

BELLIGERENCY IN CHRISTIANITY.

BY THE EDITOR.

CHRISTIANITY is a religion of peace, but the Christian nations are warlike, and at the very beginning of the Christian era the need was felt to consecrate the military spirit by religious sentiment and to have it represented in saints and angels.

The military leader of the hosts of the Lord has always been Archangel Michael, who was identified with Zeus fighting Ty-



GIGANTOMACHY; THE GIANTS STORMING HEAVEN.

Bas-relief of an ancient sarcophagus. Now in the Museum of the Vatican.

phœus and the Titans when they endeavored to storm the heavens. We read in the Revelation of St. John, xii. 7-9 :

"And there was war in Heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon ; and the dragon fought and his angels ; and prevailed not ; neither was their place found any more in Heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world ; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

The passage reflects the words of Hesiod, where he describes the conflict between Zeus and the monsters of the deep, as described in the Theogony :

"When Zeus had driven the Titans out from Heaven, huge Earth bare her youngest-born son, Typhoeus, whose hands, indeed, are fit for deeds on ac-

count of their strength. On his shoulders there were one hundred heads of a serpent, of a fierce dragon, playing with dusky tongues. From the eyes in his wondrous heads fire struggled beneath the brows. From his terrible mouths voices were sending forth every kind of sound ineffable,—the bellowing of a bull, the roar of a lion, the barking of whelps, and the hiss of a serpent. The huge monster would have reigned over mortals unless the sire of gods and men had quickly observed him. Harshly he thundered, and heavily and terribly the earth re-echoed around. Beneath Jove's immortal feet vast Olympus trembled, and the earth groaned. Heaven and sea were boiling. Pluto trembled, monarch of the dead. The Titans in Tartarus trembled also, but Jove smote Typhoeus and scorched all the wondrous heads of the terrible monster. When at last the monster was quelled, smitten with blows, it fell down lame, and Zeus hurled him into wide Tartarus."

The Christian patron saint of fighters is St. George, and it is natural that the English, who among the Christian nations are not



SATAN BROODING. (After Doré.)

the least pious and at the same time not the least belligerent, have chosen the name of St. George for their battle cry.

The legend of St. George appears first in the *Legendæ Sanctorum* of Jacobus de Voragine, who tells us of a pagan city, the neighborhood of which was infested by a dragon that had to be appeased with human sacrifices. The monster was finally slain by St. George, a chivalrous Christian knight, who arrived at the moment the king's daughter was offered as a victim. The princess, at the request of the knight, tied her girdle round the dragon's neck, who now, although the beast had been reported dead, rises and follows the virgin like a tame lamb to the city. The people are frightened by the sight, but St. George kills him once more, this time for good. St. George is richly rewarded, but he distributes his wealth

among the poor, converts the King and his subjects to Christianity, and goes to another land, where he dies a martyr's death.

The historical St. George, an archbishop of Alexandria and a follower of Arius, possesses no features whatever of the heroic dragon-slayer of the legend. According to the unanimous report of Christian and pagan historians, he was an abject, cringing fellow, and when he had attained the high position of archbishop



THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL HOLDING IN HIS HAND THE SCALES FOR WEIGHING SOULS.¹
(After Lorenzo Sabbatieri.)



ST. GEORGE, THE PRINCESS, AND THE DRAGON.¹

proved a cruel and extortionate tyrant who was greatly hated by the people. He was deposed by the worldly authorities and put in jail on Christmas eve, 361. But his enemies, mostly poor people belonging to his diocese, grew tired of the delay of the law; a mob broke open the prison doors and lynched the deposed archbishop on January 17, 362. His violent death was later on regarded as a sufficient title to the glory of the martyr's crown. The most important service he rendered the Church consisted in this, that the offi-

¹ Reproduced from Scheible, Vol. VII. pp. 289 and 562.

cial recognition of an Arian saint helped to reconcile the followers of Arius.¹

It is an unsolved problem how St. George could have been identified with the dragon-slaying deities of ancient pagan mythologies. The connecting links are missing, but it is probable that there is no deeper reason than a similarity in the sound of names. Was perhaps a solar deity somewhere worshipped under the name *γεωργός*, i. e., tiller of the ground, because the civilisation of agriculture overcame the dragon of savage barbarism? Or is perhaps



ST. ANTHONY STRUGGLING WITH DEMONS.²



ARCHANGEL MICHAEL CONQUERING SATAN.

(By Raphael. In the Louvre.)

Gergis, a Mohammedan prophet and dragon-slayer (originally, in all probability, a Persian God-incarnation), the first prototype of the legend? It would be quite natural that on the Christianisation of the story the deeds of its hero should be transferred to that Christian saint whose name sounded most like Gergis.

The final conqueror of the dragon, however, is not St. George, but the Archangel Michael, who, on the day of judgment, plays the

¹Gelarius seems to be the first Roman Catholic Pope who mentions St. George, and he knows nothing of his life, but counts him among those saints "who are better known to God than to mankind" (*qui Deo magis quam hominibus noti sunt*).

²Reproduced from Scheible, *Das Kloster*, Vol. VII. p. 94.

part of the Teuton God Thor, slaying the Midgard serpent; and when the victory is gained he will hold the balances in which the souls are weighed.

The belligerent spirit did not remain limited to Michael and St. George, but was also imputed to other saints who proved their prowess in various ways in their encounters with the Evil One. St. Anthony, of Egypt (251-356), the founder of the Christian monastery system, is reported to have battled with evil spirits in the desert near Thebais, whither he withdrew from the world to practice severe penances. His heroic deeds, which consist of frightful struggles with the demons of his imagination, have been recorded by the good Bishop Athanasius, whose book on the sub-



ST. DUNSTAN AND THE DEVIL. (Reproduced from Scheible.)

ject is of special interest because it contains an essay written by St. Anthony himself, containing the gist of his wisdom and experience in struggling with evil spirits.¹

A comical story is told of St. Dunstan, Abbot of Glaston, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. While busily engaged at the hearth in the fabrication of a golden Eucharist cup the Devil suddenly appeared and worried him. But the Saint was not frightened. He took the pincers out of the fire and seized Satan's nose, who ran off with a howl and never again dared to molest him. St. Dunstan. The event is commemorated in an old rhyme:

¹ See the *Acta Sanctorum* of the Bolandists for January 17, which is observed as St. Anthony's day. In addition there are several Latin translations of St. Anthony's letters extant in the *Bibliotheca Patrum*.

" St. Dunstan, as the story goes,
 Once pulled the Devil by the nose
 With red-hot tongs, which made him roar
 That he was heard three miles or more."

A similar act of bravery is told of St. Cuthbert. Sir Guy Le Scroope (as Thomas Ingoldsby tells us, closely following the chronicle of Bolton) expected company, but finding at the ap-



THE LEGEND OF ST. CUTHBERT. (From the *Ingoldsby Legends*.)

pointed hour the banquet hall empty, because the guests had been kept away through a bad joke of the inviting messenger, he called on the Devil and ten thousand fiends to eat the dinner for him and take all with them to the infernal regions. The Devil came with his devilish company and all the folk of Sir Guy fled, leaving his little heir behind, who was at once seized by Black Jim, the leader of the fiendish company. In his anxiety Sir Guy cried to St. Cuth-

bert of Bolton, who actually made his appearance and forced the demoniac crowd to surrender the child, but he generously allowed them to remain the guests of Sir Guy, adding :

“ But be moderate, pray,—and remember thus much,
 Since you're treated as Gentlemen, shew yourselves such,
 And don't make it late, But mind and go straight
 Home to bed when you've finished—and don't steal the plate!
 Nor wrench off the knocker—or bell from the gate.
 Walk away, like respectable Devils, in peace,
 And don't "lark" with the watch or annoy the police !'
 Having thus said his say, That Palmer grey
 Took up little Le Scroope and walk'd coolly away,
 While the Demons all set up a ' Hip! hip! hurray !'
 Then fell tooth and claw on the victuals, as they
 Had been guests at Guildhall upon Lord Mayor's day,
 All scrambling and scuffling for what was before 'em,
 No care for precedence or common decorum."

One more story of a saint's courage which is told of St. Medard, who while once promenading on the Red Sea shore in Egypt, saw Old Nick carrying in a bag a number of lost sinners. The saint took compassion on the poor souls and slit Satan's bag open, whereupon Old Nick's prisoners escaped.

" Away went the Quaker,—away went the Baker,
 Away went the Friar—that fine fat Ghost,
 Whose marrow Old Nick Had intended to pick,
 Dress'd like a Woodcock, and served on toast !

" Away went the nice little Cardinal's Niece,
 And the pretty Grisettes, and the Dons from Spain,
 And the Corsair's Crew, and the coin-clipping Jew,
 And they scamper'd, like lamplighters, over the plain !

" Old Nick is a black-looking fellow at best,
 Ay, e'en when he's pleased ; but never before
 Had he look'd so black As on seeing his sack
 Thus cut into slits on the Red Sea shore."

Old Nick took up a stone and threw it at the saint.

" But Saint Medard Was remarkably hard
 And solid about the parietal bone."

The stone recoiled.

" And it curl'd, and it twirl'd, and it whirl'd in the air,
 As this great big stone at a tangent flew !
 Just missing his crown, It at last came down
 Plump upon Nick's Orthopedical shoe !

“ It smash'd his shin, and it smash'd his hoof,
 Notwithstanding his stout Orthopedical shoe ;
 And this is the way That, from that same day,
 Old Nick became what the French call *Boîteux* !



THE LEGEND OF ST. MEDARD. (From the *Ingoldsby Legends*.)

There can scarcely be any doubt that the original doctrine of Jesus of Nazareth was an ethics of peace ; not only peacefulness and gentleness of mind in general, but peace at any price, and a non-resistance to evil. That the warlike spirit among later Christians and the worship of belligerent archangels and saints was introduced into the writings of the early Church from pagan sources there can be no doubt, for the New Testament preserves even the language of Greek mythology. The writer of St. Peter's Second Epistle, speaking of the revolution of the angels, uses the verb *ταρταροῦν*, i. e., "to hurl to Tartarus," which is translated in the version of King James, "Cast down to Hell."