

**MARIE DE FRANCE:
SEVEN OF HER LAYS
DONE INTO ENGLISH**

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Marie de France: Seven of Her Lays Done into English by Edith Rickert & Caroline Watts

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EDITH RICKERT & CAROLINE WATTS

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MARIE DE FRANCE



MARIE de FRANCE

Seven of her Lays
done into English
by Edith Rickert,
with designs by
Caroline Watts.

Published by David Nutt at the
Sign of the Phoenix, Long Acre 1901.



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Preface

THE popularity of Marie de France in her own time was due largely to the fact that she was so entirely in the drift of the literary tendencies of that day. When these had exhausted themselves, she was for centuries almost completely forgotten. During the past hundred years she has been edited, criticised and translated by French and German scholars; but her *Lays*, with two or three exceptions, have remained almost unknown in English.

This fact is the stranger since, in addition to their vivid pictures of perhaps the most attractive period of the Middle Ages, and to a certain charm in the narration, due partly to Celtic origin, partly to Marie herself, the *Lays* have an element of "humanity," that is, of appeal to human experience, that seems to make them worth bringing before a wider circle of readers than those who are familiar with twelfth-century French.

In translating, I have endeavoured to keep to the original modes of thought and ways of speech as far as is consistent with a reasonably idiomatic use of modern English; but Marie's language is at once so archaic and so simple, at times almost colloquial, that the way of the translator is hard

Preface

and craves wary walking. And hence, if I have departed unduly from the modern idiom or from the text, or "if any one understand it better than" I could, this must be my plea.

I have added a general introduction on Marie's life and work, and separate introductions to the notes on each lay, dealing with the sources, as far as they have been discovered, for the use of students who may not have access to the materials.

Thanks are due to various friends for criticisms upon the translation; and especially to Mr. Alfred Nutt for this, as well as for suggestions in regard to the sources.

With the hope that these tales "of old unhappy far off things" may find friends among English readers, as they have found admirers in their old French form, this little volume has been prepared.

MID YELL, SHETLAND ISLES,
August 6, 1901.

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