

other Matilda; she had shown herself desirous of promoting their welfare while her French husband appeared to them to be a good fellow enough. Moreover, although no actual law stood in the way of a female occupant of the throne, public opinion did. The position led, as we are aware, to a kingdom divided against itself and also to friction with David of Scotland, uncle of both Matildas. No doubt it was from a fine sense of justice that that "sair sanct for a croon" raised an army to further the cause of the Empress whom he can scarcely have known. By Stephen's Matilda he was dissuaded from his first effort to establish the claims of the Empress, but he had indicated where his sympathies and his sense of justice lay, and there were many in England who shared his view of the situation. Thus it wanted but the arrival of the Empress Matilda in England to plunge the country into civil war, and Stephen did not help his own cause when, with his natural chivalry, he granted her safe custody to Arundel where she was under the protection of Adelia of Louvain and her second husband, who was hardly less powerful than the king himself. The Empress was determined to establish her right, and that of her son in the future, to sit on the throne of England and, on the capture and imprisonment of Stephen, the struggle actually lay between the two Queens. In strength of purpose, courage, determination and statesmanship one had little advantage over the other, and, as in many another great crisis of international or national history, the ultimate victory was won, for Stephen's Matilda, on what one might speak of as a psychic, rather than a physical, ground of battle; we use the word

"psychic" here in its original, its classical meaning, and not in any "spiritualistic" sense. The victorious Empress was crowned at last, but the sceptre was dashed from her hand even as she stooped to raise it. The Londoners, still smarting under the imprisonment of their debonair and lovable Frenchman, approached their new crowned queen with a prayer that they "should be governed according to the laws of Edward the Confessor." She met them with ill-judged haughtiness and arrogance and, according to an old chronicle, "with fierce countenance, her forehead wrinkled into frowns, all the feminine sweetness exiled

from her face, and drove them away with intolerable indignation." (In case the above quotation might give to some the picture of a middle-aged woman we would remind them that the two Matildas were still quite young when these events took place.) Thus did the Empress send public opinion to be the herald of Stephen's gallant Queen; he is a strange fellow always, this Public Opinion: a powerful ally and an implacable foe. Ere long Matilda and Stephen were once more on their thrones, but it is not in an article such as this that we need trace the course of events culminated thus. It is from the point

of view of influences which penetrated from her into nursing history that we have an interest in Matilda of Boulogne rather than in the rival claims of the two Matildas.

Matilda of Boulogne imitated the example of "the Lady Matilda of Scotland" in that she took over for herself the administration of the Abbey of Barking, and it may have been partly from this that the idea came to her of establishing a religious foundation whose administration would be the prerogative of Queens succeeding her. Primarily, however, it was in her grief for the death of her two little children that she founded and endowed the Church and Hospital of St. Katherine's-by-the-Tower, "in pure and perpetual alms for the repose of their souls." It is not a matter of certainty whether the children were ultimately buried there or in the Church of the Holy Trinity. She made great gifts to St. Katherine's and we note that the chief of the army, after her husband's capture, the devoted Sir William Ypres, was also one of its most generous patrons. We must bear in mind what was



MATILDA OF BOULOGNE, WIFE OF KING STEPHEN.

meant by the word "Hospital" in those days.

A hospital then was, in fact, a building wherein shelter, food and care were provided for a very limited number of poor and also sick people. The Queen retained for herself and for Queens succeeding her the right to nominate the masters and also the brothers and sisters, with power to alter the statutes of the Hospital, or to make new ones as they, in their wisdom, thought fit. And so, for long centuries, St. Katherine's stood looking across the river where half the commerce of the world came and went, where so many of the makers of history and great adventurers

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)