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**S T. M A R G A R E T,****QUEEN OF SCOTLAND.**

[From her life, written by Theodoric, a monk of Durham, her Confessarius, and afterwards by St. Aélred; also from the Scottish and English historians. See Fordun, Scoti-Chron. lib. v. c. 15, vol. ii. p. 418, ed. Hearne.]

**A.D. 1093.**

**ST. MARGARET** was little niece to **St. Edward** the Confessor, and granddaughter to **Edmund Ironside**. Upon the death of the latter, who was treacherously murdered by **Count Edric**, in 1017, **Cnute**, or **Canutus**, the Dane, who had before obtained by agreement **Mercia** and the northern provinces, caused himself to be acknowledged by the bishops, ealdormen, and other chief men of the nation, **King** of all England, and guardian to the two infant sons of his late colleague, **Edward** and **Edmund**, till they should be of age to succeed to the crown of the **West-Saxons**. But **Cnute**, though he punished the traitor, yet seemed to love the treason, and secretly

sent the two young princes to the King of Sweden, that they might by him be made away with. The Swede refused to imbrue his hands in their innocent blood, though he feared the power of Cnute, who had added Norway to his native kingdom of Denmark by a treachery no less execrable than that by which he usurped the dominions of these innocent royal children in England. The Swede therefore generously sent the two princes to Solomon, King of Hungary, by whom they were kindly received and educated. Edmund, the elder of them, died; but Edward, the younger, marrying Agatha, sister to the queen, and according to some authors, niece to the emperor, Conrad, a most virtuous and accomplished princess, had by her, Edgar, surnamed Etheling, Christina, a nun, and St. Margaret. Cnute reigned in such a manner as to appear worthy to wear the crown, had it been acquired without ambition and injustice. He was succeeded after his death, in Norway, by his eldest son, Swane, in Denmark by his favourite second son, Hardecnute; and in England, in 1036, Harold was chosen king, who is said to have been also a son of Cnute, though he much degenerated from his virtues, both in peace and war. After his death, Hardecnute came into England, and was acknowledged king, but died two years after. Whereupon Edward the Confessor was called to the crown in 1041. He, by ambassadors, invited Edward, surnamed Outremer, or Etheling, over from Hungary, with his children, and received them honourably at London, in 1054, where Edward Outremer died three years after, and was buried in St. Paul's Church. At the death of St. Edward, Edgar being but young, and a stranger born, had not interest enough to oppose the powerful party by which Count Harold was placed on the throne in 1066, pretending the crown to have been bequeathed him by the late king, as Hoveden and others relate. But William the Norman affirmed that it had been

promised him by St. Edward, and invading England, slew Harold in a great battle near Hastings, on the 14th of October, 1066. Many English desired to raise Edgar, the lawful Saxon heir, to the throne; but he was unable to make good his claim by arms, and therefore, with the rest of the nobility, received the victorious Norman at London. But some time after, he secretly fled from the tyranny of the conqueror, and left the kingdom. The ship in which he put to sea was by a tempest driven upon the coast of Scotland, where Malcolm, or Milcolcumb III. entertained him and his sister in the most courteous manner. He had the more tender feeling for the misfortune of the royal exile, having formerly been himself in a like situation. For Macbeth, general of part of the troops, having killed his father, King Donald, or Duncan VII., usurped the throne, and Malcolm only saved his life by flight. After wandering over many places, he found a secure retreat in the court of Edward the Confessor, who assisting with ten thousand men, he marched into Scotland, was joined by his friends, and overcame and slew Macbeth, who had then held his usurped crown seventeen years. Malcolm having thus recovered his dominions, was declared king at Scone, in 1057. When Edgar arrived in his dominions, the sight of the young prince and princess made him feel all the weight of their affliction. He gave them the best reception his kingdom could afford, and it gave him the highest pleasure, that it was in his power to show them courtesy. William the Norman sent to demand them to be delivered into his hands. Malcolm rejected with horror so base a treachery. Whereupon a war ensued. The Scots defeated Roger, a Norman general, in Northumberland, and afterwards, Richard, Earl of Gloucester. Upon which William sent his brother, Odo, Earl of Kent, into Northumberland; but Malcolm gave him a considerable overthrow, and recovered the booty which he

had taken. After this, the haughty Norman sent his son Robert, at the head of an army, who encamped on the Tyne, but without doing any thing, except building the city of Newcastle upon Tyne; and soon after the Norman agreed to a peace on these conditions, that he should restore Sibert, Earl of Northumberland, and leave Cumberland as formerly to the Scots; that he should treat Prince Edgar as his friend, and that the boundaries of the two kingdoms should be King's Cross, on Stanemoor, between Richmonshire and Cumberland, which should have the statues and arms of the two kings of England and Scotland on each side.

Malcolm was so much taken with the virtues of the Princess Margaret, that he most impatiently desired to make her his royal consort. She had learned from her cradle to contemn the vanities of the world, and to regard its pleasures as a poison to the heart, and the bane of virtue. Her amazing beauty, her rare prudence, her wit, and her extraordinary virtue could not fail to excite the admiration of the whole court. But it was her only desire and ambition to render herself agreeable to the King of kings. She seemed to relish no earthly pleasure, finding all delight in the incomparable charms of divine love, which flowed into her pure soul chiefly by the means of assiduous prayer and meditation, in which holy exercises she often spent whole days. She took great pleasure in relieving and serving the poor, and in comforting all that were in distress, considering Christ in his necessitous members. Her consent being obtained, she was married, and crowned Queen of Scotland in 1070, being twenty-four years of age. The marriage was solemnized at the king's royal castle of Dumfermline, built in the midst of a beautiful plain, surrounded with woods, rocks and rivers, by its situation almost inaccessible to men or beasts, says Fordun, and strongly fortified by

art. The Scottish historian adds, that she brought a great fortune to the king in the immense treasures she had carried off from England, together with many most precious relics. Among these was the Black Cross, held in the highest veneration in Scotland in succeeding ages. Malcolm was rough and unpolished, but neither haughty nor capricious; and had no evil inclinations. Margaret, by the most tender complaisance, and the most condescending and engaging carriage, always full of respect, gained so great an ascendant over him, as to seem entirely mistress of his heart; which influence she only exerted to make religion and justice reign, to render her subjects happy, and her husband one of the most virtuous kings that have adorned the Scottish throne. She softened his temper, cultivated his mind, polished his manners, and inspired him with the most perfect maxims and sentiments of all Christian virtues. And so much was the king charmed with her wisdom and piety, that he not only left her the whole management of his domestic affairs, but followed her prudent advice in the government of the state. In the midst of the most weighty concerns and cares of a kingdom, Margaret always kept her heart disengaged from the love of the world, and recollected in God. The continual attention of her soul to him in all her actions, assiduous prayer, and the constant practice of self-denial were the means by which chiefly she attained to this perfection. At the same time her prudence and care in all things, her application to public and private affairs, her watchfulness in providing for the good of her subjects, and the wonderful ease and wisdom with which she discharged every duty of the regal authority, showed her most extensive genius to the astonishment of foreign nations.

God blessed this pious royal couple with a numerous and virtuous offspring which did not degenerate from the piety

of their holy parents. The queen was mother of six boys: Edward, Edmund, Edgar, Ethelred, Alexander, and David; and of two daughters, namely: Maud or Mathildes, married to Henry I., King of England; and Mary, who married Eustache, Count of Bologne. Of the sons, Edgar, Alexander, and David I., successively came to the crown of Scotland, and all governed with the highest reputation of wisdom, valour, and piety—especially King David, who may be justly stiled the brightest ornament of that throne. The happiness of these princes, and that of the whole kingdom in them, was owing, under God, to the pious care of Queen Margaret in their education. She did not suffer them to be brought up in vanity, pride, or pleasures, which is too often the misfortune of those who are born in courts. She inspired them with an early indifference to the things of the world, with the greatest ardour for virtue, the purest love of God, fear of his judgments, and dread of sin. She chose for them the ablest preceptors and governors, persons eminently endued with the spirit of piety and religion; and would suffer none but such to approach them, being sensible that tender minds receive the strongest and most lasting impressions from the behaviour of those with whom they converse, especially masters. Instructions are dry, but the words and actions of persons breathe the spirit and sentiments of their hearts, and insensibly communicate the same to others, especially where this influence is strengthened by authority. The zealous mother watched over the masters, examined the progress of her children, and often instructed them herself in all Christian duties. No sooner were the young princesses of an age capable of profiting by her example, than she made them her companions in her spiritual exercises and good works. She daily, by most fervent prayers and tears, conjured Almighty God to preserve their innocence, and fill their souls with the senti-

ments of those virtues which she endeavoured to instil into them. She extended her care and attention to her servants and domestics, and her sweetness and tender charity with which she seasoned her lessons, rendered her endeavours the more effectual. By her prudent zeal and example, concord, charity, modesty, religion, piety, and devotion reigned in the whole court, in which virtue was the only recommendation to the royal favour, and to want devotion was the most certain disgrace.

The holy queen remembered that by the rank in which Providence had placed her, and by the authority which the king lodged in her, the whole kingdom was her family. She found it overrun with many abuses, and plunged in shameful ignorance of many essential duties of religion. It was her first care to procure holy and zealous pastors and preachers to be established in all parts of her dominions. She seconded their ministry with the weight of the royal authority, and that of all the magistrates, to abolish the criminal neglect of abstaining from servile work on Sundays and holydays, and of observing the fast of Lent, with many other abuses; and had the comfort to see, by her zealous endeavours, the strict observance of Lent restored, and the devout celebration of Sundays and festivals enforced, the people consecrating those days to God, both by assisting at the whole church office, and instructions, and by private devotions. Simony, usury, incestuous marriages, superstition, sacrileges, and other scandalous abuses were also banished. Many neglected to receive the holy communion even at Easter, alleging a fear of approaching it unworthily. She showed this pretence to be only a cloak for sloth and impenitence, engaged sinners to cancel their crimes by worthy fruits of repentance, and contributed very much to revive the spirit of penance and frequent communion. She laboured most successfully to polish and

civilize the Scottish nation, to encourage among that people both the useful and polite arts, and to inspire them with a love of the sciences, and with the principles of all the social and moral virtues. All which she incited her husband to promote by many salutary laws and regulations. Charity to the poor was her darling virtue. Her own coffers could not suffice her liberality to them; and often she employed upon them part of what the king had reserved for his own use and necessities, which liberty he freely allowed her. Whenever she stirred out of her palace, she was surrounded by troops of widows, orphans, and other distressed persons, who flocked to her as to their common mother; nor did she ever send any one away without relief. Within doors, when she went into the hall of the palace, she found it filled with poor people: she washed their feet, and served them herself. She never sat down to table without having first fed and waited on nine little orphans and twenty-four grown-up poor. Often, especially in Lent and Advent, the royal couple called in three hundred poor, served them at table on their knees, she, the women on the one side, the king, the men on the other, giving them the same dishes that were served up at their own royal table. She frequently visited the hospitals, attending the sick with wonderful humility and tenderness. By her extensive alms insolvent debtors were released, and decayed families restored; and foreign nations, especially the English, recovered their captives. She was inquisitive, and solicitous to ransom those especially who fell into the hands of harsh masters. She erected hospitals for poor strangers. The king most readily concurred with her in all manner of good works. "He learned from her," says Theodoric, "often to watch the night in prayer. I could not sufficiently admire to see the fervour of this prince at prayer, and to discover so much compunction of heart and such tears

of devotion in a secular man" "She excited the king," says another ancient author, "to the works of justice, mercy, alms-deeds, and other virtues; in all which, by divine grace, she brought him to be most ready to comply with her pious inclinations. For he, seeing that Christ dwelt in the heart of his queen, was always willing to follow her counsels."

The small time which the queen allowed herself for sleep, and the retrenchment of all amusements and pastimes, procured her many hours in the day for her devotions. In Lent and Advent, she always rose at midnight, and went to church to matins. Returning home, she found six poor persons ready for her: she washed their feet, and gave to each a plentiful alms to begin the day. She then slept again an hour or two: and after that rising, returned to her chapel, where she heard four or five low masses, and after these a high mass. She had other hours in the day for prayer in her closet, where she was often found bathed in tears. "As to her own eating, it was so sparing that it barely sufficed to maintain life, and by no means to gratify the appetite," says Theodoric. "She seemed rather only to taste than to take her meal. In a word, her works were more wonderful than her miracles, though these were not wanting to her." The same author, who was her confessor, writes: "She was endowed with a wonderful spirit of compunction. When she would be speaking to me of the sweetness of everlasting life, her words were full of all grace. So great was her fervour and compunction on these occasions, that she seemed as if she would quite melt into tears; so that her devotion drew also from me tears of compunction. In the church no one was more still in silence, no one more intent than she at prayer." She often importuned her confessor to admonish her of whatever he perceived blameworthy in her words or actions; and was displeased that he was, as she thought, remiss in this charitable

office. Her humility made her desire reprehensions and correction, which the pride of others cannot brook. Every year she kept two Lents of forty days each; the one at the usual time, the other before Christmas—both with incredible rigour. She recited every day the short offices of the Holy Trinity, of the passion of Christ, of the Blessed Virgin, and of the dead.

King Malcolm, after his war against William the Conqueror, in Northumberland, was disturbed by a rebellion of the Highlanders both in the north and west of Scotland. He composed the north in person; and Walter, his general, reduced to obedience the rebels in the west. Malcolm, from that time, applied himself to improve his kingdom by the arts of peace. He first reformed his own family, and afterwards enacted sumptuary laws, and remedied abuses which had crept in among the people. He built the cathedral of Durham,<sup>1</sup> and made the abbot of that place Bishop of St. Andrew's, and added the bishoprics of Murray and Caithness to the former four in Scotland. He concurred with his queen in founding the monastery of the Holy Trinity at Dumfermlin. St. Margaret, by her wise counsels, had perfectly convinced her royal consort that the love of peace is the first duty of him who is the common father of his people—war being the greatest of all temporal calamities. Those warlike princes, whose heads were crowned with laurels, and whose triumphs dazzle the world, and swell the pages of history with so much pomp, were the scourges of the earth, especially of their own nations, at least in the ages wherein they lived; and their sounding achievements and victories, when placed in the light in which faith commands us to consider them, will appear no better than a long series of boundless ambition, murders, plunder of whole countries, and the most heavy oppression of their own people. Malcolm, however, did not forget that it

is an indispensable duty of a king to be expert in war, and always in readiness, that he be not wanting to the protection which he owes his people. William Rufus, who came to the throne of England in 1037, surprised the castle of Alnwick, in Northumberland, and put the garrison to the sword. Malcolm demanded restitution, which being denied, he besieged it. The English garrison being reduced to great extremity, offered to surrender, and desired the king to come and receive the keys with his own hand; but the soldier who presented them to him upon the point of a spear, by a base treachery thrust the spear into his eye whilst the king was stretching out his hand to take the keys, and killed him. His son, Edward, carried on the siege to revenge the death of his father, but advancing too eagerly, was slain in an assault. Whereupon the Scots were so much afflicted, that they raised the siege and retired, having buried their king and prince at Tinmouth. Their bodies were soon after removed to Dumfermlin. Malcolm reigned thirty-three years, and died in 1093. His name is found in some Scottish calendars enrolled among the saints.

This misfortune was to the good queen an affliction which only her heroic virtue enabled her to bear with resignation. She lay at the same time on her death-bed. Theodoric gives the following account of her last sickness: "She had a foresight of her death long before it happened; and speaking to me in secret, she began to repeat to me in order her whole life, pouring out floods of tears at every word with unspeakable compunction; so that she obliged me also to weep; and sometimes we could neither of us speak for sighs and sobs. At the end she spoke thus to me, 'Farewell; for I shall not be here long; you will stay some little time behind me. Two things I have to desire of you: the one is, that so long as you live, you remember my poor soul in your masses and prayers: the other is,

(1) Fordun, Scoti-Chron, lib. v. c. 17, vol. ii. p. 417.

that you assist my children, and teach them to fear and love God. These things you must promise me here in the presence of God, who alone is witness of our discourse.” She survived this about half a year, during which she was seldom able to rise out of bed, and her pains daily increased upon her, which she bore with incredible patience, in silence and prayer. In the expedition into Northumberland mentioned above, she endeavoured to dissuade her husband from marching with his army; but he that only time dissented from her advice, imagining it to proceed only from concern for his safety, and reflecting that the presence of a sovereign raises the courage of the soldiery. His death happened four days before that of the queen. She, on the day he was killed, appeared melancholy and sad, and said to those about her, “Perhaps this day a greater evil hath befallen Scotland than any this long time.” On the fourth day, her pains being somewhat abated, she got up, and went into her oratory, where she received the holy viaticum. Then feeling the redoublement of her fever with her pains return upon her, she laid herself down again, and desired the chaplains to recite the psalms by her, and to recommend her soul to God. In the mean time she called for the Black Cross. She embraced, and signed herself frequently with it; then held it with both hands before her, and with her eyes fixed upon it, recited the Miserere psalm and other prayers. Her son, Edgar, coming in from the army, she asked him how his father and brother did? He, fearing to alarm her, said they were well. She answered him, “I know how it is.” Then lifting up her hands to heaven, she praised God, saying, “I thank thee, Almighty God, that in sending me so great an affliction in the last hour of my life, thou wouldst purify me from my sins, as I hope by thy mercy.” Not long after, finding her last moments to approach, she repeated from the prayers of the church

for that occasion, the following aspiration: “O Lord Jesus Christ, who by thy death has given life to the world, deliver me from all evil.” Praying thus, she was loosed from the bonds of her mortal body on the 16th of November, 1093, in the forty-seventh year of her age. She was canonized by Pope Innocent IV. in 1251. Her feast was removed by Innocent XII. in 1693, from the day of her death to the 10th of June. Her body was interred, according to her desire, in the church which she had built in honour of the Holy Trinity, at Dumfermlin, fifteen miles from Edinburgh.<sup>1</sup> At the change of religion in Scotland, the remains of St. Margaret and her husband were privately rescued from the plundering mob, and the principal parts afterwards carried into Spain, when King Philip II. built a chapel in the palace of the Escorial, in honour of St. Margaret, for their reception. They still continue there, with this inscription on the shrine: “St. Malcolm, King, and St. Mary, Queen.” But the head of St. Margaret having been carried to Edinburgh, to Queen Mary Stuart, after her flight into England, it was by a Benedictin monk conveyed to Antwerp, in 1597, and afterwards by him given to the Scots Jesuits at Douay, in whose church it is still kept in a silver case.<sup>2</sup>

The succession of saints which in the posterity of St. Margaret afterwards filled the throne of Scotland, the sanctification of a court, and of a kingdom, was, under God, the fruit of her zeal and pious example: so great and public a blessing is a virtuous wife, and a virtuous mother of a family. Every neighbour is bound at least by example and prayer, especially every parent, master, and mistress, also by correction and exhortation, to endeavour to impart to others, particularly those under their care, this inestimable happiness of piety. As St. Charles Bor-

(1) Fordun, Scoti-Chron. ed. Hearne, t. ii. lib. v. c. 21, p. 425.

(2) See Bolland. Acta Sanct.

romeo inculcates,<sup>1</sup> parents can leave no treasure to their children, nor can masters bestow on servants any recompence for their fidelity in any respect comparable to this of virtue. Let all superiors who neglect this duty tremble, and reflect that an account will be required of them at the dreadful tribunal of Christ for the sins of those under their care, which by a faithful discharge of their duty they might have prevented. In this sense, as Austin observes, is every master bound to be bishop or pastor of his family; and every Christian, at least by example, to his neighbour. But, alas! how many make themselves apostles of Satan, and become to others an odour, not of life, but of death. The baneful example of tepidity and sin, especially in those who are placed in authority, lays families, and the whole world, desolate; for to the influence of scandal is owing the universal inundation of vice, ignorance, and insensibility with regard to spiritual duties, which no floods of tears can ever sufficiently lament. On this account is the world declared the enemy of Christ, and is loaded with his curses.

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