

ROYAL NURSES.

QUEEN MARGARET: THE PEARL OF SCOTLAND.

(Concluded from page 300).

The Queen's was no passive religion. Turgot explains at length the reforms which she introduced into the Church and she called together great Councils of Priests and Scholars at which the King often acted as interpreter; it is recorded that those learned dignitaries of the Church left her halls having learnt more than they knew when they entered. She introduced laws calculated to benefit her kingdom and, near Dunfermline, a great stone is still pointed out which is said to be the seat from which she gave judgment when deputed by the King to settle disputes. She had a great sense of values and one can detect the fact that she well understood the difference between sentiment and sentimentality. Neither did the Queen's saintliness prevent in her a practical realisation of the dignity that should be associated with a throne; herein lies an example of her sense of values. Malcolm was uncouth, rapacious perhaps and unlearned, but *he sat on the throne of Scotland*, therefore Margaret instituted for him a retinue gorgeously attired and drawn from the highest classes in his kingdom. While she usually chose to wear the simplest dress we read that, when occasion called for it, she would appear in fine and queenly attire; that she was not above a certain feminine enjoyment in this is shown by the fact that she constantly urged her confessor to keep her reminded that, when she walked in rich attire or adorned with the jewels that the king loved to bestow upon her, it was, after all, but dust that these fine clothes adorned. She encouraged foreign traders to her court and we are told that when arrayed in the wares, purveyed by what I might call these packmen by royal appointment, the ladies of the Scottish court "looked like a new race of beings." The remark is eloquent of the condition in which Margaret found her court. She came to a castle with rough stone walls and floors covered with rushes but she had beautiful hangings made, vessels of gold and of silver, and it is said that she was the first to introduce glass into the windows of the castles in Scotland. Queen Margaret was probably the first to give a real impulse to art of any kind in the north. Her biographer, Turgot, tells of how she set aside a chamber wherein her ladies did beautiful needlework for Church and Palace, and he describes it as a veritable workshop of art. Into this room no one was permitted to enter who was known to be profane or frivolous in speech; the Queen had an understanding of what we of the present-day call "atmosphere," but there is something more interesting in the matter than that. In the Middle Ages, art was a sacred thing—*veal* art I mean—and was for centuries looked upon by the religious and the cultured as a sort of link between heaven and earth—a kind of Jacob's ladder down which conceptions of the spiritual came to their interpretation in the physical world as, for instance, in fine poetry, music and such pictures as those of Raphael, Da Vinci, and Michael Angelo (I am speaking of the Middle Ages generally) and then, again, by art they saw the physical raised to the spiritual as in the beautiful architecture of great churches, in sculpture such as that of the old Greeks and so on; there is a thought you can pursue here—you who follow the Art of Healing. In Margaret's time, work in gold was of great importance and I find that both she and Elizabeth of Hungary were patronesses of the goldsmiths. Her ladies, like those in England, became famous for a certain kind of needlework in gold and her famous Holy Rood or cross must have been, from descriptions of it, a perfect triumph of the goldsmith's art. It was richly jewelled, had a figure of the Christ perfectly cut in ivory, and set in it was a fragment of the true cross dis-

covered by the Empress Helena. The whole was contained in a beautiful black case in the shape of a cross.

If we are to credit tradition Margaret was the first protagonist of the rights of women in Great Britain; she certainly was the first to insist on some degree of protection and respect for the dignity of womanhood; and there is plenty of evidence that reform in this respect was most urgently called for. She may be said to have anticipated the work of John Howard and Elizabeth Fry by between seven and eight hundred years, for she employed certain of her subjects to visit her husband's prisoners and to enquire into their conditions; often she would set them free and she was not indifferent to the influence on culture that those English prisoners could exert when placed in certain positions. The Queen was one of the first infant welfare workers, for she made herself responsible for a certain number of little orphans each year and would often take them on her knees and give them food prepared by her own hands. At certain seasons, too, she gathered some three hundred poor people into Malcolm's tower and she and the king and priests fed and served them. But for us the great point of interest in Queen Margaret lies in the fact that (so far as present-day research has taken us) she is to be regarded as the first of the Royal Nurses in Great Britain; we gather this not merely from tradition but from the scanty references in the chronicles of her time. As the Empress Helena, in the fourth century, built hospices on the road to the Holy City of Jerusalem, so did Queen Margaret build them also, on the roads leading to St. Andrews and Dunfermline, great centres of the church in her time. It is probable that a very old hospice or hospital at St. Andrews, known as St. Leonards, owed its origin to Queen Margaret, later it became a nunnery, then a College, and now it is a famous school for girls. Such evolution is not unfitting, for Margaret gave her impulse to learning and many educational establishments in the north bear her name. Legend tells us of how she once went to the help of a poor mother with her plague-stricken child; no others would venture near the cottage but the Queen went with food and remedies and eventually the child recovered. Also she ministered to those wounded in battle, and it is said that the men ascribed their healing more to her touch than to the ointments she used; it is recorded that she cared for the lepers and washed their feet. There are various healing or medicinal wells connected with her memory, notably one near Arthur's Seat, where her messenger dropped the vessel, containing holy oil, which she was bringing to the Queen. From the spilt oil a well is said to have sprung up; it was a sort of Lourdes of Scotland for many years and the Stewart Kings had great faith in the efficacy of its waters. The garment in which she died was supposed to have healing qualities, and for long after her death the Queens of Scotland used to wear it when their children were born.

In many respects Margaret closely resembles another great character of a slightly later period—St. Elizabeth of Hungary. A miracle told of St. Margaret is very similar to one related of St. Elizabeth. One day Margaret passed from her palace carrying bread to the poor of Dunfermline when she met her husband with his retinue. He playfully challenged her to show him what she carried under her cloak and, when she demurred, he drew the latter aside. The bread had changed into beautiful woodland flowers! But the best known and best authenticated miracle, related of the saint, is that connected with her Book of the Gospels. It was perhaps her most treasured possession, and one day, when the court was moving from one castle to another, the priest, who had taken charge of it, discovered that he had lost it; after a search it was found lying under the waters of a ford. Not one of its bright illuminations was damaged and only the slightest watermark was visible on

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