

INTRODUCTION

THE legend of St. George divides of itself into two portions. One of these, the fight with the dragon and the rescue of the Princess, is as universal in its character as the passion for romance and the admiration of chivalry are deeply rooted in the heart of mankind. It is the mediaeval analogue to the legend of Perseus and Andromeda. The story has also been shown to be similar in type to the myths of Mithras and Horus; and was not Zeus the chief god of the saint's city Diospolis, and was not Zeus known in one aspect as Georgos? However this may be, the Western mind, Greek or Christian, has invested the story with a new, romantic, and more human sense. The second portion of the St. George legend, his adventures as a martyr, belongs to the general stock of martyr-legends, elaborated in the early centuries out of a small germ of truth. The false Acts of St. George were already denounced by Pope Gelasius at the end of the fifth century. What the germ was in the case of St. George we can hardly say. But it is clear enough that his cult, official or not, existed before the time of that other notorious George, ex-pork-butcher and Arian bishop of Alexandria, with whom Gibbon cynically sought to identify the patron saint of England. Disputes and researches about the