



THE PROLOGUE.

TO the honourable and excellent Matilda, queen of the English, T[urgot],¹ servant of the servants of St Cuthbert, sends the blessing of peace and health in this present life, and in that which is to come the chief good of all good things.

§ 1. You have, by the request you made to me, commanded me (for a request of yours is to me a command) to offer you in writing the story of the life of your mother, whose memory is held in veneration. How acceptable that life was to God you have often heard by the concordant praise of many. You remind me how in this matter my evidence is especially trustworthy, since (thanks to her great and familiar intercourse with me) you have understood that I am

¹ *Theodericus* in the "Acta Sanctorum," and in Pinkerton's edition. In the Cotton. MS., at the end of the paragraph, there are added, in a hand of the seventeenth century, *Per Turgotum Dunelmensem*.

acquainted with the most part of her secrets. These your commands and wishes I willingly obey; nay, more, I venerate them exceedingly, and I respectfully congratulate you—whom the King of the Angels has raised to the rank of Queen of England—on this, that you desire not only to hear about the life of your mother, who ever yearned after the Kingdom of the Angels, but further, to have it continually before your eyes in writing, in order that, although you were but little familiar with her face, you might at least have a perfect acquaintance with her virtues.

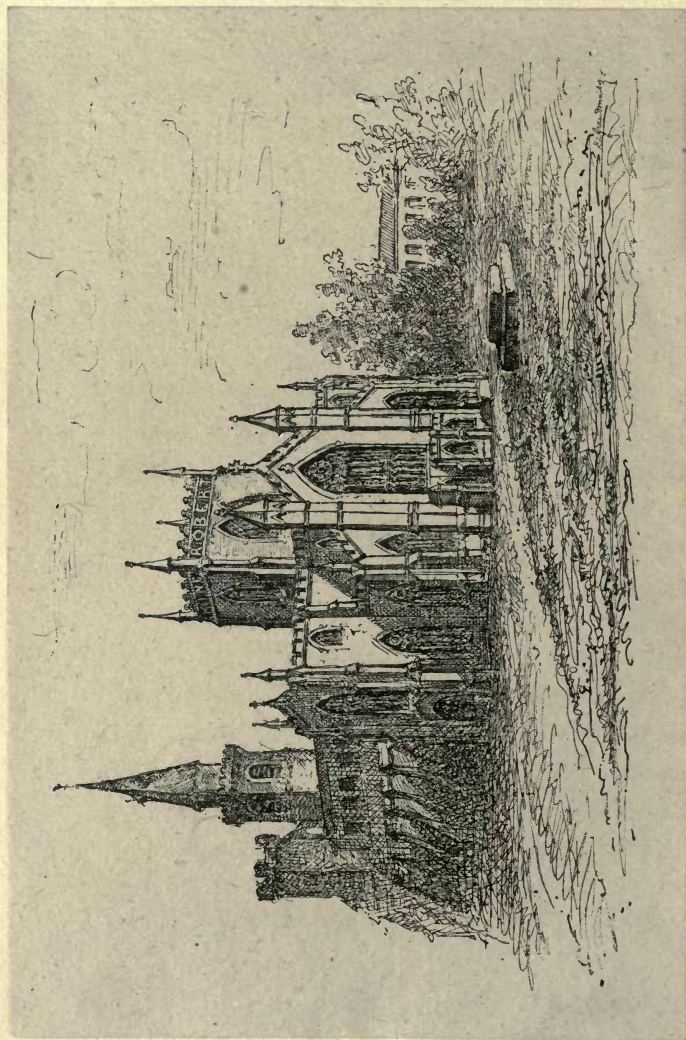
For my part, my own wish inclines me to do what you bid, but I have, I do own, a lack of ability: as the materials forsooth for this undertaking are more than my writing or my words can avail to set forth.

§ 2. So I am in two minds and drawn two ways at once. On the one hand, the greatness of the subject makes me shrink from obeying; on the other, I dare not refuse because of the authority of you who command me, and the memory of her of whom I am to speak. I cannot do justice to my subject, but my duty is to make it known

so far as I can. I owe this to the love I have for her, and to the obedience which is due from me to you. I trust that the grace of the Holy Spirit, which gave her such powers for good, will to me vouchsafe also the ability to recount them. "The Lord shall give the word to them that preach good tidings with great power." (Ps. lxxvii. 12.)¹

§ 3. In the first place, then, it is my wish that you should know, and others through you, that were I to attempt to recount all I could tell to her honour, it might be thought that, under cover of your mother's praises, I was flattering your own queenly dignity. But far be it from my grey hairs to mingle falsehood with the virtues of such a woman as she was, in unfolding which I profess—as God is my Witness and my Judge—that I add nothing to the truth. On the contrary, I suppress many things, fearing that they might appear incredible, and I might be charged (as the orator says) with decking out the crow in the plumage of the swan.

¹ "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," (Ps. lxxxvii. 10). "For no one can fail in the Word who believes in the Word." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God." (St John i. 1.)



ST MARGARET'S TOMB, DUNFERMLINE ABBEY.



CHAPTER I.

ST MARGARET'S NOBLE DESCENT. HER VIRTUES
AS A QUEEN AND AS A MOTHER.

§ 4.

MANY, as we read, have got their name from a quality of their mind, so that in their regard there is shown a correspondence between the word of their name and the grace they have received. Peter was so named from "the Rock," that is Christ, in token of the firmness of his faith; John, which means "the grace of God," from his contemplation of the Divinity, and his prerogative of Divine love; and the sons of Zebedee were styled Boanerges, that is, "the sons of thunder," because they thundered forth the preaching of the Gospel. The same thing was true of this virtuous woman, for the fairness which was pre-shadowed in her name was eclipsed by the surpassing beauty of her

soul. She was called Margaret, and in the sight of God she showed herself to be a pearl, precious in faith and works. She was indeed a pearl to you, to me, to all of us, yea, to Christ Himself, and being Christ's she is all the more ours now that she has left us, having been taken to the Lord. This pearl, I repeat, has been removed from the dunghill of the present world, and now she shines in her place among the jewels of the Eternal King. Of this no one, I think, will doubt, who reads the following narrative of her life and death. When I call to mind her conversations with us, seasoned as they were with the salt of wisdom; when I bethink me of her tears wrung from the compunction of her heart; when I regard her staidness and the even balance of her manners; when I remember her affability and prudence, I rejoice while I lament, and in lamenting I rejoice. I rejoice, because she has passed away to God, after whom she yearned; and I grieve because I am not rejoicing along with her in the heavenly places. I rejoice for her, because she now sees, in the land of the living, those good things of the Lord

in which she had believed ; but for myself I mourn, because so long as I suffer the miseries of this mortal life in the land of the dead, so long am I constrained to exclaim day by day : “ Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ! ” ¹

§ 5. Since, then, I am about to speak of that nobility of the mind which she had in Christ, it is fitting that something should be premised as to her nobility according to this world. Her grandfather was that King Edmund who had earned an honourable surname from his matchless valour, for he was staunch in fight and not to be overcome by his enemies ; and therefore he was called in English “ The Ironside.” His brother on his father’s side, but not on his mother’s, was the most religious and meek Edward, who proved himself a father to his country, which, like another Solomon (that is, a lover of peace), he protected rather by peace than arms. His was a spirit which overcame anger, despised avarice, and was utterly free from pride. And no wonder ; for as from his ancestors he drew the glory of his

¹ Rom. vii. 24.

kingly rank, so from them too he inherited his nobility of life. He was descended from Edgar, King of the English, and Richard, Count of the Normans, his grandfathers on either side; not only most illustrious, but also most religious men. Of Edgar it may briefly be said (if we would do justice to his worth as well in this world as in Christ), that he was marked out beforehand as a king at once just and peaceful. For at his birth St Dunstan heard the holy angels rejoicing in heaven and singing with great joy: "Let there be peace, let there be joy in the Church of the English as long as this new-born child shall hold his kingdom and Dunstan run the course of this mortal life."

§ 6. Richard also, father to Emma the mother of this Edward, was an ancestor worthy of so illustrious a grandchild; he was a man of energy and worthy of all praise. None of his forefathers had attained greater prosperity and honour in his earldom of Normandy, nor was any of them more fervent in religion. Though of great wealth, he was poor in spirit, like a second David; though raised to be lord over his people, he was the

most humble servant of the servants of Christ. Among other memorials of his love of religion, this devout worshipper founded the noble monastery of Fécamp, in which it was his frequent custom to stay with the religious. There, in habit a secular but in heart a monk, he placed the food of the brethren on the table where they were eating their silent meals and served them with drink ; so that, according to the Scriptures, "The greater he was, by so much the more did he humble himself to all."¹ If anyone wishes to be more fully acquainted with his works of magnificence and virtue, let him read the book called "The Acts of the Normans,"² which contains his history. Edward, the grandchild of such forefathers, did in no way degenerate from their renown and excellence. As already has been said, he was the brother of King Edmund on the father's side only ; from whose son came Margaret, who by the splendour of her merits completes the glory of this illustrious pedigree.

§ 7. Whilst Margaret was yet in the flower of youth, she began to lead a very strict life, to

¹ Eccl. iii. 20.

² See Duchesne, "*Historiæ Normannorum Scriptores.*"

love God above all things, to employ herself in the study of the Divine writings, and therein with joy to exercise her mind. Her understanding was keen to comprehend any matter, whatever it might be; to this was joined a great tenacity of memory, enabling her to store it up, along with a graceful flow of language to express it.

§ 8. While thus she was meditating upon the law of the Lord day and night, and, like another Mary sitting at His feet, and delighted to hear His word, rather in obedience to the will of her friends than to her own, yea by the appointment of God, she was married to Malcolm, son of King Duncan, the most powerful king of the Scots. But although she was compelled to do as the world does, she thought it beneath her dignity to fix her affection upon the things of the world, so that good works delighted her more than riches. By means of her temporal possessions she earned for herself the rewards of heaven; for there, where her heart was, she had placed her treasure also. And since before all things she sought the kingdom of God and His justice,¹ the bountiful grace of the Almighty freely

¹ St. Matth. vi. 33.

added to her honours and riches in abundance. This prudent queen directed all such things as it was fitting for her to regulate; the laws of the realm were administered by her counsel; by her care the influence of religion was extended, and the people rejoiced in the prosperity of their affairs. Nothing was firmer than her fidelity, steadier than her favour, or juster than her decisions; nothing was more enduring than her patience, graver than her advice, or more pleasant than her conversation.

§ 9. She had no sooner attained this eminent dignity, than she built an eternal memorial of her name and devotion in the place where her nuptials had been held.¹ The noble church which she erected there in honour of the Holy Trinity was to serve a threefold purpose; it was intended for the redemption of the king's soul, for the good of her own, and for securing to her children prosperity in this life and in that which is to come. This church she beautified with rich gifts of various kinds, amongst which, as is well known, were many vessels of pure and solid gold for

¹ Dunfermline.

the sacred service of the altar, about which I can speak with the greater certainty since, by the queen's orders, I myself, for a long time, had all of them under my charge. She also placed there a cross of priceless value, bearing the figure of our Saviour, which she had caused to be covered with the purest gold and silver studded with gems, a token even to the present day of the earnestness of her faith. She left proofs of her devotion and fervour in various other churches, as witness the Church of St Andrews, in which is preserved a most beautiful crucifix erected by her there, and to be seen even at the present day. Her chamber was never without such objects, those I mean which appertained to the dignity of the divine service. It was, so to say, a workshop of sacred art : copes for the cantors, chasubles, stoles, altar-cloths, and other priestly vestments and church ornaments, were always to be seen, either already made, of an admirable beauty, or in course of preparation.¹

¹ Not only in Saxon or Celtic times, but until the Reformation, one of the principal occupations of ladies was to work exquisite vestments for churches, so that the old poet thus addresses them :—

§ 10. These works were entrusted to certain women-of noble birth and approved gravity of manners, who were thought worthy of a part in the queen's service. No men were admitted among them, with the sole exception of such as she permitted to enter along with herself when she paid the women an occasional visit. There was no giddy pertness among them, no light familiarity between them and the men; for the queen united so much strictness with her sweetness of temper, so pleasant was she even in her severity, that all who waited upon her, men as

“And ye, lovely ladies,
With your longe fyngres,
That ye have silk and sandel
To sowe when tyme is
Chesibles for chapelynes,
Churches to honoure.”

(*Vision of Piers Plowman*, vol. i.
p. 117, ed. Wright).

English ladies were so famous for embroidery in solid gold wire or gold thread, that it was called *Opus Anglicum*. (See Rock's Introduction to "Catalogue of Textile Fabrics in South Kensington Museum," and "Church of our Fathers," vol. ii. p. 276.)

well as women, loved her while they feared her, and in fearing loved her. Thus it came to pass that while she was present no one ventured to utter even one unseemly word, much less to do aught that was objectionable. There was a gravity in her very joy, and something stately in her anger. With her, mirth never expressed itself in fits of laughter, nor did displeasure kindle into fury. Sometimes she chid the faults of others—her own always—with that commendable severity tempered with justice which the Psalmist directs us unceasingly to employ, when he says, “Be ye angry, and sin not.” Every action of her life was regulated by the balance of the nicest discretion, which impressed its own distinctive character upon each single virtue. When she spoke, her conversation was seasoned with the salt of wisdom; when she was silent, her silence was filled with good thoughts. So thoroughly did her outward bearing correspond with the staidness of her character that it seemed as if she had been born the pattern of a virtuous life. I may say, in short, every word that she uttered, every act that she

performed, shewed that she was meditating upon the things of heaven.

§ 11. Nor was she less careful about her children than she was about herself. She took all heed that they should be well brought up, and especially that they should be trained in virtue. Knowing that it is written: "He that spareth the rod hateth his son,"¹ she charged the governor who had the care of the nursery to curb the children, to scold them, and to whip them whenever they were naughty, as frolicsome childhood will often be. Thanks to their mother's religious care, her children surpassed in good behaviour many who were their elders; they were always affectionate and peaceable among themselves, and everywhere the younger paid due respect to the elder. Thus it was that during the solemnities of the Mass, when they went up to make their offerings after their parents, never on any occasion did the younger venture to precede the elder; the custom being for the elder to go before the younger according to the

¹ Prov. xiii. 24.

order of their birth.¹ She frequently called them to her, and carefully instructed them about Christ and the things of Christ, as far as their age would permit, and she admonished them to love Him always. "O, my children," said she, "fear the Lord; for they who fear Him shall lack nothing,² and if you love Him, He will give you, my darlings, prosperity in this life and everlasting happiness with all the saints." Such were this mother's wishes for her little ones, such her admonitions, such her prayers for them, poured out night and day with tears. She prayed that they might confess their Maker through the faith which works by love,³ that confessing they might worship Him, worshipping might love Him in all things and above all things, and loving

¹ Royal and noble personages were accustomed to make their offering at Mass. To do this they left their places, and advancing to the altar or to the entrance of the chancel, placed their gift in the hand of the celebrant or of the deacon. On this subject see "History of the Holy Eucharist in Great Britain," by Father Bridgett, vol. ii. p. 212; "Lay Folk's Mass Book," edited by Canon Simmons, pp. 231-248.

² Psalm xxxiii. 10.

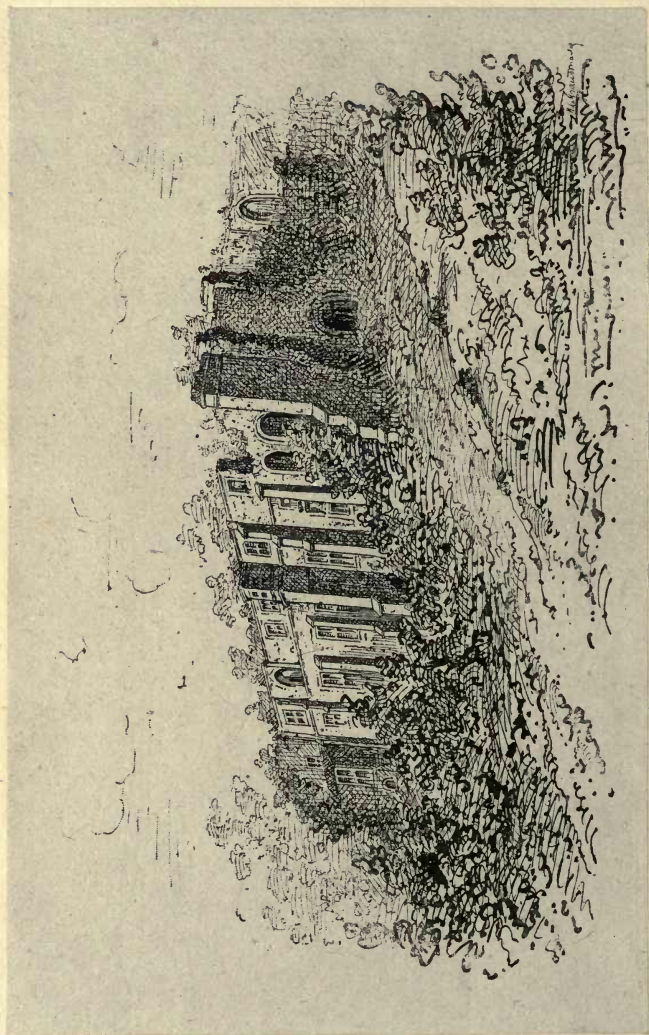
³ Ep. ad Gal. v. 6.

might attain to the glory of the heavenly kingdom.¹

¹ It is owing in great measure to this virtuous education given by Margaret to her sons that Scotland was governed for the space of 200 years, by seven excellent kings, that is, by her three sons, Edgar, Alexander, David, by David's two grandsons, Malcolm IV. and William, and William's son and grandson, Alexander II. and III.; during which space the nation enjoyed greater happiness than perhaps it ever did before or after. (Cf. Mr Innes, "Sketches of Scottish History," p. 158; Mr Hill Burton, "History of Scotland," vol. ii. pp. 190-198; Mr Robertson, "Scotland under her Early Kings," vol. ii. pp. 171-180.)

Orderic ("Migne," vol. 188, p. 620) wrote panegyrics on the three brothers, and especially on David; but it is William of Malmesbury who is especially emphatic on the unparalleled purity of life of all three. One child only, Edmund, is spoken of as falling away from the bright example of his parent. But Edmund repented sincerely, and became a monk at Montacute, a monastery founded by William the Conqueror in Somersetshire. (Cf. "Will. Malms. Gest. Reg. Angl.," v. § 400.)

The princesses, Matilda and Mary, were placed by their uncle Eadgar in the Abbey of Romsey, of which his surviving sister, Christina, was abbess. A few years later she followed her aunt Christina to Wilton Abbey, which was the place of nurture and education for many young princesses of the Anglo-Saxon royal families.



RUINS OF THE ROYAL PALACE, DUNFERMLINE.