The Legend of Saing George

Saint George was a knight and born in Cappadocia. One time he came to the city of Silene in the province of Libya. Near this city was a pond, wherein there was a dragon which was poisoning all the country. Whenever he approached the city he poisoned the people with his breath, and therefore the people of the city gave to him every day two sheep to eat, so that he would do no harm to the people. When they ran out of sheep, he was given a man and a sheep. Then an ordinance was made that the children and young people of the town should be chosen by lottery to feed the dragon. Whoever the lot fell upon, wealthy or poor, he or she was delivered to the dragon.

One time the lot fell upon the king's daughter, and the sorrowful king said to his people, "For the love of the gods take gold and silver and all that I have, but let me have my daughter."

They said, "Sir, you have made the law, and our children are now dead, but you would do the contrary. Your daughter shall be given, or else we shall burn you and your house."

Seeing that he could do no more, the king began to weep, and said to his daughter, "Now I shall never see you married."

Then he returned to the people and asked for eight days' respite, which they granted to him. When the eight days were passed they came to him and said, "You see that the city is perishing."

Then the king had his daughter dressed like a bride, embraced and kissed her, gave her his blessing, then led her to the place where the dragon was.

When she was there Saint George passed by, and seeing the lady, he asked her what she was doing there.

She said, "Go your way, fair young man, lest you perish as well."

Then he said, "Tell me why you are weeping."

When she saw that he insisted on knowing, she told him how she had been delivered to the dragon.

Then Saint George said, "Fair daughter, doubt not, for I shall help you in the name of Jesus Christ."

She said, "For God's sake, good knight, go your way, for you cannot save me."

While they were thus talking together the dragon appeared and came running toward them. Saint George, who was on his horse, drew his sword, made the sign of the cross, then rode swiftly toward the dragon. He struck him with his spear, injuring him severely.

Then he said to the maid, "Tie your belt around the dragon's neck, and be not afraid."

When she had done so the dragon followed her meekly. She led him into the city, and the people fled in fear.

Saint George said to them, "Doubt not. Believe in God and Jesus Christ, and be baptized, and I shall slay the dragon."

Then the king and all his people were baptized, whereupon Saint George killed the dragon and cut off his head. It took four ox-carts to remove his body from the city.

At that time fifteen thousand men were baptized, not counting women and children. The king established a church there in honor of Our Lady and of Saint George, in which there flows to this day a fountain of living water that heals sick people who drink from it.

The king offered to Saint George as much money as he could count, but he refused it, asking instead that it be given to poor people for God's sake. Then he made four requests of this king: that he [the king] should have charge of the churches, that he should honor the priests, that he should hear their service diligently, and that he should have pity on the poor people. Then Saint George took leave of the king and departed.

Now at this time Diocletian and Maximian were emperors, and under them there was such great persecution of Christians that within a month twenty-two thousand were martyred. For this reason, some were so afraid that they denied God and sacrificed to the idols. Seeing this, Saint George abandoned his knight's raiment, sold all that he had, gave it to the poor, and put on the raiment of a Christian brother.

He went into the midst of the pagans and began to cry, "The gods of the pagans and gentiles are devils. My God made the heavens and is the only God."

Then the provost, whose name was Dacian, said to him, "How can you say that our gods are devils? Tell us who you are."

He answered, "I am named George. I am a gentleman, a knight of Cappadocia, and I have left all in order to serve the God of heaven."

The provost attempted with words to convert Saint George to his faith, and failing to do so, had Saint George beaten with iron rods until his body was broken in pieces, then sent to prison. Our Lord appeared to him that same night and comforted him sweetly.

Seeing that Saint George would not surrender to his torments, the provost had his sorcerer prepare a powerful poison mixed with wine, which they gave to Saint George. He took it, made the sign of the cross on it, and drank it. It did him no harm. The sorcerer then made an even more powerful poison. Saint George drank this as well, and it did him no harm. The sorcerer then knelt before Saint George and begged him to make him a Christian. Seeing that his own sorcerer had converted to Christianity, the provost cut off his head.

The provost had Saint George placed between two wheels mounted with swords, but the wheels broke, and Saint George remained unharmed. Then the provost had him thrown into a caldron filled with molten lead, but Saint George sat there comfortably, as if he were in a warm bath.

At last the provost said to Saint George, "Our gods are patient and forgiving. Abandon your folly and make sacrifices to our gods, and great honor will come to you."

Saint George replied, "Why did you not say so earlier? I am ready to do as you request."

So the provost called all the people together to witness the conversion of their prisoner. Saint George fell to his knees, but instead of worshipping the pagan gods, he called upon the Lord God of heaven to destroy their temple and their idols. Immediately fire descended from heaven, burning the temple, the idols, and their priests. Then the earth opened and swallowed all the cinders and ashes that were left.

Then the provost was so angry that he said to his wife, "I shall die of anger if I cannot overcome this man."

She replied, "Evil and cruel tyrant! Do you not see the great virtue of the Christian people? I told you that you should not do them any harm, for their God fights for them. Know well that I will become Christian."

Much abashed, the provost said to her "You will be a Christian?" Then taking her by the hair, he beat her cruelly.

Then she asked Saint George, "What will become of me? I have not yet been baptized."

He answered, "Doubt not, fair daughter, for you shall be baptized in your own blood."

She began to worship our Lord Jesus Christ, then died and went to heaven.

The next morning the provost had Saint George beheaded. This was about the year of our Lord two hundred and eighty-seven. As the provost was returning homeward from the place where Saint George was beheaded, fire fell down from heaven, consuming him and all his servants.

Gregory of Tours tells that some who were carrying certain relics of Saint George came into a certain oratory in a hospital. On the morning when they were to depart they could not open the door until they had left there part of their relics.

It is also found in the history of Antioch, that when the Christians went to conquer Jerusalem, that a fair young man appeared to a priest and counseled him that he should bear with him some of the relics of Saint George, for he was conductor of the battle. And during the siege of Jerusalem, Saint George with his white armor and red cross led them to victory.

Between Jerusalem and the port of Jaffa, near a town called Ramys, is a chapel of Saint George which is now desolate and in ruins. The body of Saint George, but not the head, lies in this chapel. There too lie his father, his mother, and his uncle, not in the chapel but under the wall of the chapel. The caretakers will not allow pilgrims to enter unless they pay two ducats, and therefore only a few come inside, instead making their offerings outside the chapel at an altar. The body of Saint George lies in the middle of the choir of the chapel, and in his tomb is a hole, allowing a man to put his hand inside it. When a mad person is brought there, and if he puts his head into the hole, he shall immediately be made perfectly whole, and again have his understanding.

This blessed and holy martyr Saint George is patron of this realm of England and the cry of men of war. The noble Order of the Garter was founded in his worship, and also a noble college in the castle of Windsor, where rests the heart of Saint George, which Sigismund, the Emperor of Germany, brought and gave for a great and a precious relic to King Harry the fifth. Also there is a piece of his head. This college is nobly endowed to the honor and worship of Almighty God and his blessed martyr Saint George. Let us pray unto him that he be special protector and defender of this realm.