

ROYAL NURSES.

QUEEN MARGUERITE: ROSE OF PROVENCE.
1222—1295.

Dedicated to Mlle. Chaptal and the Nurses of France.

By Isabel Macdonald.

A summer night and the scent of roses in the air; near by is a glorious mass of them set in a huge blue jar, as I lift my pen to write an impression of Marguerite of Provence. They, the roses, have caught, in my mind, a mysterious chord with her; they can tell nothing, in the sense of materialistic history, yet do they seem to hold something of her mood and moreover . . . A knock at the door. "I've heard of the lovely roses Queen Marguerite sent you that night. I really must see them, so fresh still. Aren't they lovely? How I am looking forward to the Congress. I really must get you to tell me what I should miss in it though; there are so many things I want to see in Paris." Already I am considering how I can dispose of the intruder, for the moments fly and my task is hardly begun. But the roses save me as she rattles along. "You're tired, surely you will not sit up writing to-night. And now I think of it, dear, these roses are too much for you, the scent of them is quite heavy and you know that flowers in a room at night are so unhealthy. How unwise of you to forget. I will put them outside." And she marches off with my roses and carefully (but with emphasis) I close the door behind her.

Back at my desk it seems somehow as though my visitor has dispelled the peace of the summer night. Marguerite was so near that evening when they handed me the roses, so near but a few moments ago when I strung together a sentence or two to commence to tell you of her. Now the pen will record some historical facts, those and those only. "You would write in an historical manner of the deeds of a lady of Provence! Mais non, Mademoiselle, c'est impossible! Provence, Provence land of roses and rich vineyards, land of gaiety and tradition, Provence land of troubadours and poesy and *gaie science*, where every lady had her poet lover! And you expect someone to come from there, Mademoiselle, of whom you can set down the story on paper in your direct, analytical English way. But no, Mademoiselle, it is not thus that you can write

the story of Marguerite. The roses they know her story. Mademoiselle, voulez-vous permettre aux roses de vous raconter l'histoire de Marguerite?" But almost ere the sentence closes (did it come from those banished roses think you?) I have stolen quickly to the landing and back again, set the roses on my desk once more and—locked the door on them and me! "Unhealthy things at night" did she say? "Giving off carbon dioxide?" No, not that, but some strange unearthly fragrance surely, for almost at once there rises like magic a vision of the town of Sens

presenting such a spectacle as surely it never has before or since. Scenes are there of nigh seven centuries ago; these roses call them up as they whisper of Sens and the part it played once in the story of old France. Indeed, from that time the town has assumed a kind of dual personality. One may be forgiven such a mode of expression, for there are no words that will rightly adjust themselves to the meaning one desires to express. Once a building, or some town, has played a part in one or more significant events in history, it seems to become a kind of entity that is very near indeed to what one may describe as "personality." It has characteristics untranslatable into words but none the less real to those who have intuition, imagination, and awareness. But even more intensely is this so to people who, in their youth, have lived through the thrill of great events in the very surroundings in which those events were set. Years after that gorgeous week of summertime in Sens, commencing on May 26th, 1234, old men who had been boys then, held secret and subtle understanding with the cathedral there. Others might come to worship, to admire its architecture and its treasures; but the hearts of the old folks, who had been young when Louis the Ninth was young, held mysterious links with their Cathedral. Yes, it was a great cathedral they agreed, but yet, as they spoke, they gave an impression that they held something back, some knowledge that the ordinary sojourner in Sens need not know. For they could remember those



MISS ISABEL MACDONALD, S.R.N., F.B.C.N., who will deliver the Oration on the Historic Royal Nurses, Paris, July 11th, 1933. Official delegate National Council of Nurses of Great Britain to the Meeting of the Grand Council of the I.C.N.;

days when the cathedral took to itself a kind of whimsical character, a gaiety that harmonised with the mood of a people and that even enhanced, in a way, their reverence for it. For the 26th of May King Louis the Ninth of France had ordered that a scaffolding be built over the Cathedral of Sens so that it might be decked with garlands, bannerets and the like until at last it assumed the character of some

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