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Katherine of Alexandria

A Saint for Soldiers

By CHARLES PHILLIPS

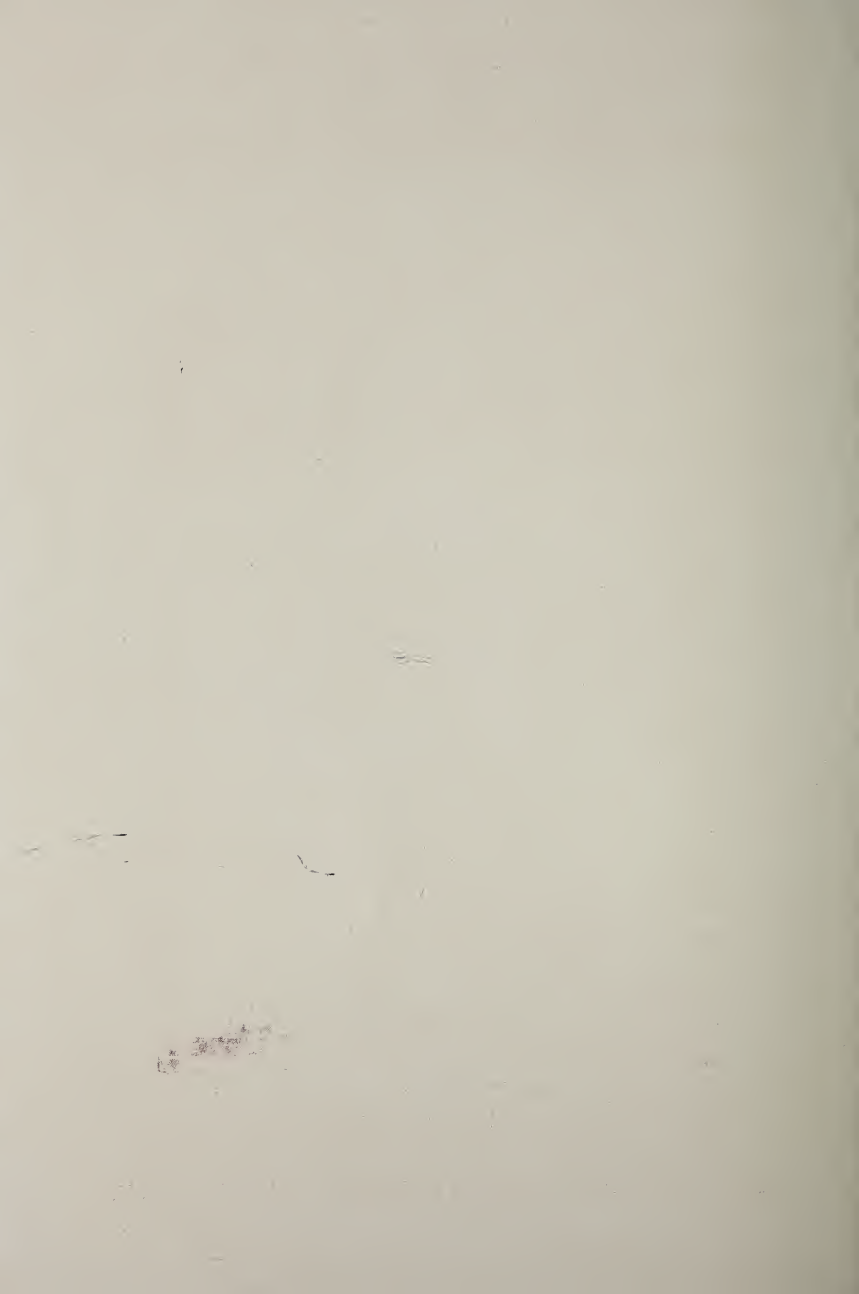


St. Katherine of Alexandria Adoring Blessed Virgin
and Infant Christ —*Von Schraudolph*

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Katherine of Alexandria

A SAINT FOR SOLDIERS

CHARLES PHILLIPS



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A SAINT FOR SOLDIERS

IN the lovely valley of the Indre, within a day's ride of the walls and turrets of the ancient chateau of Chinon, which rises above the river like an island of rock, lies the village of Fierbois, nestled in the wooded country of southwestern France. These are the Touranian fields which Clovis, first King of France, once trod and loved. At evening the lancet windows of old Chinon still reflect the glories of a sunset which for miles and miles bathes with prodigal loveliness a fair, wide-spreading land of tranquillity and plenty. Yet this whole peaceful scene was once trodden flat in the pathway of Mars. That was in the late Middle Ages when France was suffering the agony of the Hundred Years' War, and when armed conflict, instead of peace, so like our own terrible and momentous times, became almost the normal state of the civilized world.

In those days, as once more in our own, every man was a soldier, and there were few left at home to till the fields and grind the corn—and pray to the saints. But between those days and our own there was a difference, too, as well as a likeness. Only a small percentage of the twentieth century soldiers know anything about the saints; whereas the fighting men of five hundred years ago not only knew the saints but they had a saint of their very own—one whom they actually carried off to the wars with them, instead of leaving her behind to find votaries among the stay-at-homes; one whose name

was forever on their lips, called upon for succor wherever and whenever danger threatened them or death or misfortune wrung a prayer from their hearts. This Saint was the blessed martyr-virgin of Egypt, Katherine of Alexandria, patron of men-at-arms and worker of innumerable wonders among the soldier-boys of the fifteenth century. And it is at Fierbois near Chinon, in lovely Touraine, that her most famous shrine is situated. Here her relics are still preserved; and hither the faithful still come on pilgrimages, though not so much now out of fealty to *Madame Sainte Katherine* herself as for love of the greatest and holiest of all her devotees that one glorious soldier above all others whom she succored and guided in time of war, St. Joan of Arc. For this Saint-for-soldiers of ours is the same Katherine who became one of the three Voices inspiring and directing the Maid of Domrémy to rise up and save France.

The Shrine at Fierbois

There is much more than the story of Joan clustered around St. Katherine's shrine at Fierbois, however; there is, in fact, a whole history of soldiering written in its ancient records—such a story of war-time escapes and escapades, of miracles and deliverances and wonder-workings, as one will find only in the chronicles of the days of faith and chivalry; days long lost, but coming back to us, it seems, on the red tide of war again. For adventure and heroism, for faith unshaken by fire or sword, stock or gibbet commend us to these antique records of the Chapel of Fierbois!

It is a chronicle of wonders, this yellowed manuscript, *Les Miracles de Madame Sainte Katherine*, reposing now in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris. Only once has it seen the light of an English day—back in the nineties of the last century, when the late Andrew Lang published a translation of some of its pages, taken from a transcript made at Tours in 1858 by the Abbé Bourassé; and this slender little book is now out of print. A chronicle of wonders—and most of them wrought for soldiers gone to war.

Supposedly it was a soldier who first brought St. Katherine to France—some Crusader, gone to the East to rid the Holy Land of the curse of the Moslem, and returned safe home, after many perils through all of which his chosen patroness had protected him. No wonder that the story of the martyred maid of Alexandria had appealed to the heart of that fighting man of France, that champion of the Cross, whoever he was, valiant fighter that she herself was, a mere girl of eighteen facing her pagan emperor and challenging him with the Faith of Christ! Such an intrepid saint was just the patron to inspire the warrior who must face the fire and hatred of the heathen desecrator of the Holy Land. Long known as “one of the fourteen most helpful saints in heaven,” it is not strange that the man of arms, cast in pagan lands far from all that was Christian and familiar, should appeal to her for protection. And, his prayers answered, what more could he do than spread her holy fame among his fellow-soldiers, and bring back to France the story of her power in heaven? Her relics were enshrined on Mount

Sinai. He made his pilgrimage to that holy spot; but he did more. When he sailed home to France he brought with him some of those sacred remains, to be set up in his own country for veneration.

That was the beginning of the reign of St. Katherine in France. It was at Fierbois that the relics were deposited and a fitting shrine erected over them. The Church of St. Katherine at Fierbois became the center of the world's devotion to the martyred virgin, and the cult grew rapidly to vast proportions.

Three centuries passed. Evil days fell upon Fierbois. War swept over Europe; and by the year 1375, as the chronicles show, the shrine, once a Mecca of the devout, was completely abandoned, the chapel fallen into ruin, overgrown with weeds, forgotten even by the soldiers whom the saint had loved to shelter and protect.

But not altogether forgotten. There was one Jehan Godefroy who remembered. Like the rest of us, he may not have given much thought to heaven and the saints when all went well with him; but when trouble and pain came, he remembered. In the year 1368 this Jehan was stricken with blindness and paralysis. Was it a visitation of God? Marvelous fruits were to come out of this misfortune of Godefroy's. After the Scriptural seven lean years of suffering he suddenly be-thought himself of the long neglected shrine of St. Katherine near the village of Fierbois. Seven years of blindness and paralysis give a man plenty of time to think! Perhaps in a happier day Jehan had visited the

shrine; perhaps *Madame Sainte Katherine* had succored him in other troubles. At any rate, he recalled the deserted chapel, to approach which, as the record tells us, one had to pass "through tangled wood and undergrowth no man might reach." He begged that he might be carried there, to make a novena for his cure; and thither his friends bore him on his litter, though they were obliged to hew a path with axes through the wild wood that had grown up around the deserted and desecrated place. But the difficult journey was made, and the crippled soldier was reverently laid within the once-consecrated walls. And there, before his novena was ended, the desired miracle was indeed wrought for him, and Jehan rose from his bed sound of limb and with his sight restored. "He could see well and clear and was whole and healed in all his members, as he yet continues to be."

This was the signal for St. Katherine to come once more into her own in France. The fame of Jehan's miraculous cure spread like fire, and that same year the ruined shrine was restored and the chapel rebuilt. It was one Hylaire Habert who, enthused over the wonder wrought for his friend Jehan, undertook this restoration. And in Hylaire's story we find not only the heavenly and miraculous, but a glint of common everyday humor as well. The characters in the comedy are Goodman Habert—himself and his practical minded wife—evidently a long-tongued and short-tempered dame, who had a poor opinion of the religious enthusiasm of her pious spouse. Hylaire, however, possibly a soldier at one time, and one who owned some great in-

debtedness to St. Katherine, took very seriously the obligations of able-bodied men to the Egyptian virgin. Rebuild her shrine at Fierbois he would, no matter what the cost; and forth he set to do it, much to the neglect of his wife and his work at home. Dame Habert rebelled. "The thing that he did sorely displeased his wife," reads the quaint *Chronicle*. In fact, she became so terribly incensed at her husband, because "he left his business to do the same," that, in one of their rows over the matter, she made a prayer to God "that he might never return nor come again to his own house!" We can see the angry lady driving him off!—we can imagine the state of mind she was in, to let go like that!

But for once Dame Habert had permitted her feelings to get too much the best of her. On the making of that wicked prayer, there came a condign, swift punishment on her head. "She dropped down, as one dead, her eyes and mouth shut, sans speech or movement, nor ever returned to herself till her lord came from the said chapel." What Hylaire first thought that evening on coming home, to find his stormy help-mate "sans speech" and "with her mouth shut," is not recorded. But, dutiful husband that he was, he instantly repaid good for evil. Where she had prayed a curse for him, he made a prayer of charity for her—albeit there may have been just a touch of coals-of-fire in it; for it was to St. Katherine he turned for help. "He took a vow . . . and promised to bring his wife to that Saint, if madame would restore her." She was restored, and "she made her oblation"—a good resolu-

tion against sins of the tongue, perhaps, poor fretted lady—and Hylaire rebuilt the chapel of Fierbois.

It was in 1375 that Jehan Godefroy was cured—and Dame Habert silenced. From that time the shrine flourished. A prisoner of war, a French soldier, taken by the English and held in chains for “a whole month,” is the next witness to the powers of St. Katherine’s intercession. This soldier is Perrot Chapon, whom the saint miraculously delivered out of his irons. Lying captive in prison, he made a vow that “if he might escape without paying ransom, verily he would go on pilgrimage to her chapel.” At home, his wife—like many a soldier’s wife today—was pouring her life out in prayer for her man’s deliverance and return; and, as heaven would have it, she too, at the same hour, “made her vow.” Instantly the miracle was worked! Perrot in his prison fell asleep; “and on his waking, lo, he was in the hall of his own house, all in chains of iron as he was.” “And so hath he come to the chapel to give thanks to our Lord, and to the Virgin, and hath sworn that this is true.”

The Wonder-Workings of St. Katherine

In every case the depositions of pilgrims who came to Fierbois to testify to the wonder-workings of St. Katherine were duly sworn under oath. There can be no question of the veracity of these records. With the devotees who journeyed thither to make public acknowledgment of the help of heaven, this pilgrimage and attesting was a very solemn business. Often they

came great distances, and at great expense and grave peril, to pay this debt to God. Even the most skeptical, then, can hardly question them or claim that such journeyings were undertaken merely for the fun of telling gorgeous lies. No; these wonders had been wrought; these devotees—mostly soldiers, rough men of little subtilty but of mighty faith—had actually experienced these miraculous happenings, and nothing could hinder their publishing them to the world, for the grace and benefit of those who should come after them, even to the generation of the twentieth century!

The armies fighting in Europe in those days were like those of today, made up of men from many countries. In the Fierbois *Chronicle* we find, alongside our Frenchmen and Englishmen, the sturdy, canny Guillaume Oade, a Welshman—we can just see him!—"declaring and affirming by his faith and oath" how he was saved from the perils of war through the aid of St. Katherine. And the Welshman's story brings us into the very heart of the World War—into Flanders, and up to the very "Wipers" whose name the Tommies of the twentieth century (some of them Welshmen, too! have written in heroic blood on the pages of history. "At Poperique in Flanders," we read "two leagues and a half from Ipre," "between All Saints and Christmas," in 1382, Welshman Oade "was lodged . . . with great company of men at arms." On a certain Saturday night, about midnight, the English suddenly decided to abandon the place, after setting fire to it; but our friend Guillaume "and his varlet"—Oade was evidently an officer—were apparently not apprised

of the movement, or else simply overslept, for they were left behind "sleeping in the house whereas they were lodged," and were quickly surrounded by the Flemish soldiers who "ran in on them from every quarter." What followed is enough to make any romancer sit up and look to his laurels. Fiction could not devise more breathless suspense. And through it all, St. Katherine leads our soldier hero scatheless. Taken by surprise, Oade and his man fled in terror from the house, fighting to escape; Oade, in his extremity, "calling on *Madame Sainte Katherine* of Fierboys" for help, and vowing a pilgrimage to her shrine if she would save him. How this Welsh soldier came to know of Fierbois and its miracles is not set forth; but the only explanation there can be is that the Saint's fame had spread through all armies, that it had come even to his alien ears. At any rate, there he was, cornered by his enemies, and praying desperately for help. The swift heels of his varlet took that terrified mortal to safety; he "escaped by his speed and by the grace of God and *Madame Sainte Katherine*"; but Guillaume, either because he was fat and short of wind; or perhaps because he unselfishly stood back to let his companion make good his flight—the reason is not stated—was left alone to face the enemy. He saw "that he might neither fight nor flee," so he "ran into a thatched house, and those Flemings knew not what had become of him." Up to the roof of this house he climbed, and through all the bitter, winter night he lay there, flat on his face, fearing to move lest he be detected; and praying—how he must have prayed!

All around him the town was burning; there was the crash of falling roofs, the heat of flaming walls, drawing ever nearer and nearer him; and it was no easy matter to hide, perched on a roof top in the lurid glare of such a conflagration. But he did not give up. He prayed. He placed his all in the hands of St. Katherine. He made his vow to her, over and over again. The long, perilous hours passed flaming over his head. At dawn, the fire still raging and the heat becoming unbearable, matters grew altogether desperate for him. "And when the fire had burned all the houses thereabout, the said Guillaume, seeing all the house fall flaming against him, and the fire entering at front and rear"—thus graphically does the old parchment tell the story—with the name of St. Katherine on his lips, and one last measuring glance to the hostile ground below, Guillaume slid down from the burning roof, determined to fight his way through the street to safety. But once more he was surrounded by the Flemish and cornered. Yet even now he did not surrender. There was still St. Katherine to succor him. With a prayer bursting from his heart, he broke from his captors and made a dash for the river—he could not have been such a fat man, after all!—and leaping in, swam for the opposite shore. There again he was set upon, stripped of his purse and his money and savagely attacked "with axes and pikes." "And seeing that they thought to smite him and slay him . . . he prayed yet again to *Madame Sainte Katherine*;" and despite all his weakness and exhaustion, and all the uneven odds of the struggle, he escaped, though he roamed the plains for three days afterward, hiding by daylight,

traveling by night—as many a fugitive in the No Man's Land of Flanders has done—before he rejoined his men.

Miraculous Answers to Soldiers' Prayers

There may not be so much of the miraculous in the Welshman's story as there is of sheer pluck; but there was the faith of the man!—it was that that gave him wit and grit to win out. To him it was a miracle, or at any rate a direct answer to prayer; and he came duly to the shrine at Fierbois to pay his promised pilgrimage. Soon on his heels came others to testify—this time to a veritable miracle. In the next record of the *Chronicle* we find not one alone, but four men, come to acknowledge together the heavenly aid of St. Katherine. They had been taken prisoner by the English stationed at a garrison near La Souterraine, and when caught had been “bound as straitly as they might,” and beaten “sorely,” after which their captors had left them in their dungeon and had gone off to enjoy a well-earned dinner. The poor whipped wretches, left thus to their smarting pains and their heavy irons, trying to comfort one another with hopeful words, were minded at last to pray to St. Katherine for deliverance. They made their prayer—and their plea was heard immediately! Straightway the irons fell from their feet and hands, and out from their prison, past guards and sentinels, they walked, the four of them, unharmed! “And to accomplish their vows they came hither together, they, their wives and their children, and swore and affirmed that the said tale is true, making oath in the presence of several notable persons.”

Two fellow-soldiers, Thomas du Mont and Perrinet l'Auvergnat imprisoned in a fosse "narrow and deep as a lance's length, and above them laid a right great rock, that they might not avail to win forth," were held for fourteen months "at so great a ransom that all their friends would have been over hard-set to pay it." Three of their companions taken with them, had already died in the same fosse, and the bodies were left there to corrupt beside the living captives "whereby the said Thomas and Perrinet suffered sore from the filth and stench." They prayed to St. Katherine. Kneeling in the trench, they turned their faces, as well as they could guess, in the direction of Fierbois, and begged their patroness in heaven to send them a quick deliverance out of the horrible death that was slowly creeping over them. Thus praying, sleep came upon them; "and when they woke they found themselves above the fosse, and the rock rolled away, as it were two turns, the said rock being so heavy that it needed two men to turn it over." . . . Casin du Boys, sentenced to be beheaded, and imprisoned in a cage "locked with a key, bound moreover with a right strong rope all about it" and with a guard lying on top of the cage, was likewise delivered through prayer to St. Katherine. "Right so, his vow being made and his prayer, the said cage flew open of its own accord, and forth went Casin, he that lay above the cage perceiving naught." But still the prisoner was a prisoner. The only opening in the dungeon was a window "set the height of two men from the ground;" yet Casin was miraculously lifted up to it: "he found his breast on a level with the window, and him seemed that he was hoven under the

armpits." And he "went forth of the house." So record after record reads—the opening of doors the falling away of chains, the saving of soldiers from every sort of peril and death.

The fate of non-combatants in the wars of five hundred years ago was quite as bad as it is today. But St. Katherine protected them too, as well as the fighting men. Jehan de Pons, peaceably enjoying a partridge hunt one bright June day in 1423—very likely getting ready for the next meatless day forthcoming—was snatched up by a party of marauding Scotch soldiers of the invading armies and with seven farm hands plucked from their tasks in a neighboring wheat field, was marched off to a nearby oak tree to be hanged with a halter. The seven unfortunate laborers were hanged first; "then remained the said Jehan the last to be hanged because he had prayed for this grace in God's name to him that took him" (A Scotchman, not a Hun!) "that he might have time and space to pray God's mercy and pardon." This prayer was granted, the while he saw "all these seven hanged and strangled before his eyes," and then it was that he turned to St. Katherine for help.

How often it happens that when we desire the most earnestly and pray the most urgently, the ear of God and His saints seems deafest to our pleading! And then—the sudden answer! Jehan de Pons prayed; but he was hanged nevertheless, "right high on the said oak tree by a halter that was almost new." And yet his prayer was heard, even in that extremity. The quaint language of the *Chronicle* best recounts the ending of

the story: "And when he that hanged him was mounted and riding after the others, being now about a bow-shot from the said oak, the halter wherewith Jehan was hanged broke asunder and he fell on a heap of sharp stones, harming himself no more than if he had been on a pillow, and he felt no pain when he was hanged up, for it seemed that one hove him up under the feet. So came he to accomplish his vow . . . bringing with him the broken halter."

The leaven of the grace of God was working among those braw Scotch warriors marauding in French fields, it seems. Among these foreign soldiers posted on the continent was one "Michael Hamilton, a Scot," a native of a Scottish parish dedicated to St. Katherine, and all his life a devotee of hers. That the soldier going off to the wars need not leave his religion at home behind him, but rather that he does very well indeed to take it with him to the fray, the story of Michael Hamilton pointedly attests. Stationed with his company of "foot-soldiers at arms" in Brittany, he and his companions suffered an ambushade in which several of his men were slain, and he was taken prisoner because he "could not flee for the weight of his armor." He was sentenced to death by hanging and the sentence was to be executed not only as an act of war, but as one of personal revenge, by the son of a Breton spy whom the Scots had already dispatched by the halter. And so it was done. "In truth, before the eyes of the other Bretons, he bound Michael's hands behind his back, and hanged him from the gibbet at Clisson in his shirt, hose and shoon. There was he hanged on

Maundy Thursday, two hours after noon;" and there the Bretons left the victim of their vengeance, suspended in mid-air, given up for dead.

But Michael Hamilton, devout parishioner of St. Katherine's—somewhere-in-Scotland—Shotts, Bartram Shotts, or Bothwell Minor, in Lanarkshire, opines Andrew Lang—this soldier who had all his life prayed to St. Katherine, had not now, in his hour of peril, forgotten his patroness. "So soon as he was taken [he] did nothing but think devoutly of *Madame Sainte Katherine* and prayed that she would be pleased to guard him from death." In what sensational manner those prayers were answered the *Chronicle* tells us in thrilling language:

"So chanced it, that, when he had been hanged, there came a voice to the curé of the town bidding him go speedily and cut down Hamilton. Of this voice the curé took no keep, and forgot it until the morrow, which was Good Friday. And when the said curé had done all his service it was near noon. Then he be-thought him of the said voice, and bade one of his parish go to the gibbet and see if Hamilton were dead or not. Wherefore the man went on that errand. And when he got thither he turned and spun the Scotsman about, and knew not whether he was dead or alive.

"Nevertheless, to know the very truth, he took the hose from the right foot and slit the little toe with a knife, so that therein was a great wound and much blood. And when the said Hamilton felt it, he swears by his oath that as long as he was hanging he felt no

harm, no more than if he had been hanged by a rope under the arms. For when he was hanged he kept praying *Madame Sainte Katherine* to be his aid, without other thought. And it seems that he was hoven up under his feet. Nevertheless, when he felt the wound in his said toe, he drew up his leg and stirred. Thereon sore fear fell on the messenger of the curé, as Hamilton hath since heard him say. Wherefore he ran hastily to the curé, declaring that Hamilton was still alive and he had seen him move. Then the said curé, considering his voice in the night, and considering that Hamilton had been hanged from Maundy Thursday to Good Friday afternoon, deemed that it was evident miracle, and proclaimed all these things to the people present. Whereafter he and the other people of Holy Church put on their vestments and with a great company they went to the gibbet and cut down the said Hamilton. . . . Now he that had hanged him was present, who in wrath that he was not dead, struck him over the ear with a sword, and gave him a great wound, for which he was blamed. Nevertheless, the said Hamilton was set on a horse and taken into a house to be nursed and cared for. . . . And today the said Hamilton came hither in his shirt, bringing the halter wherewith he was hanged. . . .”

Jeanne d'Arc

These strange happenings occurred in Brittany in the spring of 1429; in May of that year Hamilton, true to his vow, was at Fierbois testifying to his miraculous deliverance through the aid of St. Katherine.

But already in this same year the shrine had been visited by another and a far more illustrious warrior—by Jeanne d'Arc herself not only a devotee of the Alexandrian saint, but one who had even seen her in visions and hearkened to her voice. This was in mid-winter, in February, 1429, in the darkest hour that the arms of France have known between sorry Vaucouleurs and the bloody but victorious Marne of the present day. From Vaucouleurs, leading the distracted armies of the Dauphin, rode the battle-weary Maid; and halting at Fierbois for rest, she repaired to the shrine of her beloved St. Katherine to pay her *devoirs* to that glorious patroness and to assist at Mass in her honor. She heard three Masses there that day the records tell us; and what prayers she prayed, what thoughts she thought, as she knelt before the bodily relics of that heavenly spirit whom already she had beheld crowned, in an ecstasy, what fears were allayed in her heart, what courage renewed, we can easily imagine. The walls of the chapel around her were hung thick with the votive offerings of those whom St. Katherine had succored in the hour of peril and despair: there were crutches and canes and irons and ropes; there was the arrow that had struck but had not pierced, the culverin ball that had glanced away from the prayer-protected body; the halter of Jehan de Pons was there, and the chains that had bound Perrot Chapon. Could Jeanne's ardent soul resist the thrill of such sights, the encouragement of such irrefutable witnesses? No! Rather, she rose from her knees there in the chapel of Fierbois with her heart beating high with renewed hope and

strength, renewed faith in her divinely appointed mission.

A month later this holiest of the devotees of our Saint for soldiers was the acclaimed of France, and Charles was showering her with royal gifts, with horses and arms, with armor and the richest raiment. But whatever else was forced upon her, one thing she would not accept from him. She would have no sword from him. Her Voices bade her look for a more sacred weapon than even his kingly anointed hands could proffer. This was to be none other than the sword of Charles Martel, the self-same sword that had vanquished the Paynim at Tours. It was to be a blade marked with five crosses—thus should it be known—and it was to be found awaiting her under the altar of St. Katherine's shrine in the village of Fierbois. So said Jeanne's Voices; and worthwith, an armorer being sent from Tours to make search for the mystic weapon, under the altar of St. Katherine at Fierbois, just as had been foretold, the sword was found.

This supernatural happening not only roused the greatest enthusiasm for the Maid, and played a great part in establishing her before the eyes of all France, but likewise it gave to the cult of St. Katherine a new impulse of popularity. And though the actual connection of the Warrior Virgin with the shrine at Fierbois ceases with the discovery of the holy sword—unless we note from the chapel *Chronicle* a Mass said "for the King and the Maid, the worthy servant of God" on May 5, 1430; or mark down the names of Dunois, La Hire and de Gaucourt, all her associates and all to be

found in the chapel register: from that time henceforth, nevertheless, these two names of Blessed Jeanne and St. Katherine were inextricably linked in the popular mind of France. Miracles continued to be wrought and pilgrimages to be made. "Two fingers deep" into the head of Jehan Fary—another Scotchman looking for trouble!—flew an arrow which yet left the man unhurt. Jehan Prevost struck by a culverin ball, could find no remedy, "for the stone of the culverin abode fast in his leg," until St. Katherine cured him. There were still other hangings and escapes, still other rescuings from dungeons and loosening from stocks. Wherever the soldier fared or fought whatever befell him, he had a helpful friend in St. Katherine of Fierbois, did he but call upon her.

Of such are the wonders wrought by this blessed Saint for soldiers in the fifteenth century, rescuer of the imprisoned, curer of the injured, saver of the doomed; above all, patroness and inspirer of the patroness of all Christian warriors, Jeanne the Maid; these things and many others, proved and attested beyond questioning. "Ah yes," smiles the skeptic; "quite so! But she did not save Jeanne, this Saint of yours, I see! She let her be taken, and held, and even burned to death. What do you say of that?"

To the Christian soldier, dear as are life and freedom and victory, there are still higher and dearer things; and these, above all succorings and rescuings, St. Katherine will give to him whenever the need be, if he but ask her, just as she gave them to the St. Jeanne. Strength to withstand temptation, strength to

remain steadfast and true to his ideals, to his cause and to his flag, whatever the cost, be it even death, these are the rarest gifts heaven can accord the fighting man on the field of honor. To Katherine herself, imprisoned in Alexandria and doomed to martyrdom if she would not recant her Faith, God's comforting angel came, promising her help to withstand her judges and accusers, promising her release from her suffering, and entrance into paradise. To Jeanne, imprisoned and doomed the holy Katherine brought the same comfort, a gift greater and more desired than even liberty and triumph could ever be. The true soldier surrenders only to God. And that surrender made, he can turn even death into a victory, and if life be denied him, can welcome with a soldier's salute the falling away of the chains of his mortal flesh, the unbarring of the bright doors of eternity.

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