

SAINT ANDREW

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OF the various saints venerated as the guardians or patrons of the British Isles, St. Andrew of Scotland is the only one mentioned in Holy Writ. We learn from the Scriptures that St. Andrew was Christ's first convert, except one other whose name is not revealed. Not only, indeed, His first convert, but His first enquirer and His first missionary! The venerable Anglo-Saxon scholar, Bede, calls him the Protoclete, the Introducer to Christ, because he was always eager to bring people to Him.

If now we turn to other sources, we learn of many traditions connected with this patron saint. The present writer is indebted for the following account chiefly to a Scottish scholar of the present generation who has gathered interesting material from various researches. His account runs somewhat in this wise:

According to the *Chronicle of the Picts and Scots*, it was in 761 A.D. that "ye relikis of Sanct Andrew ye Apostle cam in Scotland," and not long it was before he became the patron saint of the whole country, ousting in so doing St. Rule or Regulus "Gaelic, Rimhinn" a monk of Patrae, who had a prior right to the honour as he was the first to convert the natives to Christianity, an event which happened some three centuries previously. Here again our saint unwittingly formed a precedent which many a Scot since has not been slow to follow, supplanting less virile men for the good (let us hope) of all concerned, even if occasional exception must be made in respect of some of the luckless individuals whose thrones have been usurped.

The earliest accounts of the saint's legend and cultus are contained in three manuscripts. The oldest of these is the Colbertine MS. in Paris; next in point of time come the Harleian MSS. in the British Museum, while the Breviary of Aberdeen ranks third in date. These vary considerably in detail, but in broad outline they are substantially the same. They agree that the relics were carried under supernatural guidance from Constantinople to the old Pictish "Muckcross" (Mucros, Pig-point or promontory) which became in course of time the modern St. Andrews (Gaelic Cill-Rimhinn). Regulus is mentioned as having brought them to the Pictish king, Angus (Aonghas), but the only Regulus known

historically was an Irish monk, a contemporary of St. Columba, who lived about a century before the reign of Angus. The attempt to connect this monk's name with the relics seems to have arisen from the desire of early chroniclers to date the foundation of the Church of St. Andrews as early as possible.

Be that as it may, the relics were evidently highly venerated from the time of their very first appearance in Scotland, as in *Wyntoun's Chronicle* we read that

Syne Sanct Andrewys relics there
With honour great ressaved were.

Wyntoun, it must be noted, is to be regarded as speaking with considerable authority and local knowledge, for he was himself a canon of the Augustinian priory of St. Andrews.

King Aonghas, or Hungus as Wyntoun writes his name, soon displayed much gratitude for assistance which he thought the saint had rendered him, and he richly endowed the ancient Culdean Church which had now been linked with St. Andrew's name. Thus Wyntoun narrates:

Than furth in his devotioinne
Added the dotatione
Of Sanct Andrewys kyrk in fee
And landis in regality.

The legend which brought the saint into the king's good graces is related at length in Leslie's *History of Scotland*. According to this author, the cross of St. Andrew appeared in the heavens to the king the night previous to the battle with Athelstane. As the Scots and Picts were the victors in that struggle, they duly placed the credit of it at the door of the saint, and their kings, to show their gratitude in practical fashion, went barefoot to the "kyrk of Sanct Andrewys", and vowed to adopt the cross as the national emblem.

A later Scottish king, Alexander I, also endowed the Church with more land, including the famous "boaris chace," a tract still known to the present day as "the Boar hills."

The "Boaris chace" in regale
To the kyrk the kyng gave hale.

In mediaeval times a very different tale from that of the early manuscripts passed into popular belief, if the chap-books of that period are to be relied on. According to one of them called *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, St. Andrew, after performing prodigies of valour in Thrace, came in person to Scotland, then (we are told) "a rude and heathenish country, where the common

sort of people inhabited." Although the king and nobility seem to have welcomed his coming, the "common sort of people," it seems, would have none of him, and put him secretly to death. By way of retribution, the king in anger put everyone to the sword who had taken part in the martyrdom, so that afterwards only Christian believers were left in Scotland. So runs the chap-book tale, and here was a "consummation devoutly to be wished", but hardly to be fulfilled by the stormy sequel of events in the centuries that followed.

Perhaps no fact relating to St. Andrew has been more widely and readily accepted than that his cross was "decussate," as the learned term it, though the ordinary person would merely say that it resembled an X in form. In Christian art the saint has always been depicted as an old man, and with long white hair and beard, holding the Bible in his right hand, and leaning on the cross which has become indissolubly linked with his name. He is so represented in the "Flagellation" of Domenichino, and the "Adoration of the Cross" by Guido, which form the two great frescoes in the Chapel of St. Andrea in the Church of San Gregorio at Rome. Now, although in both these pictures the shape of the cross is the usually accepted one, yet some authorities have called in question the truth of this representation. They maintain that the cross was of the ordinary shape, and point to the relic in the convent of St. Victor near Marseilles in confirmation of their opinion. A plausible explanation of the supposed error which has been put forward is to the effect that the "decussate" form was only apparent, and took its rise from the position in which the cross was generally displayed, i.e., resting on the end of the cross-beam, and on the point of the saint's foot. The matter is, after all, one of trifling account nowadays; and the accepted form, as being that of the true St. Andrew's cross, will doubtless continue to hold its own in the popular belief and esteem.

The fascinating science of folklore furnishes several instances of customs that have become associated with the name of St. Andrew. In *Brand's Antiquities*, the author writes of the early doings of the "London Scottish", using this term in a wider sense than the military one which has of late been covered with so much distinction. Brand describes how "singed sheeps' heads are borne in the procession before the Scots in London on St. Andrew's Day." It may be worth noting also that sheep's head, and the succulent broth derived therefrom, have for long been an honoured item in the typical bill of fare of a St. Andrew's Day feast. "The Statistical Account of Scotland," that invaluable repository of much lore and

legend existing in Scotland a little over a century ago, has an interesting note on the devotion of the Scot to this dish. "At Duddingston, near Edinburgh, many opulent citizens resort in summer months to solace themselves over one of the ancient homely dishes of Scotland, for which the place has long been celebrated—sing'd sheeps' heads, boiled or baked. This is supposed to have arisen from the practice of slaughtering sheep fed on neighbouring hills for the market, removing the carcasses to the town and leaving the heads, etc., to be consumed on the spot."

St. Andrew's Day is very much in evidence in a corner of England almost as far removed from Scotland as it well could be. So far as we are aware, no similar custom prevails in the land which claims the saint for its own; but in regard to this we may be in error. In Halsted's History of Kent it is related that in the parish of Easing, "on St. Andrew's Day, November 30, there is yearly a diversion called squirrel-hunting in this and the neighbouring parishes, when the labourers and lower kind of people, assembling together, form a lawless rabble, and being accoutred with guns poles, clubs and other such weapons, spend the greater part of the day in parading through the woods and grounds with loud shoutings; and under the pretence of demolishing the squirrels, some few of which they kill, they destroy numbers of hares, pheasants, partridges, and in short whatever comes in their way, breaking down the hedges, and doing much other mischief, and in the evening betaking themselves to the ale-houses."

In Germany, St. Andrew's Day supplied the anniversary of a custom which Luther in his *Table Talk* picturesquely described. On the evening of the feast the young maids would take off their clothing and utter this prayer: *Deus, Deus meus, O Sancte Andrea effice ut bonum pium virum acquiram; hodie mihi ostende qualis sit qui me in uxorem ducere debet.* (God, my God, O Saint Andrew, bring it about that I may get a good affectionate husband; show me to-day what manner of man it is that shall lead me to the altar). When the young folks were together, "To learn which of the persons present love each other, or will one day be united, a vessel of pure water is set on the table, and there are placed to float on the water little cups of silver foil inscribed with the names of those whose fortunes are to be determined. If a youth's cup advances to a maiden's or *vice versa*, it is worth the while to note which makes the chief advances, and if they eventually cling together, they will be sweethearts. But little cups must also be set floating marked as priests; and it is only when the youth and the maid coming together get a priest between them that they can look forward with any

certainty to marriage". The above pretty idea reads like a variant of the nut-burning which Burns has immortalized in his "Hallowe'en."

Other points of interest in connection with St. Andrew's Day may also be instanced. There are at least two weather proverbs referring to the feast. One of these is a Westphalian saying which runs thus in English, "On the feast of St. Andrew it is winter of a truth; afterward on St. Nicholas day we see it before all our doors." The other is the Italian, "*A Sant Andrea ol fred al s'fa conoss a i let,*" which may be translated as "On St. Andrew's day we feel the cold even in bed." The nearest approach to anything similar in English is a remark which occurs in the "Shepherd's Kalendar", and reads thus:—"If on St. Andrew's Day in the evening much dew or wet remain on the grass, it betokens a wet season to follow; if dry, the contrary." It must not be forgotten also that the Russians, before the war, did likewise claim St. Andrew as their patron saint. In a manner that country surpasses, or used to surpass, us in doing St. Andrew honour, for he also is, or rather was, the patron saint of the highest Russian order of chivalry. The saint's high place in the Russian regard is based on the tradition that he preached along the shores of the Black Sea as far as the Volga mouth. St. Andrew's cross, familiar to us as our national flag, figures also—or did so until recently—as the flag of the Russian navy.

The custom of celebrating St. Andrew's Day by feasting is involved in obscurity, but it has flourished down to the present time, and, apart from the war, has shown no signs of decline. It is surely a noteworthy circumstance that Scotsmen should celebrate both the reputed day of their saint's death, spoken of in bygone Scotland as Andry's Day, Androiss Mass or Andermass, and also the anniversary of their national poet's birth. The double event is unique among the nations, and these celebrations are not by any means geographically confined to Scotland, but are world-wide, and seem to arouse the fervour of the Scot in a measure directly proportioned, as it were, to the square of the distance he may at the time be situated from his native heath. No other country in the world can boast two such national feast days—certainly none other has acquired so wide and far-reaching a measure of recognition.

The fame of Scotia's saint would not be complete if it did not embrace within its compass that most picturesque of mediaeval practices—the pilgrimage. As regards this form of pious adventure we are at least on ground based on historical facts, for the present college of St. Leonard's, in the city of St. Andrews, was originally

“the hospital of St. Leonard’s for the hospitable reception of poor pilgrims,” and it is so spoken of in bulls and charters dating as far back as the twelfth century. One of these “poor pilgrims” left behind him for posterity’s edification some Latin verses inscribed on a kind of votive tablet. In English dress they read as follows, and their touch of piety, combined with shrewd observation, may be fittingly employed to conclude this brief paper: “Hither come to pray a crowd of men from the most distant regions—the loquacious Frenchman, the war-like Roman, the Flemish weaver, the rude German, the Englishman, the Saxon, the Hollander, the naked Pict, the savage Angerian; and strangers from the Rhone, the Rhine, and the Tiber came to seek the prayers of St. Andres. We, too, if our humble name may be noticed among so many, have come to solicit the same favour.”