



The Life of St. Cecilia: from Ms. Ashmole and Ms. Cotton Tiberius with Introduction, Variants and Glossary

Bertha Ellen Lovewell Ph. D.

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By Bertha Ellen Lovewell, Ph. D.

Edited by Albert S. Cook

The pages that follow are the record of an attempt to present to a small contribution to the general study of English Medieval Saints Legends, in as complete form as time and conditions have permitted. The legend here edited is in no sense peculiarly representative of medieval legends, yet it may serve to indicate the general tone of the species of literature to which it belongs.

Until, as Dr. Horstmann has observed, the combined intelligence of generations yet to come has been applied to the problem, many of the most vital questions relating to English Legendary must remain unsolved. Perhaps the best service which can now be rendered, is to continue to present, as Dr. Horstmann has so long been doing, accurate reprints of existing versions, together with textual studies of the kinds familiar to scholarship.

The texts, here printed for the first time, have been carefully transcribed from their originals and collated by scribes at the several libraries where the manuscripts are kept. I regret exceedingly that, owing to delay on the part of one scribe, this edition must go to press lacking the table of variants from MSS. Stowe 946 and Lambeth 223, which are the only existing versions of this even a single legend have reason to expect, have been omitted but not overlooked. I shall hope to supplement these deficiencies as time and ability may permit.

In presenting this result of a few months' work, I wish to acknowledge, first of all, my great indebtedness to the strong, clear-sighted judgment of Professor Cook, under whose guidance my graduate work has received direction. I wish to also express my thanks to Professor Skeat, who sent me advance proof-sheets of the Aelfrician version of the Life of St. Cecilia, and at the same time gave suggestion and encouragement.

From the long list of saints and martyrs whose acts are celebrated by the Western Church, there is separable a group of Roman virgin martyrs. To this group, with St. Agnes, St. Agatha, and St. Lucy (the two latter being undoubtedly of Sicilian origin), St. Cecilia belongs. St. Cecilia is also frequently associated in the modern mind with the Greek St. Katherine, probably through the intensifying and relating of the emblematic idea, which gave to St. Katherine the province of literature and philosophy, as it made St. Cecilia the patroness of sacred music.

The attempt to reach conclusions concerning the historic St. Cecilia is one full of difficulties, although the veneration paid to the saint may be traced with considerable ease to a very early period. The Roman church regularly interweaves the significant features of the...

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