

lecturer also gave some idea of the meaning attached to crimson roses in the Middle Ages in relation to religion, mysticism and culture. Next some account was given of the wonderful education which both Dionysius and Elizabeth received in their childhood, and the facts and circumstances connected with the marriage of Elizabeth to King Diniz, and the King's joy and munificence on meeting his beautiful bride, were mentioned. Next the lecturer referred to Elizabeth's appreciation of what she owed to her queenship and went on to relate how, when the great functions of State were over, she would go to meet a messenger from a home where there was sickness or where the Angel of Death had passed, to dress some leprous sore or to confer with one of her architects on the building of a hospital or convent. Reference was made to the wonderful tolerance with which she suffered the unfaithfulness of King Diniz and how, after a time, this last was overcome by his veneration and admiration for his Queen so that he became energetic in promoting his country's development, and added to the title of "The Poet King" (he was the first great poet of Portugal) he came to be spoken of as "the Labouring King," and, in reference to his work for agriculture, as "The Husbandman King." Reference was also made to the wisdom of the King and Queen in their appreciation of the Knights Templar as a moral force, and to how King Diniz saved (except in name) that Order for Portugal, when, through the power and avarice of Philip le Bel, it was destroyed.

Information was given of how the Queen collected and organised a body of women at Alemquer for the nursing of the sick in their own homes, and how in her own house she fed thirty lepers daily, carving and dividing their food herself. Certain miracles were referred to which are attributed to her, including the story of how, when she founded a church, she paid her builders with crimson roses, the petals of which, during the night, changed into money sufficient to meet the extent of the Queen's liability. An account was given of the hospital and convent which Elizabeth built in the ancient royal city of Coimbra, and how her palace was connected by an arch with the former. She brought together a number of nuns of the order of Poor Clares to undertake the nursing.

On the death of the King, whom she nursed devotedly, she longed to enter a monastery, but, owing to the fact that her country was still likely to require her services as peace-maker under the reign of her son, she followed the example of her great aunt and assumed the habit of a Franciscan Tertiary. Her splendid robes of State were converted into church vestments. Miss Macdonald then gave an account of how she performed the seven works of charity.

When she had gone far on a long pilgrimage, to make peace between Portugal and Castile, the great Queen died at the age of sixty-five, and Miss Macdonald closed her lecture as follows: They carried her all the way to her beloved Coimbra in accordance with the commands of her son the King, and the people crowded from far and near to witness the last journey of their "Mother of Peace." Once they pressed the bearers so hard that the coffin fell and opened; from it poured a fluid sweet and fragrant which, while it lasted, would cure the sick who were anointed with it.

They buried her in her own Royal Monastery at Coimbra. But the forests of Diniz did not prove sufficient to protect the grave of his Queen and the Convent of St. Clare. The storms of sand had all but buried them when a few centuries later the Portuguese raised her body that they might lay it in a new tomb. They opened the coffin lid and beheld the body of the Queen fresh and beautiful, majestic still in death. Then reverently, with holy ritual, they laid it to rest in the new monastery that crowned the hill. In the mists of the ages did they, as in a vision, behold the splendid figure of their Poet King with an angelic mystical form at

his side? Had they a vision of crimson roses near her, roses such as those of which the poet writes:

"Soft voices had they, that with tender plea
Whispered of peace and truth and friendliness
unquelled." —Keats.

We are indebted to the Casa Portugal for their courtesy in lending us this beautiful photograph of the Holy Queen Elizabeth of Portugal for reproduction.

This photograph was taken from the statue by Teixeira Lopes.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

A "FITTER BRITAIN."

Sir Kingsley Wood, Minister of Health, has plans for creating a "Fitter Britain" in 1937, which has been given publicity in *The Times*:

"We have," said Sir Kingsley, "many plans for building up an A1 nation in the New Year. One important thing we must not forget. If we are to be successful we must, while steadily maintaining and improving our existing health services, always keep before us our fuller conceptions of health policy to-day—that it is not enough to protect the individual or the community from disease, but that we must more and more be health builders.

"The New Year finds us on the threshold of an important development in our plans for the creation of a 'Fitter Britain.' The aim of the Government is to give a special and better place in our health provision to physical education and self-equipment. It is not because there is physical deterioration in Great Britain, but rather because we believe that still greater results can be achieved.

"We have no desire to set a course of physical jerks for the nation—dumb-bells are perhaps relics of the past—but we do desire new concreted efforts in many directions. It is certainly necessary that there should be additional gymnasias and physical recreation, but also the provision of more clubs for young people, more community centres, more swimming baths, more playing fields, and more open-air life.

NO COMPULSION.

"There will, of course, be no question of compulsion—it is alien to British conceptions of how this country can best attain a fitter and fuller life. We shall work through our existing organisations, local authorities, and voluntary organisations—aided by further Government assistance."

So far as new plans needing Parliamentary approval are concerned, he said he hoped that the New Year would see the serious gap filled which now existed when children left school and became employed. There was at present no public provision for medical care until insurance began at the age of 16.

There were some 67,000 blind people in this country. The Government proposed to make old-age pensions available to them at 40, and that domiciliary provision for them should be divorced from the Poor Law.

Then there was the new voluntary pensions scheme, which would permit "black-coated" workers to enjoy the benefit of the widows', orphans', and old-age contributory pensions on a voluntary basis. He was now completing the scheme for presentation to Parliament.

He would then be able to state the figure at which the income limit would be fixed, but he might say now that it would be material only at the time of application for admission, and when a person had satisfied the conditions he would be able to continue as a voluntary contributor whatever his income might be.

Sir Kingsley Wood added that he hoped the new midwifery service, which would be in operation in most parts of the country next July, would have a beneficial effect on

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)