



CHAPTER II.

HER CARE FOR THE HONOUR OF THE REALM
AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH.

§ 12.

NOR need we wonder that the queen governed herself and her household wisely when we know that she herself acted always under the wisest of masters, the guidance of the Holy Scriptures. I myself have had frequent opportunities of admiring in her how, even amidst the distractions of lawsuits, amidst the countless cares of state, she devoted herself with wonderful assiduity to the word of God, about which she used to ask profound questions from the learned men who were sitting near her. But just as no one among them possessed a deeper intellect than herself, so none had the power of clearer expression. Thus it very often happened that these doctors went from her

wiser men by much than when they came. She sought with a religious earnestness for those sacred volumes, and oftentimes her affectionate familiarity with me urged me to exert myself to obtain them for her use.¹ Not that in doing this she cared for her own salvation only; she thought of that of others too.

§ 13. First of all, in regard to King Malcolm: by the help of God she made him most attentive to the works of justice, mercy, almsgiving, and

¹ In the Middle Ages the Bible was comparatively seldom formed into one volume, and more commonly existed in its different parts. Even in the earliest periods we meet with notices of translations of numerous portions of the Inspired Writings into the various modern languages, and many copies of these different versions still remain in preservation. We know of translations of the Bible into sixteen modern languages, all made between the fourth and fifteenth centuries; and these must obviously have been made for the use of the laity, since the Scriptures were read by the monks and clergy in Latin, then the universal tongue of learned Christendom. Often, indeed, this purpose was openly avowed. Thus Ælfric avers that he rendered the Scriptures into the vernacular "For the Edification of the Simple, who Know only that Language" (MSS. Camb. Wanley, 153). On this subject see Maitland's celebrated work "The Dark Ages," p. 187, *et seq.* (Cf. L. A. Buckingham's "The Bible in the Middle Ages," L. 1853, p. 45, *et seq.*)

other virtues. From her he learnt how to keep the vigils of the night in constant prayer; she instructed him by her exhortation and example how to pray to God with groanings from the heart and abundance of tears. I was astonished, I confess, at this great miracle of God's mercy when I perceived in the king such a steady earnestness in his devotion, and I wondered how it was that there could exist in the heart of a man living in the world such an entire sorrow for sin. There was in him a sort of dread of offending one whose life was so venerable; for he could not but perceive from her conduct that Christ dwelt within her; nay, more, he readily obeyed her wishes and prudent counsels in all things. Whatever she refused, he refused also; whatever pleased her, he also loved for the love of her. Hence it was that, although he could not read, he would turn over and examine books which she used either for her devotions or her study; and whenever he heard her say that she was fonder of one of them than the others, this one he too used to look at with special affection, kissing it, and often taking it into his

hands. Sometimes he sent for a worker in precious metals, whom he commanded to ornament that volume with gold and gems, and when the work was finished, the king himself used to carry the volume to the queen as a kind proof of his devotion.

§ 14. The queen on her side, herself a noble gem of royal race, much more ennobled the splendour of her husband's kingly magnificence, and contributed no little glory and grace to the entire nobility of the realm and their retainers. It was due to her that the merchants who came by land and sea from various countries brought along with them for sale different kinds of precious wares which until then were unknown in Scotland. And it was at her instigation that the natives of Scotland purchased from these traders clothing of various colours, with ornaments to wear; so that from this period, through her suggestion, new costumes of different fashions were adopted, the elegance of which made the wearers appear like a new race of beings.¹ She

¹ Hence, Lord Hailes conjectures that perhaps we owe to her the introduction of what we call Tartan. ("Hailes, Ann. Scot." vol. i. p. 37).

also arranged that a higher class of attendants should wait upon the king, by a large body of whom he should be accompanied in great state whenever he either walked or rode abroad. This was carried out with such discipline that, wherever they came, none of them was suffered to take anything from anyone, nor did they dare in any way to oppress or injure country people or the poor. Further, she added to the state of the royal palace, so that not only was it brightened by the many-coloured apparel worn in it, but the whole dwelling blazed with gold and silver; since the vessels employed for serving the food and drink to the king and the nobles of the realm were of gold and silver, or at least were gilt and plated.

§ 15. All this the queen did, not because the honours of the world delighted her, but because duty compelled her to discharge what the kingly dignity required. For even as she walked in state, robed in royal splendour, she, like another Esther, in her heart trod all these trappings under foot, and bade herself remember that beneath the gems and gold there was but dust and ashes.

In short, in her exalted dignity she was always especially watchful to preserve her humility. It was easy for her to repress all vain glory arising from worldly splendour, since her soul never lost sight of this frail life's transitory nature. She always bore in mind that text which describes our condition in this our unstable humanity: "Man, born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries. Who cometh forth as a flower and is destroyed, and fleeth as a shadow, and never continueth in the same state."¹ She meditated without ceasing upon that passage of the Blessed Apostle James, who says: "What is our life? It is a vapour which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards shall vanish away."² And because, as the Scripture says, "Blessed is the man that is always fearful,"³ this worthy queen made it easier for her to shun sin by placing ever before her soul's eyes, tremblingly and fearfully, the terrible day of judgment. With this thought she frequently entreated me to have no hesitation in rebuking her in private whenever I saw anything worthy of blame either in her words or

¹ Job xiv. 1, 2. ² St Jas. iv. 15. ³ Prov. xxviii. 14.

actions. As I did this less frequently and sharply than she wished, she urged the duty on me, and chid me for being drowsy (so to speak) and negligent towards her; "for," as she said, "the just man shall correct me in mercy and shall reprove me; but let not the oil," that is, the flattery, "of the sinner fatten my head."¹ "Better are the wounds of a friend than the deceitful kisses of an enemy."² She could speak thus because she courted censure as helping to her progress in virtue, where another might have reckoned it a disgrace.

§ 16. Journeying thus onwards towards the heavenly country in thought and word and deed, this devout and god-worthy queen called on others to accompany her in the undefiled way, so that they with her might attain true happiness. When she saw wicked men she admonished them to be good, the good to become better, the better to strive to be best. The zeal of God's house (that is, of the Church) had so consumed her that with apostolic faith she laboured to root up all weeds which had lawlessly sprung up therein. Observing that many practices existed

¹ Ps. cxl. 5.

² Prov. xxvii. 6.

among the Scottish nation which were contrary to the rule of the right faith and the holy customs of the universal Church, she caused frequent councils to be held, in order that by some means or other she might, through the gift of Christ, bring back into the way of truth those who had gone astray.

§ 17. Among these councils the most important is that in which for three days she, with a very few of her friends,¹ combated the defenders of a perverse custom with the sword of the Spirit, that is to say, with the word of God.² It seemed as if a second Helena were there present, for just as she in former days by citing passages from the Scriptures overcame the Jews, so in our times did this queen those who were in error. In this discussion the king himself took part as an

¹ The names of those friends are not given by Turgot. But we know from other sources that Margaret had requested Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, to become her spiritual father. In conformity with this solicitation, Lanfranc despatched to her three of his brethren, the senior being the English Goldwine, or Godwin, as the foundation of a renovated establishment. (Letter of Lanfranc to Queen Margaret; "Migne, Patres Latini," Sæc. xi. Col. 549.)

² Ep. ad Ephes. vi. 17.

assessor and chief actor, being fully prepared both to say and do whatever she might direct in the matter at issue. And as he knew the English language quite as well as his own, he was in this council a very careful interpreter for either side.

§ 18. The queen introduced the subject under discussion by premising that all who serve one God in one faith along with the Catholic Church ought not to vary from that Church by new or far-fetched usages. She then laid it down, in the first place, that the fast of Lent was not kept as it ought to be by such persons as were in the habit of beginning it on the Monday of the week following, thus differing from the Holy Catholic Church, which begins it on the fourth day of the week at the commencement of Lent. The others objected thus : "The fast which we observe we keep according to the authority of the Gospel, which reports that Christ fasted for six weeks." She replied by saying : "Herein you differ widely from the Gospel, wherein we read that our Lord fasted for forty days, a thing which notoriously you do not do. For seeing that during the six weeks you deduct the six Sundays from the fast,

it is clear that thirty-six days only remain on which to fast. Plainly, then, the fast which you keep is not that fast of forty days which is commanded by the Gospel, but consists of six and thirty days only. It comes then to this, you ought to do as we do. Like us, you should begin your fast four days before the commencement of Lent; that is, if you wish, according to our Lord's example, to observe an abstinence of forty days. If you do not do this, you will be the only persons who are acting in opposition to the authority of our Lord Himself and the tradition of the entire Holy Church." Convinced by this plain demonstration of the truth, these persons began henceforth the solemnities of the fasts as Holy Church does everywhere.

§ 19. The queen now raised another point; she asked them to explain why it was that on the festival of Easter they neglected to receive the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, according to the usage of the Holy and Apostolic Church? They answered her thus: "The Apostle when speaking of persons who eat and drink unworthily, says, that they eat and drink

judgment to themselves.¹ Now, since we admit that we are sinners, we fear to approach that mystery, lest we should eat and drink judgment to ourselves." "What!" said the queen to them; "Shall no one that is a sinner taste that holy mystery? If so, then it follows that no one at all should receive it, for no one is pure from sin; no, not even the infant, whose life is but one day upon the earth. And if no one ought to receive it, why did the Lord make this proclamation in the Gospel? 'Except you shall eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you.'² But if you would understand the passage which you have quoted from the Apostle according to the interpretation of the Fathers, then you must give it quite a different meaning. The Evangelist does not hold that all sinners are unworthy of the sacraments of salvation; for after saying 'He eateth and drinketh judgment to himself,' he adds, 'Not discerning the Body of the Lord;'³ that is, not distinguishing it by faith from bodily

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 29.

² St John vi. 54.

³ 1 Cor. xi. 29.

food. It is the man who, without confession and penance, but carrying with him the defilements of his sins presumes to approach the sacred mysteries, such an one, I say it is, who eats and drinks judgment to himself. Whereas we who many days previously have made confession of our sins and have been cleansed from their stains by chastening penance, by trying fasts, by almsgiving and tears—approaching in the Catholic faith to the Lord's Table on the day of His Resurrection, receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, the immaculate Lamb, not to judgment but to the remission of our sins, and as a health-giving preparation for eternal happiness." To these arguments they could not answer a word, and knowing now the meaning of the Church's practices, observed them ever after in the sacrament of salvation.

§ 20. Again, there were certain places in Scotland in which Masses were celebrated according to some sort of barbarous rite, contrary to the usage of the whole Church. Fired by the zeal of God, the Queen attempted to root out and abolish this custom, so that henceforth, from the

whole of Scotland, there was not one single person who dared to continue the practice.¹

It was another custom of theirs to neglect the reverence due to the Lord's Day by devoting themselves to every kind of worldly

¹ Turgot, unfortunately, does not say in what the barbarousness of the rites consisted. On this subject, says the late Dr Forbes, we cannot do better than quote the words of that learned antiquary, the Right Reverend Bishop Kyle: "The contemporary biographer of St Margaret tells us that certain priests in Scotland followed, in celebrating Mass, a rite which to him and the Queen appeared barbarous: which rite she laboured so effectually to abolish, that none in Scotland in his time adhered to it." I suspect that in this last point he was mistaken. For we learn that the Keledei (*Cele De*, one who has devoted himself to the service of God), long after St Margaret's days, were permitted to observe in their own churches or chapels a rite different from what was followed by the rest of the Scottish clergy. The rite of the Keledei was probably the same with that which St Margaret wished to bring into conformity with the general use of the Western Church; but neither her biographer nor the chronicles of the Culdean observance give us the least hint wherein its peculiarity consisted. (Lib. Ecclesiæ B. Terrenani de Arbutnot, p. liv.) There is no mention of Culdees in Scotland until the ninth century, as Chalmers testifies. They were secular canons who had been established since the ninth century. But although they were for the most part clerics, the name seems to have been given also to pious, unmarried laymen, inasmuch as they formed a community, and lived together. The later

business upon it just as they did upon other days. That this was contrary to the law, she proved to them as well by reason as by authority. "Let us venerate the Lord's Day," said she, "because of the resurrection of our Lord, which happened upon that day, and let us no longer do servile works upon it; bearing in mind that upon this day we were redeemed from the slavery of the devil. The blessed Pope Gregory affirms the same, saying: 'We must cease from earthly labour upon the Lord's Day and we must devote ourselves entirely to prayer, so that upon the day of our Lord's resurrection we may make expiations for such negligences as we may have committed during the six days.'"¹ The same Father, Gregory, after censuring with the greatest severity a certain piece of worldly business which had been done on the Lord's Day,

Bollandists have likewise come to the conclusion that they were secular canons or brothers, and appeared, at soonest, in the year 800. (Bollandists, vol. viii., Oct., p. 86: *Disquisitio in Culdæos*, cf. Dr Reeves, "The Culdees of the British Islands," Dublin, 1864.)

¹ "Ep. S. Gregorii Magni," lib. xiii., c. 1 opp. ii. p. 1214, ed. Bened.

decreed that the persons who had advised it should be excommunicated for two months. These arguments of the queen were unanswerable; and from this time forward these prudent men paid such respect to her earnestness that no one dared on these days either to carry any burdens himself or to compel another to do so.

§ 21. Next, she proved how utterly abominable, yea more to be shunned by the faithful than death itself, was the unlawful marriage of a man with his step-mother, as also that the surviving brother should take to wife the widow of his deceased brother; both of which customs had heretofore prevailed in this country. In this council she succeeded in condemning and expelling from her realm many other inveterate abuses which had gained a footing herein, contrary to the Rule of Faith and the institutions and observances of the Church. For everything that she proposed she supported so strongly by the testimonies of the Sacred Scriptures and the teaching of the holy Fathers, that no one on the opposite side could say one word against them;

may, rather, giving up their obstinacy and yielding to reason, they willingly consented to adopt all she recommended.¹

¹ Even the smallest circumstances of every-day life were sought out by St Margaret and put to spiritual profit. Having observed that many neglected to give due thanks to God after meals, she introduced the practice of drinking a health at rising from table to those who had complied with that duty. Hence it was called the *Grace Drink*, or St Margaret's Blessing.

A similar custom is related in some Anglo-Saxon chronicles. On high festivals and other solemn occasions, to the abbot or prior of the monastery there was brought a large bowl filled with wine, of which he drank a little, and handed this "poculum charitatis," or love-cup, to his monks, each of whom took a short draught in a like manner: after this ceremony, which was meant as a symbol of brotherly affection and good will one towards another, was said grace, which finished with a prayer for their benefactors alive and dead (Cod. Dip. Anglo Sax. v. iv., p. 304). A shadow of this Anglo-Saxon custom may yet be seen in the grace-cup of the universities, and the loving-cup passed round among the guests at the great dinners given by the Lord Mayor of London.

Not many years ago, in Germany as well as Belgium, this custom was still kept up, of sending round the loving-cup at grace after dinner. (Cf. Rock, "The Church of our Fathers," vol. ii., p. 335 *et seq.*)