

and virtuous of her sex; and with that and other fine practices of the good old times has passed away the disposition to care much about patron saints. Our modern custom rather is to put our faith in four-footed champions, and to back our favourites.

But the history of St. George of England is interesting for its own sake. It supplies perhaps the most curious illustration of the eccentricity of traditional biography anywhere to be found. That pink of chivalry was born about the beginning of the fourth century, in, or shortly before, the reign of the Great Constantine. His parents who had emigrated from Cappadocia to Epiphania in Cilicia, were employed in a humble branch of the cloth-trade; and George himself was born, not in an enchanted castle, but in a fuller's shop in that town—a pleasant bower of half-cleaned togæ and small-clothes of those days. The youth, whose name was afterwards to become so famous, passed through childhood and boyhood without exhibiting any more remarkable quality than an extraordinary genius for sneaking. He was always ready to play the toady for a consideration, and a grave historian tells us that, in those unsophisticated days, the embryo saint was willing at any time to sell his flattery for a cake; just as Smith Minor, the sneak of the school, is always ready to propitiate any boy, big or little, who is in receipt of a hamper from home. Arrived at man's estate, and beyond the attractions of cakes and toffy, George still relied upon his main talent, and played the parasite to such purpose, that he obtained an important contract to supply the imperial army with provisions. So far as we can make out, this was the gallant George's only connexion with the profession of arms. Instead of riding about on fiery steeds, performing miraculous feats of arms, slaying dragons, and delivering damsels, the fuller's son was employed in delivering bacon to the imperial commissary; and very badly he performed that duty. His bacon was generally rancid, and the quantity short. He was a true member of the army contractor race, one of the sort that Wellington would have liked to hang, to encourage the others. He made lots of money at this business. For a long time, the powerful friends whom his gift of flattery kept around him protected him, from the anger of the authorities and the fury of the soldiers. The former had to wink at short weight delivered by the favorite of the ministers; and the latter had to chew their rancid bacon, and curse the rascally contractor beneath their breath. At length, however, there arrived a time when this sort of thing could endure no longer. George had to flee. He narrowly escaped death at the hands of the soldiers, whose commons he had so shamefully robbed; and he was sought after, perhaps not very diligently, by the imperial officers of justice.

He managed to conceal both himself and his money, and to reappear at the proper time in a more distinguished and lucrative sphere. Thus the great George of England, the greatest knight of Christendom, the peerless champion of virtue and valor, retired from the military service of his country. What would those thousands of stout knights who clove Moslem crowns to the inspiring music of his name, and who sought death on the fields of Scotland in his honor, have said if you had told them that they were shouting themselves hoarse in the worship of a rascally bacon-factor?

After George had spent a suitable period in obscurity after his enforced retirement from the bacon trade, he suddenly reappeared in the character of a churchman. He had in the interval been converted to Christianity, and with the unerring instinct of his tribe, he of course chose the form of Christianity that was most likely to lead to his own advancement. The court of the East was altogether Arian; and although the firmness of Athanasius, supported by the power of the western emperor, maintained the Catholic faith in the East, the day of the Arians was evidently coming. George went to Alexandria, and had himself ordained a bishop. By the use of his special talent for flattery, he soon made himself favorably known to the leaders of the Arian party, and at the court of Constantinople; and when the death of Constantius left Constantius at liberty to deal as he would with Athanasius, it was a settled thing that George of Cappadocia should be his successor on the archiepiscopal throne. At length the time to accomplish the religious revolution at Alexandria arrived. Constantius, now sole master of the double empire, soon compelled the synods of the West, as well as of the East, to depose that very Athanasius whom they secretly revered as the venerable champion of the rights of conscience and of the church against the strong arm of the civil power. But to depose Athanasius and to get rid of him were very different things. The archbishop would not voluntarily quit his see, and Constantius for a long time lacked the courage to compel him. At length, however, the emperor summoned resolution to order the venerable Athanasius to retire into banishment. Even then, as if afraid of the possible consequences, he only sent a verbal message, which the archbishop refused to recognize, and which the civil authorities in Alexandria were powerless to execute. Then, rapidly and secretly, the legions of Upper Egypt and Libya advanced to substitute, by the power of the sword, George for Athanasius. They surprised the city with open gates, and Alexandria was given up to murder and rapine, to celebrate the triumph of one Christian faction over another. Athanasius fled, and George of Cappadocia reigned in his stead. The pagans