

declared that she was not, that she was free to marry when and whom she would. The great Archbishop Anselm was soon drawn into the controversy and gave it as his dictum that "if she were a Nun she could not marry, if she were not, she was free." The matter was hotly debated and eventually the Archbishop called together a Council of Bishops, Abbots and Nobles and laid the matter before them. Evidence was brought to the Council by two archdeacons, William of Canterbury and Humbald of Salisbury, who had been deputed by the Archbishop to make full and complete enquiries of the Sisters at Romsey and at Wilton; these two witnesses reported that they could find no evidence that Matilda was a Nun. Then the maiden herself was brought before the Council and it is surprising that no artist has thought fit to paint this scene—a slender and lovely girl, the last of the Saxon Princesses, there in the hall at Lambeth facing the great prelates of the Church and many nobles, mostly of an alien line. She made a valiant enough defence of her position. She told of how she had only worn the veil by her aunt's compulsion. "If I attempted to remove it she would torment me with harsh blows and sharp reproaches; sighing and trembling, I wore it in her presence but as soon as I withdrew from her sight, I always threw it off and trampled upon it." Then she told a story which is interesting in its psychological aspects and which apparently made a very lasting impression on her. (It is important to remember at this point a remark in one of her letters to Archbishop Anselm, referred to above, which shows that Matilda had a great regard and love for her father). Malcolm of Scotland had come to visit his little daughter in the Abbey of Romsey, bringing with him Alan of Bretagne to whom there is no doubt that he, at one time, hoped to give his daughter in marriage. Matilda could not have been more than thirteen then and she was brought into her father's presence wearing the, to her, obnoxious veil. The fiery King of the Scots at once tore the veil from his child's head saying that he intended to bestow her in marriage and not to devote her to a cloister.

She told of another occasion when her aunt had put the veil on her head and her father pulled it off and execrated the person who had placed it there. Perhaps history was repeating itself in the mind of Malcolm. Did there stir in him some half-forgotten memory of a day long past when Christina had fortified his lovely Margaret in her desire to enter a convent rather than to share his throne? Revenge was always dear to the heart of Malcolm Canmore. But Matilda was not for Alan of Bretagne and, long before a greater destiny offered itself, Malcolm had fallen a victim to treachery at Alnwick and Margaret slept by the altar in her church by the "crooked burn." Yet Christina had not always been thus unsuccessful in her "diplomacy." Once William Rufus had visited the Abbey and she conceived a shrewd suspicion that that squire of dames was more interested in her two beautiful wards than in the benefits which his soul might derive from any scanty religious observances, on his part, at the Abbey of Romsey. And so she had the two Scottish Princesses, with other maidens committed to her rule, brought into the presence of the Red King, and his none too scrupulous Norman nobility, in the habits of the Black Nuns; whatever their morals, these men were always likely to recognise the sanctity of the veil "or the worst might befall them." Ever afterwards, although the incident was doomed to play a part in frustrating her subsequent plans, the Abbess congratulated herself on her own astuteness, for William Rufus departed immediately after seeing the veiled ladies showing, so said the Abbess Christina, that his visit was for no good purpose. All these incidents tended to convince the Council, which Anselm left for a time in order that it might, in full freedom, weigh the evidence placed before it; the whole matter was thoroughly debated and

the Princess was recalled in order, if possible, to obtain further evidence. She expressed her willingness to confirm all that she had said by any oath that they chose to administer, but Archbishop Anselm decreed that no oath was required and said that "if any man out of the evil treasure of his heart should bring forth evil things he could not withstand the evidence through which the case had been proved." And the venerable Archbishop laid his hands in blessing on the maiden's head and she passed out from that assembly. As a matter of fact Matilda had but followed a practice common in her time. It was quite usual then for ladies, of royal or noble birth, to go into convents and to wear the veil without becoming professed nuns, in order to protect themselves from the licentious manners of their age.

ISABEL MACDONALD.

(To be concluded.)

THE HOSPITAL WORLD.

We congratulate all concerned on the splendid result of the *Matinée* attended by the King and Queen at His Majesty's Theatre, Haymarket, in aid of the funds of the Mount Vernon Cancer Hospital. Sir William Morris gave £26,000 to the appeal, which altogether raised over £30,000.

It has been officially announced that a sum of £5,061 has been raised by the exhibition of Princess Elizabeth's miniature house in London, Cardiff, Bristol, and Swansea, and that the whole of this amount, with the exception of £525 which was given to Bristol charities, has been distributed among Welsh hospitals.

The house has been visited by 250,000 persons.

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Southwark (Dr. Amigo) states that it was hoped to build a Roman Catholic Hospital for South London at a cost of about £100,000. A site had been acquired in Lambeth Road, S.E., but a start would not be made till funds were available.

Canons Melly and Gugnoz, the two young monks of the St. Bernard Hospice, who were recently chosen by the Chapter to establish a small hospice in the Si-La (pass) on the borders of Szechwan and Tibet, left the hospice after a moving ceremony.

The two monks are accompanied by several lay workers and a number of the famous dogs, and they will have the assistance of French missionaries from Tibet in building the new hospice. The height of the site is 12,000 ft.

The gross receipts on Blind Babies' Day, the annual street collection in aid of the Sunshine Homes for Blind Babies, amounted to £2,566. The cost of the collection amounted to £211, the net result being £2,355.

Dr. Isabel Kerr, a medical missionary who was one of the foremost authorities on the treatment of leprosy in India, has died at Dishpali, the Methodist Leper Home and Hospital, near Nizamabad, of which for the past 12 years she had been the medical superintendent. Struck with the great need for a leper home in the area, she and her husband chose a beautiful site six miles from Nizamabad, and, with money given for the purpose by a devout Hindu, began to build. When Sir Leonard Rogers made his great discovery of the remedial value of the injection of the essential principle from chaulmoogra oil, the home developed into a hospital.

In 1923 Dr. Kerr was awarded the Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal in recognition of her services.

Her medical skill and her devotion to the cause of the leper, together with her modest reserve and womanly charm, won her innumerable friends both in India and at home.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)