

# The Legend of St. George

By Margaret J. Preston

'Twas many and many an age ago—  
Who readeth should understand—  
That the tale I tell, they say, befell  
Afar in an Eastern land.

In the pagan times of old it happed,  
When saintly martyrs died  
By flood and flame for the holy name  
Of Him who was crucified.

In the oozy depths of a slimy marsh,  
Unfathomed and foul and deep,  
A dragon whose food was human blood  
His fearful lair did keep.

With terror the frightened folk had fled  
For fear of his blasting breath,  
Yet day by day they sickened away  
In an atmosphere of death.

And day by day he came not nigh  
To poison the city's air,  
The lot they drew, and two by two  
They gave up their children fair

Wherewith to feed the monster grim,  
Till heartened hope did fail,  
Till everywhere there was wild despair,  
And the streets were filled with wail.

At length, on the king's one daughter dear  
The terrible lot did fall,  
And he offered gold and treasures untold.  
Rank, glory and honors—all—

To buy her life ; but they said him : " Nay,  
Through thy command alone  
Each day a twain of *ours* are slain,  
And darest thou grudge thine *own* ? "

Then the princess fell at the royal feet  
Like a hunted and wet-winged dove ;  
" My father, shall I forbear to die  
For the sake of the land I love ? "

So, all in her richest robes bedight,  
'Mid the sobs of women and men,

With a bosom that shook, her course she  
took  
To the horrible dragon's den.

As, weeping her piteous doom, she neared,  
It chanced that a Christian knight  
Did fare that way on steed of gray,  
And he paused at the rueful sight ;

" Oh ! sorrowful maiden, whence thy tears  
And witherward dost thou go ? "  
And, all dismayed, his steps she stayed  
With the story of her woe.

" God see and save," now cried the knight,  
" While I thy helper be !  
For the name of Christ hath ever sufficed  
To bid all evil flee."

To the dragon's lair forthwith he spurred,  
And therein the monster found,  
And with sudden advance he plunged his  
lance,  
And fastened him to the ground.

" Bring hither thy girdle, O princess fair,  
To bind, withal, his strength ; "  
And the maiden she brought it, golden-  
wrought ;  
And knotting its sleaven length.

Therewith he circled its steely scales,  
And in her quivering hand  
He laid the noose, soft-drawn and loose :  
Then he gave her a quick command

To utter the sacred name of Christ—  
And she spake it in faith and grief ;  
And forever away did flee that day  
Her heathenish unbelief.

Then slowly she to the city gates  
The slimy horror drew,  
And the king and his men took heart again,  
And the dragon there they slew.

Henceforward the name that the good St.  
George

Thus taught them to adore,  
Through all their days, with heartiest praise,  
They worshipped forever more.

—The Children's Friend.