

**THE MIRACLES OF
MADAME SAINT
KATHERINE OF FIERBOIS**

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The Miracles of Madame Saint Katherine of Fierbois by J. J. Bourassé & Andrew Lang

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**THE MIRACLES OF
MADAME SAINT
KATHERINE OF FIERBOIS**

Livre des miracles de Sainte-Catherine
-de-Fierbois. English. Selections,

THE MIRACLES 
OF MADAME SAINTE
CATHERINE OF 
FIERBOIS

translated from the edition
of the abbé J.J. Bourassé,
Tours, 1858: by Andrew
Lang



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PREFACE

Invited by my friend Mr. Way to translate a little book as a companion to my version of "Aucassin and Nicolette," I could find nothing more curious than the Abbé Bourassé's edition of the Fierbois Chapel chronicle, "Les Miracles de Madame Sainte Katherine" (Manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale). One or two very dull narratives I have ventured to omit, and have added an essay on Fierbois and the Maid's connection with the shrine.



INTRODUCTION



WE read in history for various reasons and to various ends. Now we are allured by the tale of human adventure in the world, and the drama of the fortunes of nations; again we are attracted by some personality, as of Napoleon, or Cortés, or Mary Stuart; or we try to interpret the present and the future by the past, and to learn the lesson which peoples, like individuals, can only be taught by actual experience, and then too late.

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But history has another charm, and the historic muse might be represented gazing in the mystic glass which reflects all the changing aspects of common life that is no more, and the days that do not return. No gift would be more enviable than the visionary power of seeing the departed generations in their costumes as they lived, concerned with the many trivial accidents that were things of habit to them, and that now have passed wholly out of the existence which we know.

Shreds of old raiment, ancient coffers, armor, swords, jewels, we can look at in the museums ; but fancy fails when she tries to restore the pictures of the men and women to whom

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these were things of quotidian use and service. The traits, minute but essential, of the lost time escape us ; to live an hour in old Athens or in medieval Paris would teach us far more than we can gain from chronicle, or from art. Nevertheless the love of the spectacle of life makes us treasure every hint from book or manuscript concerning details of existence which are rarely mentioned by writers to whom they seemed over familiar and over trivial for record. We hear of princes and captains in the great wars, but we are seldom informed about the hinds who were plundered, and the common archers and men-at-arms who were food for the appetite of the

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sword. In search of lore which will complete our knowledge, and fill our picture of the past, we turn from the great chronicles, as now from those of Monstrelet, Chastelain, or Froissart, into such byways of the past as the little old French manuscript which is here translated for the first time.*

The official contemporary record of *Les Miracles de Madame Sainte Katherine de Fierbois* seems to bring us almost within sight and touch of France during the late middle ages, and in the agony of the Hundred Years' War with England. When Jeanne d'Arc, in the most hopeless

* From the edition by the Abbé J. J. Bourassé.
Mame & Cie., Tours, 1858.