

HISTORIC ROYAL NURSES.

ELIZABETH THE PEACEMAKER, QUEEN OF PORTUGAL, 1271-1336.

In her lecture on Elizabeth, Queen of Portugal, Miss Macdonald said that the subject presented difficulties chiefly because the country and the age concerned are so remote from our own, but, she stated, it was perhaps just as well that, after the present-day manner of biographers, it was not possible to label the Queen with special characteristics and to relate in great detail the incidents in which she played a part, for to use any such method to portray Elizabeth of Portugal would tend to bring her below the level of the great national spirit that she was, watching over the destiny, the healing and the evolution of her kingdom. Miss Macdonald said that at the present time, when there was a greater tendency than ever before to regard the physical body as the whole of the person we see before us, she would like to take as the *motif* of her lecture certain words of George Macdonald to the effect that "all that interests man is man," and so she would group about her picture of Elizabeth the conditions and circumstances of her age into all of which she entered powerfully and effectively, according to her conception of her world task. The spirit which dwelt in Elizabeth used the channels of eyes and ears to keep watch and guard over her country and her reaction to what reached her through those channels was one of the factors that made the reign of Dionysius (or Diniz as he was more often called) one of the richest and the most progressive in Portuguese history.

Miss Macdonald next referred to the significance which names held for the people in the Middle Ages. Elizabeth was given the name of her great aunt, Elizabeth of Hungary, whose spiritual power and teaching were still exercising a great influence over European learning and thought, while Dionysius was so named after Dionysius the Aeropagite, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. Attention was drawn to the fact that the Queen stood at a very important period on the stage of world history. It was the age of a great movement towards the development of the intellect as against the more mystical type of mind that characterised pre-medieval times. It was very near to the scientific age, and in this connection the lecturer

pointed to an important truth—that there must always be the Preparers for the Beginners—in this case for the Beginners of modern science, which some people claim that Bacon of Verulam introduced; he at least gave that materialist impulse needed for the development of science. But, said the lecturer, the doors of science were already, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, commencing to swing open their portals and King Diniz and Queen Eliza-

beth were of those who were pressing against the gates. Contemporaries of theirs were such men as Roger Bacon, Raymund Lully and Albertus Magnus, these were among the Preparers for such as Copernicus, Kepler, William Harvey and Peter Low, and, in the Peninsula itself, Columbus and Vasco da Gama. King Diniz and Queen Elizabeth established one of the first secular universities in Europe, at Coimbra and it was from the forests of King Diniz, about two centuries later, that the ships of Vasco da Gama were built; it was from the mines which the King developed that money was provided for the age of Portuguese discovery with its tremendous results.

Miss Macdonald then referred to the outstanding fact connected with the life of Elizabeth, *i.e.*, the continual claims upon her to settle disputes between her own and other countries, to quiet political strife and smooth out quarrels between her husband and her son, all of which led the people to speak of the Queen as "the Mother of Peace." The picturesque incident of her riding on a mule through the part of the field where the battle was thickest, between the adherents of her husband and son, was recounted and how the men on either side laid down their arms lest they should injure the "Mother of Peace," while others said they "obeyed the commands of an angel."

In relation to Elizabeth's birth, the story was told of how the long dispute between her father and her grandfather was settled over the baby's cradle. Certain other incidents were related in regard to the birth of Elizabeth and in referring to the fact that she was born enveloped in a membrane, Miss Macdonald showed

how the folk spirit of her people translated this fact as the physical interpretation of the "Veil of Holiness" that surrounded the child from her infancy, and pointed to the fact of how this "imagination" had degenerated so that people now speak of such a circumstance as merely indicative of "luck." As she was on the subject of superstitions, the



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