

Mathilde's Story



A long time ago in France, there was a little girl with long, long hair called Mathilde. As Mathilde combed her beautiful hair, she dreamed of becoming a queen. "I will be a queen someday," she told her mother, "I am sure of it." She told her father too. "I will be a queen someday. Just wait. One day you will see a golden crown on my head" Her father laughed and said, "Well, you are only a countess. If you want to be a queen, you will have to marry a king." It was true. Her father was the count of Flanders and very

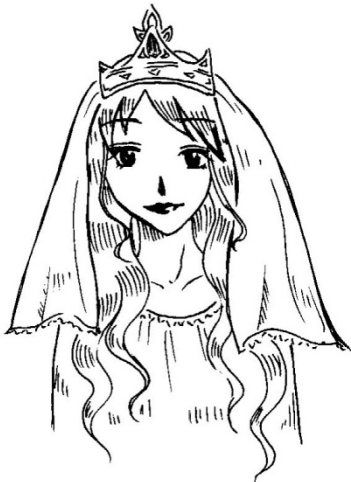
rich, but she was only a countess. She knew that most kings preferred to marry princesses.

Mathilde, the Countess of Flanders, grew older and her hair got longer, but she never forgot her dream. One Sunday, Mathilde and her family were walking to church. Mathilde wore her best blue robe and her long braided hair shone in the sun. Suddenly a handsome man rode by on a large horse. Mathilde admired his strong arms and his noble face. "Who is that?" asked Mathilde. "That is William, the Duke of Normandy," answered her mother.



The duke noticed the young girl with the beautiful long braids. In fun, he pulled so hard on her braids that she fell down; then he rode away on his horse! Mathilde was not amused.

Soon after, he asked her father for her hand in marriage. "Don't marry him," said her mother. "If you marry a duke, you'll be a duchess, not a queen." Her husband agreed. "Don't marry him," he said. "The duke just wants your money."



But Mathilde did marry the Duke of Normandy. She used her money to help William build his army, and she paid for a battleship that sailed to the Battle of Hastings. When William became king of England, she became a queen, just as she had predicted. Queen Mathilda (her English name) wore a crown on her long beautiful hair -- as you can see in the picture. She and William had a long and happy marriage and they had eleven children.