ROYAL NURSES.

MATILDA THE GOOD.

(*Concluded from page* 22.)

After the decision of the Council, Matilda appears to have been in no hurry to marry. Doubtless Christina continued to oppose the marriage and, likely enough, after her victory in the Council, there were many besides the Abbess who were ready to whisper in the ears of Matilda tales of Henry's flirtations, for he was indeed something of a Lothario, this dazzling Beauclerc. However, the wedding took place at last with a great gathering of the nobility to witness the ceremony; Anselm himself went into the pulpit and "to stop all calumny and report" gave a complete account of all that had taken place in his synod; he gave his own judgment that "the Lady Matilda of Scotland was free from any religious vow and might dispose herself in marriage as she chose." Anselm asked in a loud voice whether any objected and, with one loud shout, the people replied that the matter was "rightly settled." And so they were married and the Archbishop crowned and anointed the Queen. It must have been with somewhat mixed feelings that Matilda stood before that multitude; all, or nearly all, were those who had conquered her nation and their language had become the language of the Court, of all legal assemblies, of the army and indeed English was, in a sense, a tongue forbidden. But the last of the Saxon Princesses faced the Norman nobility as fearlessly as she had faced the Council of the Archbishop. Would that she might have looked into the seeds of time, to the coming of the centuries wherein the descendants of those Norman French would all be proud to call themselves English, centuries in which the language of her fathers would again be the language of her fatherland but improved and enriched, by the Conquest, with new and beautiful words; thereby it has become a language which, to quote a learned German writer (Grimm), "possesses a power of expression such as perhaps never stood at the command of any other language of men." The genius of words is such a strange and entrancing subject and the history of words is as fascinating as the history of a race; how far we wonder was the genealogy of words in England affected by the marriage of Norman Henry and a Princess of the old kingly line? Her influence, and that of her descendants, must have gone towards protecting the old forms of speech just as much as to the fostering of the grander and more ornate words that came with the Normans and which have added much of dignity to the English speech. Had Matilda any premonition that the language of the Saxons would ultimately supersede that she heard around her on her wedding day and, embellished as we have suggested, penetrate to every known quarter of the globe?

His marriage having taken place, Henry proceeded to another step that greatly pleased his people. He granted to them a Charter which was actually the direct progenitor of that great palladium of the rights of the people—the Magna Carta of King John. Rightly or otherwise, Henry's subjects ascribed this Charter and the privileges it conveyed to the influence of Matilda. A hundred copies of it were circulated to the various bishoprics, but, when Stephen Langton required copies, on which to found the Magna Carta, only one could be found; it was rumoured that Henry himself had them destroyed after Queen Matilda's death.

No sooner was she married than Matilda proceeded to make energetic efforts to improve the conditions of the poor and the infirm; it is said that her compassion for them carried her almost beyond the bounds of discretion. Particularly she interested herself in the lepers and was in the habit, at certain times, of attending to their sores herself; also it is recorded that she personally examined the food supplied to them Once she is said to have tried to persuade her brother David to assist her in dressing the sores of her patients. But David seems to have made a hurried departure from what we might call his sister's out-patient department, saintly and fine as his character would appear to have been. It is told that, with brotherly frankness, he asked her later whether she imagined that Henry would continue to kiss the lips that so constantly kissed the sores of the lepers? Her maids of honour assisted Matilda in her ministrations to the sick and the three principal among those were Emma, Gunelda and Christina; on her death they retired to Kilburn, where there was a healing well, and established a kind of hermitage into which they gathered many who were in need of nursing care; afterwards it became a priory.

It is important to remember that it was Henry I. who granted land to Rahere to build St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and he also gave it a Charter; these events happened, however, after the death of Matilda but, no doubt, she knew the versatile Rahere, who was at one time Jester at the court of King Henry. The chief fact which emphasises Queen Matilda's interest in the sick is her foundation of the hospital for lepers at St. Giles; this was probably the first foundation of its kind in London, although tradition has it that there was, prior to the establishment of the Hospital of St. Giles, one for female lepers on the site of what is now St. James's Palace. The Charter, given to St. Giles' Hospital by Matilda, provided that there should be accommodation for forty lepers, a chaplain and a messenger. Later on other officers were appointed and those were spoken of as the "sounds," no doubt in contradistinction to the leprous. This Hospital, established by the munificence of Matilda, was founded in 1101 "over against the west suburb of London." The original endowment of the hospital amounted to only £3 annually—a very small sum even if we bear in mind how much greater was the value of money in those times. But the lepers themselves went out to beg for corn with their clapdishes; a clapdish was a round wooden vessel with a lid. Later the danger of infection, arising from this practice, came to be recognised and a proctor was appointed to beg in the churches and public places on behalf of the hospital. When the gallows was removed from the Elms in the fourteenth century to the "north land belonging to the hospital," the custom was established of presenting to the criminal, as he passed the hospital, a large bowl of ale and this came to be known as "the St. Giles Bowl"; so here at the gate of the hospital, founded by Matilda the Good, many a poor wretch experienced a last act of human kindness in the last misery of his existence. As time went on great gifts of land and money began to pour upon St. Giles until at last it became a very wealthy institution; it maintained for many centuries its connection with the Crown, rather a doubtful privilege as regards its freedom of action for, although it might be sold or gifted by various owners at different times, the Crown always appeared to consider that it had the right to give the ultimate decision in any matter pertaining to the hospital. The influence of the Queen was fruitful in the foundation of a number of other institutions in London of a type more or less similar to that of St. Giles, and we have to note, in the reign of Henry I and Matilda the Good, the rise of that splendid order, the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, although its actual foundation belongs to a slightly earlier period. It was during their reign that Jordein Brisset and his wife Muriel gave to the Order its headquarters at Clerkenwell and dedicated a priory there to the nuns of Clerkenwell, who occupied themselves with work among the sick.

The Abbess of Barking always took precedence of all

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