

Saint Mechtilde

St. Mechtilde was born in 1241. Her father was Count de Hackeborn, head of one of the richest and noblest families of Saxony, so that her surroundings were all calculated to set this world and its attractions in their brightest light. But a love of perishable goods was to find no place in the heart of one whom God had singled out to be His, and His alone, from the first moment of her existence. That He had so chosen her was shown by a remarkable event which occurred at her birth. She was so weakly and fragile that when she was born she seemed on the point of death, and the attendants, in great alarm, hurried her off then and there to the parish priest to have Baptism administered before it was too late. The priest complied with their wish to have the child baptized; but, animated by a prophetic spirit, differed from them as to her danger. "Do not fear," he said; "this child will work great wonders, and she will end her days in a good old age." Afterwards Our Lord revealed to St. Mechtilde that He had caused her Baptism to be thus hastened that He might the more speedily take possession of the temple of her heart, which was destined to be consecrated forever to Him.

We have only one little incident of Mechtilde's childish years which shows that she had a touch of mischief in her character. It appears that she wanted to have a little fun, so she told the servants that there was a thief in the garden, and gave them all a fright and a hunt for nothing. In after years this little untruth caused her many tears; and, on her death-bed, it was the only breach of truth she could find with which to reproach herself.

When she was seven years old, her mother took her to see her sister Gertrude, who was a professed nun at the Benedictine Monastery of Rodardsdorf. As her mother and sister were talking together, Mechtilde ran off to carry out a little plan she had secretly formed. Going to each of the nuns in turn, she fell at their feet and begged them to allow her to share with them the privilege of being a Spouse of Christ. The nuns, of course, answered that they would be only too glad to welcome her among them, if she could obtain her mother's consent, and the little girl determined never again to leave the convent. When her mother wished to return home nothing could induce the child to accompany her; and at length, not being able to delay any longer, the mother decided to leave her at the Monastery, hoping that it was only a passing whim on the part of her daughter. However, as time went on and

