

II.

¹Life of St. Margaret.²

HERE IS THE PROLOGUE BEFORE THE LIFE OF SAINT MARGARET.

The praise, and honour, and reward which are paid to a good man, after he has gained the victory, will cause other persons to perform the same goodness, to obtain similar honour, praise, and rewards thereby, having seen from the epistles, and from many correct witnesses, and having preached from them that the Son of God had taken our nature in the womb of the Lady Mary; and in that tender earthly nature had suffered on our account hunger and thirst, and labour, nakedness, and the want of necessaries; and at last had been betrayed, and sold to sinners, those who bound him, and scourged him, and buffeted him, and spat in his eyes, and through false testimony adjudged him to death, whilst he was innocent; and after he had been unjustly condemned, had suffered all without complaint, and without grief had been crucified and buried, to overcome the

¹ From the Cott. MSS. in the British Museum, Titus D. XXII.

² According to the ancient Martyrologies, Saint Margaret suffered at Antioch, in Pisidia, in the last general persecution. She is said to have been instructed in the faith by a Christian nurse, and persecuted by her own father, a priest of the idols, and after many torments, to have gloriously finished her martyrdom by the sword. From the east her veneration was much propagated in England, France, and Germany, in the eleventh century during the holy wars.—Butler's Lives of the Saints, (Saint Margaret.)

The churches in the Welsh dioceses dedicated to St Margaret, are Roath in Glamorganshire, and St. Margaret's, Herefordshire.

wicked enemies of mankind, which are the world, the flesh, and the devil; and on account of that victory, he arose from the dead, and is praised by the whole creation. And God has given him a life without pain, and without death for ever; and he was raised to the height of heaven, and sat with God his father at his side, equally with him king over all creatures, and a judge of the living and the dead.

On which account therefore, as it was said in the beginning, having seen from the epistles, and heard and believed from people of all kinds, the sufferings of Jesus Christ and his victory, and his glory after the victory, male and female saints despised their frail temporal life in this world to obtain the dwelling with Jesus Christ in heaven; and through the suffering of the Son of God many persons parted with this world, and their temporal wealth, and became poor on account of God, as did the confessors; and others, who left off all carnal deeds, as did the virgins and some others; it was not sufficient for them to suffer martyrdom, for they gave up their souls and bodies on account of God. It is not true that they were all naturally able to endure, and had come to the age of discretion, for women and maidens and young persons, who naturally are fearful and ready to submit, and be overcome, through the grace of the Holy Spirit stood firm and immoveable against the enemies of Christ, and held belief in him until death.

And Saint Margaret was one of the principal male and female saints, who took delight to profess faith in Christ, and to suffer martyrdom for the sake of God, as is clear to every one that will see and hear her laudable life, which was compiled and written by Theoturus, a man who was full of faith and the wisdom of God, and was conversant in the depth of the Holy Scriptures; and thus he began to relate her life.

HERE IS THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED MARGARET.

The most blessed Margaret was the daughter of Theodosius, a dignified gentleman at that time; but he worshipped

false gods, and he had but one only daughter, who was Margaret herself, and she was faithful, and full of the Holy Spirit. After she was born, she was sent from the place of her birth to a city which was near Antioch, for twelve circles of instruction were there to be learned. And after the death of her mother, her nurse brought her up more carefully and diligently than she had been before; she was precise and very pure, and she believed in the true God, and prayed to him constantly. And when she was ten years of age, and in the house of her nurse where she liked to remain, she heard of the valour of the saints against unbelief, and their victory, and the great quantity of the blood of the male and female saints which was then shed for the love of God, and the name of Jesus Christ.

She therefore, being full of the Holy Spirit, gave herself up wholly to God, who defended her, and gave her grace to keep her integrity and chastity, as he gave to all virgins; and although she was nobly born and beautiful and beloved, yet she was humble, and did not refuse to attend to the sheep of her nurse with other maidens.

And it happened at that time that Oliver, the sovereign of the country of Asia, came to the city of Antioch, for the purpose of ensnaring the Christians, and to bring them to unbelief, and to command all persons, wherever he went, from one kingdom to another, to worship his gods, and despise Jesus Christ. And wherever he heard of a Christian being at the place, he ordered him to be bound with iron bands. And when he saw Saint Margaret keeping her nurse's sheep, he lusted after her, and said to his workmen, "Go quickly and lay hold of that maiden, and ask her if she is free; and if she is free, I will take her to be my wife, and my palace will be suitable to her on account of her beauty."

And after some of the knights, which the sovereign had sent, arrived, the glorious Margaret called on Jesus Christ, and spoke as follows, "Have mercy on me, Lord, have mercy, and destroy not my soul with the wicked men, nor lose my life with the cruel people; cause me, Lord Christ, to

take pleasure in thee when I worship thee. Prevent them, Lord, to adjudge my soul to punishment, nor to cause my belief to be corrupted, nor my body to rot through sin, and prevent the wicked filthiness, and folly of the devil. Remove not the understanding and belief that thou hast given to me, but send me an angel to govern me, and to teach me to answer without terror and full of hope, for, as I appear to be, I am as a sheep among wolves; I am like to a small sparrow, or a lark in the talons of a hawk, or a trout taken in a net. Assist me, Lord, deliver me, O Lord, and leave me not in the hands of sinners."

And when the knights, who had been sent to Margaret, heard her wisdom, and the words she had said, they returned to their lord, and said, "The maiden whom we have seen, does not fear thy power, and she will not serve thee, nor obey thy gods, but will worship Almighty God, and will preach Jesus Christ, the man whom the Jews crucified." And when Oliver heard these words, the colour of his cheeks changed, and he ordered her to be brought before him; and when she came, he said unto her, "From what race art thou born, and tell me if thou art free, and of noble birth." Margaret answered him, "I am free, and a Christian." The sovereign said, "What is thy name?" And she said, "I am called Margaret." Then he said, "what belief hast thou?" Margaret said, "I believe in God Almighty, and in Jesus Christ his Son and our Lord, the man who has hitherto preserved my integrity, and myself unensnared, and unpolluted."

And Oliver said, "If that is true, what thou hast said is to be regretted, and he, on whom thou dost call, must be the man whom the Jews crucified." And Margaret answered, "Thy forefathers crucified Jesus Christ, and therefore truly they are not innocent; but he will remain for ever, and there will be no end to his reign." And then the judge became angry, and ordered the blessed Margaret to be cast into prison, until he should invent and devise means how he might overcome her, and have her adjudged for her belief and integrity.

And thereon, he went from thence to the city of Antioch, which was near, to worship his gods, who were blind and dumb, and to request from them power to that effect. And at the end of the second day, he sat as judge in the place where judgment was administered, and he ordered the blessed Margaret to be brought before him. And after she came, he said unto her, "Have mercy on thy body and beauty and thy tender age, and attend to my advice; and worship my gods, and I will give to thee riches, and more honour than to any one of all my family." Saint Margaret answered, "God knows," said she, "no one has crossed my integrity, before thou didst attempt to cross me, nor removed me from the way of truth, which I began to keep and sustain, and have succeeded hitherto; and him I will worship, before whom the earth moved, the sea trembled, and the timid world became pale."

And then said the judge, "Unless thou wilt worship my gods, my sword shall pierce thee, and I will have the mastery over thy flesh and thy bones, and will cause them to be burnt; but if thou wilt attend to my advice, and believe and worship my gods, I will be a soul and a lover to thee." And Margaret then said, "It is true that I have given my integrity to another, so that I shall have rest with the holy virgins. Christ has given his soul and body to death for us, and I will give my soul and body also to him; I am not afraid of thy death, for Christ has marked me with the sign of his holy cross." And then Oliver, the judge, ordered his officers, the men who were accustomed to examine the Christians, and enquire of them how they believed, to raise her up in the air, and to beat her with small rods. And the blessed Margaret looked towards heaven, and said as follows, "In thee my Lord is my hope, prevent them from dishonouring me, prevent my enemies from mocking me, for whosoever has intercourse with thee, shall not be mocked nor dishonoured."

And on this, Margaret afterwards prayed a second time as follows, "Look upon me, and have mercy on me, O

Lord, and deliver me from the hands of wicked men, and from the power of this butcher, lest it may happen that I should tremble, and my heart fail for fear of him; send me medicine and health from heaven, that my wounds and my anguish may be lighter, and turn my pain to joy and pleasure for me." And as she thus prayed, they were beating her tender body, and the blood was running after the rods in streams, as water from a clear fountain. And with this, the apparitor said with a loud voice as follows, "Believe in the gods, Margaret, and he will make thee the chief of the maidens." And then, when those who were standing near saw the amount of her pain, and the quantity of her blood that was shed, they wept much on her account, and some of them said to her, "Knowest thou that we grieve to see the execution that is done on thy body, and it is wonderful that thou dost not see how much beauty thou dost lose on account of thy unbelief. Dost thou not see that the judge is angry and full of wrath against thee, and is desirous to destroy thee quickly from this world, and remove thy body from the earth; believe in him and live."

And Margaret answered, "Alas, for wicked counsellors! alas, for unrighteous judges! What do you request me to do? if my body is executed, my soul shall have rest and eternal joy, and therefore it is best for you to believe in the true God, who is able to open to you the gates of paradise; I will never worship your gods, which are dumb and deaf, and were made by men's hands." And then she said to the judge, "O shameless dog, perform the works of thy father, I have God to assist me, and when he will give thee possession, and power over my body, Jesus Christ will defend me, and take my soul out of thy hand.

And then the sovereign ordered a second time her body to be raised in the air, and her flesh to be rent, and torn with sharp rods; and then the blessed Margaret raised her heart to God, and looking towards heaven, she said, "The dogs have greatly encompassed me, and much wicked counsel is against me; but do thou, my God, see that thou be

my help, and take my soul by a two edged sword, and release me from the hands of this dog; strengthen me, Jesus Christ, and give me an animated spirit that my prayer may ascend to heaven, and send me an angel full of the Holy Spirit from heaven to assist me, so that I may preserve my integrity blameless, and contend face to face with whomsoever shall oppose me, until I shall see my enemy who fights against me, destroyed and overcome. Vanquish thou them, so that thou mayest communicate boldness and confidence to all virgins to confess and acknowledge thy blessed name for ever and ever."

These butchers shed her blood more and more, and tore her holy body, so that they, the cruel oppressors, hid their eyes with the skirt of their mantle, because they could not look on the dreadful punishment; and so did all who were about the place. And then the judge said, "How is this, Margaret, why dost thou not agree with me and worship my gods? and if thou wilt do so, thou shalt not be executed, but if thou wilt not, my sword shall bear rule, and pierce thy body, and thy bones shall be spread across the fire." And the blessed Margaret said, "O shameless, ungodly man, very wicked judge, have mercy on my body; according to thy advice my soul would be wholly lost, as is thine, and therefore I will give up my body to sufferings, so that my soul shall be crowned in heaven."

And then Oliver ordered her to be cast into prison about mid-day; and as she came within the prison, she put on herself the sign of the cross of Christ, and prayed as follows, "Lord God," said she, "thou dost distribute all just judgment by thy wisdom, before thee all the worlds tremble, thy fear is on every body; although great is their power, thou dost hope that they are without hope. O just judge, look upon me, for I was an only daughter of my father the man whom I left, and therefore, I beseech thee that thou wilt not leave me; cause me, O Lord, that I may see my enemy, who contends against me." And her nurse attended her with bread and water, through the window of the prison,

and heard her prayers, and resolved in her heart to be a constant visitor.

And then there suddenly appeared to her in a corner of the prison, a marvellous dragon, whose hair was of various colours, and his beard was that of gold, and his teeth were of iron, and his eyes were shining, and from his nostrils proceeded smoke and fire, and his tongue was fiery, and he had a hot sword in his hand, and he caused a bad smell and filthiness in the prison, and he uttered a strong rough voice, and fire from his mouth gave light to all the prison. And great fear seized Saint Margaret when she saw him, and she became pale like grass, and trembling seized her as one ready to die; all her bones shook, and she had no remembrance, so great was her fear of God having heard her prayer, and that he was showing to her the enemy who contended with her, for it was that which she besought in her prayer. And Margaret had already fallen on her knees to the ground, and raising her hands in prayer to God, said as follows, "God, who cannot be seen with eyes of the flesh, before whom the deeps tremble, who hast fortified paradise, and set bounds to the seas; thou hast robbed hell, thou hast overcome the devil, and hast kept guard over the wonderful great dragon, look upon me, and have mercy on me, and prevent this monster from injuring, who will shortly seek to swallow me." And while she was so saying, the dragon came with his mouth wide open, and fell on her, and swallowed her; but the sign of the cross which was put upon her, grew in the mouth of the dragon, and became greater and greater until it cleaved him into two portions.

And the blessed Margaret got up, harmless and uninjured, and therewith she saw on her left hand another devil with his hands bound, and on his knees; and when she saw that devil, she prayed as follows, and said, "I am glad and rejoice, Lord God, supporter of the world, Jesus Christ, the immortal wise Creator, and the beginning of innumerable saints and angels, the foundation of all material things, now

I see my belief bearing blossoms, now I see the joy of my soul; here I have seen the red dragon cast under my feet to the ground, here the bad smell and filthiness are removed, and I see his poison and madness have retreated from me; and turning to him again I see the sign of the cross in blossom, and I see my body with sweet perfumes, and I see light coming to me, I see my joy, here I am raised in health. The strong dragon I slew, and I trod him under my feet with the hope that I had in God, and therefore I will thank God, for thou art the protector and defender of all creatures. Thou art the victory of all the creatures and martyrs, thou art the governor of every one who lives, and thou art the Saviour of all mankind, and that for ever and ever. And may it be true, and that distant."

And whilst she said that in prayer, the devil came, and laid hold of the hand of the blessed Margaret, and said as follows, "Margaret," said he, "be satisfied with what thou hast done, rest therefore from afflicting my person, thy prayer is very constant and persevering; and I sent my red brother in the form of a dragon to swallow thee, and to destroy thy remembrance and name from the earth, and from this world, and to corrupt thy maidenhood, and destroy thy beauty, and thou didst kill him with the sign of the cross of Christ; and thou art trying by prayer to kill me also therewith.

And then Margaret laid hold of the devil by the hair of his head, and threw him to the ground, and put her foot on his neck, and said unto him, "Say nothing more respecting my maidenhood, I have God to assist me; rest, great wicked and wonderful devil, who dost injure mankind, cease from murder, Christ is my supporter; rest fiery, wicked monster, the author of hell; I am a lamb of Christ, and am gentle and at home in the true faith; I am a handmaiden to Christ, and a companion I am to God, the man who was blessed throughout all ages." And whilst she was thus saying, a light suddenly shone in the dwelling portion of the prison, and the sign of the cross was seen on

high, and from earth unto heaven. And therewith a dove descended on her shoulder, and said to her, "Thou wilt be happy, Margaret, for all the saints are waiting for thee in the gate of paradise."

And then said Margaret, "To thee, Lord, will I return thanks." And immediately afterwards she turned to the devil and said to him, "Tell me of what nature thou art," and the devil then said, "I beseech thee, handsome maiden, saint of God, to raise thy foot from off my neck, and I will relate to thee my proceedings." And so she did, and then said the devil, "Avenger is my name after Belzebub," (which means the god of flies, on account of the great number of flies which were on his image, owing to the blood of the animals which were slain in sacrifice before him;) "many of the works, and the labour of innocent persons have I swallowed to the middle of my belly, that is, several good works have I rendered of no value, and against every body I will fight, and no one hitherto has overcome me. And now I am not able to vanquish, owing to thee; it is evident that our power and strength can do nothing, when a young tender maiden can put us to shame, and reproach us in this manner." And he said much therewith, and then Margaret answered, "O most wicked devil, be immediately dumb, and say not a word, and go away."

And afterwards on another certain day, the judge ordered Margaret to be brought before him; and as she came out of the prison, she put the sign of the cross upon herself, and when she stood before him, he said to her, "Margaret, agree with me, and worship my gods, for I say it will be for thy benefit." The saint answered, "To thee, governor, I say that I will worship my God, and Jesus Christ his son." And he said, "Undress her, and hang her in the air, and burn her sides with consuming flames." And the officers did without delay what he ordered, and while they were burning her holy body, she prayed as follows. "My Lord God, burn my kidneys and my heart that there may be no iniquity in me." The judge said, "Be of the same

opinion with me, and sacrifice to my gods." Saint Margaret answered, "I will not be of the same opinion as thee, and I will not worship thy gods, which are dumb and deaf."

And then the judge ordered her head and feet to be bound, and commanded her to be cast into a vessel with hot water, and to punish and torment her therein. And the tormentors took her, and executed his orders; and the blessed Margaret raised her eyes towards heaven, and said, "My Lord, glorious for ever, break these bonds, and I will offer to thee a sacrifice of praise; cause that this water may be to me as the mild water of a fountain, be purity to me and evident deliverance, be agreeable without decrease and without defect. May a dove full of the Holy Spirit come to bless this water in thy name, and wash me therewith so that I may obtain eternal life. May this water strengthen my soul and enlighten my understanding, and deliver me from all my sins, and baptize me in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, who is blessed for ever and ever."

And in that hour there was a great commotion in the earth, and a dove came from heaven with a crown of gold in its beak, and therewith sat on the shoulder of the blessed Margaret. And her hands and feet were rendered free from the water, and her bonds were likewise loosed, and she went on her feet from the water with praising and blessing. And then she said, "The Lord God has reigned, and he is clothed with beauty, and with valour and fortitude, and with supreme strength and power."

And a voice was heard from heaven, saying to her, "Come, Margaret, to the rest and to the joy of Jesus Christ thy Lord; come to the kingdom of the heavenly country." And a second time the voice said, "Thou art happy, Margaret, for thou hast accepted the crown of pure life, and hast kept thy integrity." And at that time five thousand men believed, besides women and youths and maidens. And then the wicked Oliver ordered all to be

beheaded, who believed in Christ; and in an hour afterwards Oliver ordered Margaret to be beheaded with a sword; and the catch-poles laid hold of her and took her out of the city; and when they came to the place of execution, Malchus said to her, "Reach thy neck, and receive the stroke of the sword." And the blessed Margaret said, "Stop a little whilst I pray, and commend my spirit to the angels and the saints."

And Malchus said, "Worship as much as thou wilt, in the time which thou shalt have." And she began to pray, and said as follows, "God," said she, "who measurest the heaven and the earth with thy hand, and dost set bounds to the sea, and let no one think that God had a hand or a foot when he made the heaven and the earth and the seas; for the hand of God is strength and power, and wisdom, and has fixed measure and bounds to every creature, God," said she, "hearken to my prayer, and grant to every man, who shall write my life and relate my works, or shall read or shall hear them, that his name be written in the book of eternal life; and when he will request of thee pardon of his sins in my name, do not refuse him; and whosoever shall build a church in my name, or shall at his own expense have lights in the church on my account, do not bring him to thy remembrance to punish him for his wrongdoings, or his mischief; and whosoever in the great judgment shall be overtaken in doing wrong, if he call upon me, and worship my gate, deliver him from punishment; and whosoever will have with him in his house my works related, or life written, may he not have a jealous wife or heir, and prevent his having born to him a lame blind or dumb heir, and restrain the unclean spirit from deceiving him, and if he will request forgiveness of his sins, have mercy on him."

And whilst she was so saying, and much more in her prayer, there was very loud thunder, and with the thunder came a dove, and with it an image of the cross, and it conversed with the blessed Margaret. And for fear of the

thunder, and other signs, which all saw who were then about, they fell headlong on their faces to the ground. And when the blessed Margaret saw the miracles of God and his power, she fell before him, and the dove leaped on her and said to her, "Happy art thou, Margaret, among all women, and all things which thou hast requested in thy prayer, God will grant to thee, and come thou, my dear one, to the place that is prepared for thee, and I will open to thee the gate of the kingdom of heaven."

And then she took leave of all who were at the place, and commended them to God, and her own spirit she commended to the angels and saints of heaven. And when she had done praying, she raised herself up, and said to the man who came with the intention to behead her, "Take thy sword and now strike me." And he refused, on account of the manifest miracles of God which he had seen and heard. Saint Margaret said to him, "Unless thou wilt strike me, thou wilt not be partaker of the joy of paradise with me." And then the executioner made use of his sword, and beheaded her at one blow, and on having that blow, she prayed as follows, "Lord, do not reproach any one for the deed who performs this execution on me, nor punish him.

And as that was said, the man struck her, and she fell to the floor, and the angels of God descended, and took her soul to heaven, praising God, and saying as follows, "Lord God, there is no God like thee of all the gods, and there is no God who acts as thou dost; Holy, Holy, Holy art thou," (which they said three times on account of the Trinity,) "and Lord God of all hosts and all powers, heaven and earth are full of thy glory, heal us in the height of heaven. Blessed be the king of Israel, who cometh in the name of God." The sick, the lame, the deaf and dumb, and those who were possessed by dumb demons, and the maimed came to her to ask for deliverance, and a cure they obtained for their maladies and disorders through means of the blessed Margaret.

And I Theotenus took the body of the blessed Margaret and placed it in a sepulchre, having honourably anointed it with precious ointment; and I attended upon her whilst she was in prison, and I wrote an account of her victory and the disputations which she had with the wicked Oliver. And he caused her to suffer on the twelfth day before the calends of August, through the grace which is given us in our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who is living, and always will live, and will reign throughout all ages, without cessation, without end, for ever. To him be all true praise, and eternal glory from all creatures, and to us forgiveness of our sins, and true joy without defect and without end, with the Father Son and Holy Ghost. May it be true. AMEN.