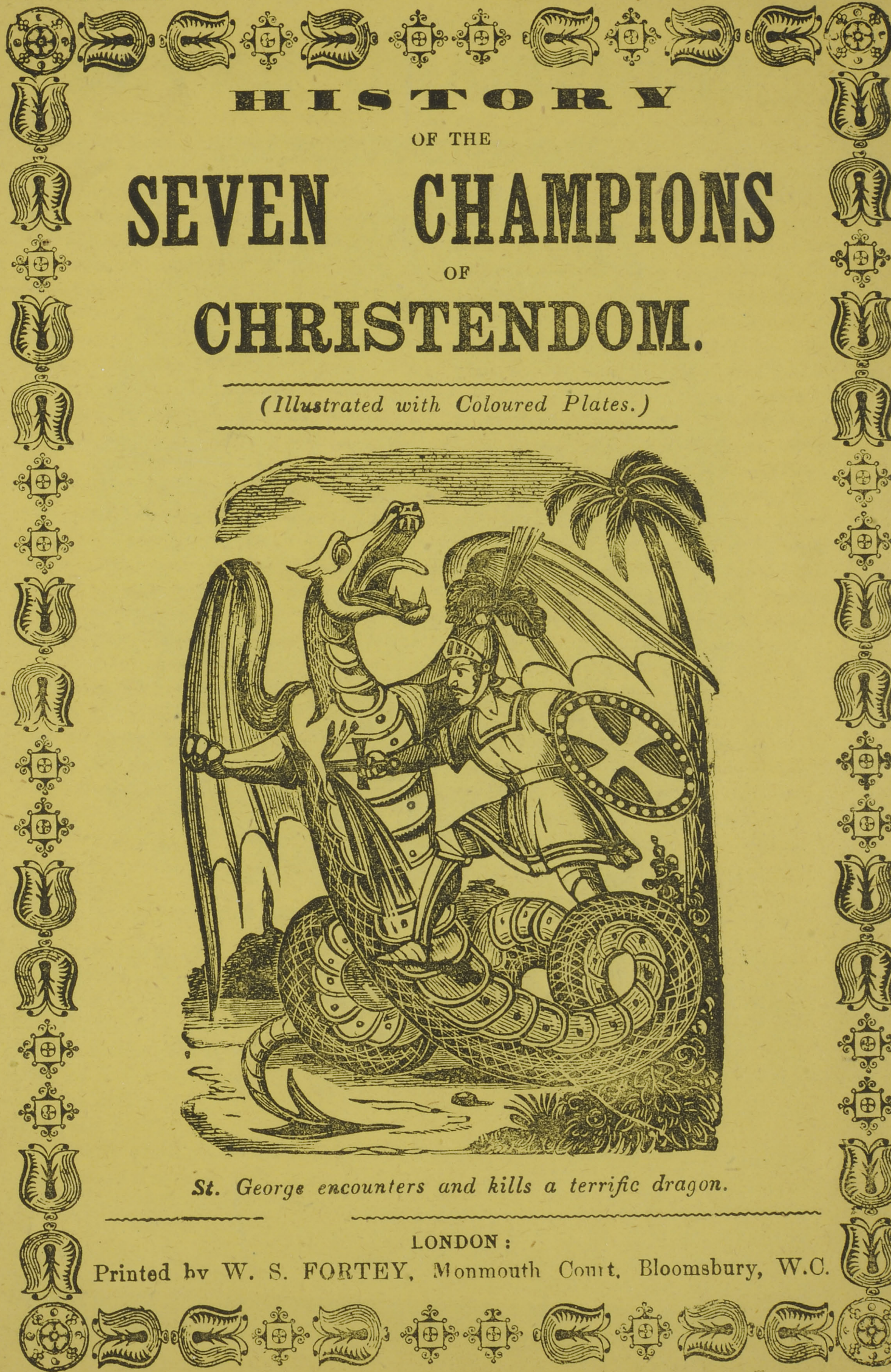


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HISTORY
OF THE
SEVEN CHAMPIONS
OF
CHRISTENDOM.

(Illustrated with Coloured Plates.)



St. George encounters and kills a terrific dragon.

LONDON :

Printed by W. S. FORTEY, Monmouth Court, Bloomsbury, W.C.

HISTORY OF THE
SEVEN CHAMPIONS
OF
CHRISTENDOM.



St. George encounters and kills a terrific dragon.

IN former times, very great while since, when there were giants, enchanters, and magicians, who had power to do wicked actions, it was fortold, that seven champions would arise in Christendom, whose renown for good and valiant deeds should be spread through the whole earth.—The first of these heroes was to be St. Denis of France, the second St. James of Spain, the third St. Anthony of Italy, the fourth St. Andrew of Scotland, the fifth St. Patrick of Ireland, the sixth St. David of Wales, and the seventh, and most famous of all the valiant St. George of England.

Calyba, a great and most wicked enchantress, now trembled for the downfall of her power, so she sent the evil spirits under her command to steal six of these heroes while they were yet in their cradles, and bring them to her brazen castle. But she thought she would herself make sure of St. George, who was born in Coventry, and son to the lord high steward of England; for she was much more afraid of him than of the others, as George had at the time of his birth the marks of a green dragon on his breast, a red cross on his right arm, and a golden garter on his left leg. Calyba then made herself invisible, entered

the nursery of the lord high steward, and bore away the lovely sleeping babe, leaving his parents to die of grief for the loss of him.

Calyba kept all these youths in her castle till they grew to be men; and then the beauty of St. George's person, his manly figure, and pleasing manners, won the heart of Calyba and she used all her arts to make him marry her.

One day she led him into a lofty stable, almost grand enough to be taken for a palace, where seven of the finest horses that ever were seen, stood in seven stalls made of cedar wood, inlaid with silver; one of them was even finer and larger than the rest; his hoofs were of pure gold, and his saddle and bridle were adorned with precious stones. Calyba led this from the stall, and gave it to St. George: its name was Bucephalus. She then led St. George into an armoury, where she buckled a noble breastplate upon him, placed a helmet, with a lofty plume of waving feathers, upon his head, and gave him a fine and sharp sword. When the young champion was thus armed for battle, he looked so very handsome, that Calyba could set no bounds to her love for him: so at last she put into his hand the silver wand which gave her all her power, and told him to use it just as he pleased.

St. George knew, and hated the wicked actions of Calyba, so he took the wand with a pleasure which he could hardly conceal. It was then about the hour that Calyba used to retire to a cave dug in the solid rock, to feast upon the bodies of children that she had killed. St. George watched her, and when he saw her enter the cave, he waved the wand three times and the rock shut upon the wicked wretch for ever.

He then set out for Coventry along with the other six champions; and in that time he built a grand monument to the memory of his beloved parents.

Early in the next spring, the seven heroes bade each other farewell, and they all took different roads in search of adventures; and St. George of England, after some tiresome voyages and travels, came into Egypt. That country was then in a most wretched state, on account of a dreadful fiery dragon, which tainted the air with his breath in such a manner, that a plague raged through all the land, and there were hardly people enough left alive to bury the dead. For this reason the king had made it known, that if any valiant knight would come forward to fight with the fiery dragon, he should receive the hand of the princess royal in marriage, and on the king's death should reign over Egypt.

When St. George heard this, he declared that he would himself fight the dragon, for the sake of the princess and whole kingdom.

Early the next morning St. George set out to find the fiery dragon. He had not gone far before he saw the princess Sabra, with some of her women, who were loudly weeping for the cruel state of the country. Our hero rode up to them, and told them he was resolved either to kill the dragon, or to perish in the trial. The fair Sabra was struck with surprise on finding that a stranger would engage in an attempt of so much danger, which the stoutest of the Egyptian champions had shrunk from with fear: but she thanked him in a proper manner, and, by St. George's advice, she went back to her palace, to wait for the issue of the great event.

As soon as our hero had reached the cave, the dragon sent forth such a dreadful roaring as seemed to shake the earth, and at the first onset St. George's spear was broken to pieces, and he himself was thrown from his horse. He then boldly drew his sword, and though almost stifled by the monster's noisome breath, he fought with such fury, that he soon felled his enemy beneath his feet. At this moment the dragon spread his wings in order

THE SEVEN CHAMPIONS.



St. Denis releases the lady from the mulberry-tree.

to take flight: but by so doing, he showed a soft part of his skin, and St. George at once stabbed him to the heart, The monster died with a horrid groan, and St. George, having cut off his head, rode back in triumph toward the palace.

He had hardly reached the city, when he was basely set upon by twelve armed men, whom the king of Morocco (who courted the princess Sabra) had hired to kill him. St. George soon put these villains to flight; and when he came to the court, he was treated with all sorts of honours, and the lovely Sabra gave him a diamond ring, as a small mark of her esteem.

In spite of this failure, the Moorish prince still vowed to destroy or ruin St. George. For this purpose he asked a private audience of the king, and told him, that St. George was an open foe to the religion of Egypt, and had tried to make the Princess a Christian. The king was so angry when he heard this that he declared St. George should not live any longer; but as it might not have been safe to put him to death in Egypt, where he had done such a great service to the people in killing the dragon, he wrote a letter to the sultan of Persia, begging him to put the bearer, St. George, to death, as he was an enemy to the religion of Persia and Egypt.

St. George little thought of this deceit, so he took this letter to the sultan; but as soon as he came into Persia he was taken up, and brought before the sultan, who had him thrown into a deep dungeon till a day should be fixed for his death.

At the end of three days, two fierce and hungry lions were put into the dungeon; but St. George having prayed to Heaven for strength, burst the cords which he was bound with, and finding an old broken rusty sword in a corner of the dungeon, he laid both the lions dead at his feet.

The sultan of Persia was amazed at this; and was afraid to put to death in public the noble champion, so he kept him in prison, where we will leave him at present, to look after the other champions.

St. Denis of France took his journey through Arabia. One day he sat down to refresh himself under a mulberry-tree, and being very hungry he plucked

THE SEVEN CHAMPIONS.



St. James kills the largest boar that was ever seen.

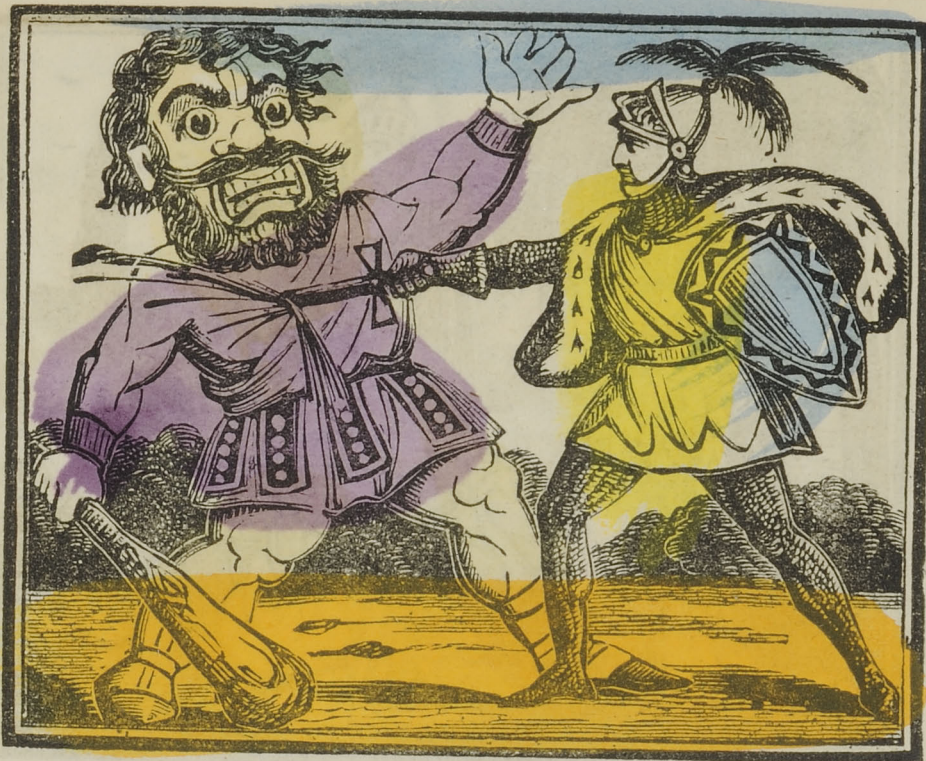
some of the fruit; as soon as he tasted it he became very faint, dropped on his hands and knees, and in a few minutes he found himself turned into a stag. This dreadful change filled him with great trouble he burst into a flood of tears, and lifted his eyes to Heaven to beg relief in this bitter distress, thinking he should never get his proper shape again; when a mournful voice, like that of a woman, came from the mulberry-tree, and spoke to him in this manner:—

“ Brave knight, like mine, your case is hard,
Yet patiently endure;
Oh, trust in Heav'n, who will regard,
And send at length a cure.
Seven years are number'd as your doom,
All full of bitter woes;
Then shall you human shape resume,
By eating of a rose.”

The champion of France was amazed at this, and felt his courage return. He listened some time longer, but the voice spoke no more; and when he thought of the long period in seven years that must pass before he should have his own form again, deep sighs and groans burst from his bosom. His faithful horse seemed to share his sorrow: he walked round and round his grieving master; and even tore down some branches from the trees, to shield him from the heat of the noon-day sun.

In this manner seven tiresome years passed away and on the morning when the seventh was ended, St. Denis saw his horse climb a steep rock, and bring down from the top three full-blown roses in his mouth. His master now thought of the voice that had come from the mulberry-tree, and he straight ate one of the roses; immediately on which he found himself in his proper shape. While he was giving thanks to Heaven for this happy change, he heard the mournful voice in the mulberry-tree begging for liberty. St. Denis seized his sword, and with one blow cut the tree to the ground, when he saw a handsome young lady there, who told him she was daughter to the king of Thessaly, and that an enchanter had kept her in that place. St. Denis placed her behind him on horseback, and took her to her father's court, where she was treated with every mark of gladness and love.

THE SEVEN CHAMPIONS.



St. Anthony attacks and destroys a monstrous giant.

St. James of Spain, in the mean time, passed through Sicily, where he had a dreadful fight with a fiery griffin, which lasted seven days and seven nights, but at last he killed it. He then continued his journey till he came to Jerusalem. As he drew nigh, he heard the sound of drums and trumpets, and heard that the king and all his nobles were making ready to hunt the wild beasts, with which the country was troubled; and that the king would give a noble reward to him who should kill the first boar.

St. James straight rode off to the forest, and before the king and his nobles came, he had slain one of the largest boars that was ever seen. The king got down from his horse to salute him, and owned him worthy of the reward; but when he heard that the stranger was both a Spaniard and a Christian, he said he should surely die, but gave him leave to choose his own death. He chose to be shot by the hands of a virgin.

The Spanish champion was then bound to a tree, and his breast laid bare to receive the blow; but none of the virgins who were called would do the cruel deed. The princess royal above all was so much moved by the courage of the gallant stranger, that she threw herself at her father's feet, and begged him to repeal his dreadful sentence. The king granted her request, but declared that if he ever should attempt to enter Palestine again, he should suffer death. The princess then untied St. James; and gave him a rich diamond ring as a token of her esteem. He took it with thanks, and got ready to leave the kingdom of her cruel father.

After riding some miles, he alighted off his horse, to rest, in a shady forest, and there began to think that he ought not to have left a princess who had saved his life. He at length resolved to return, and to enter the palace as a stranger, in want of employ. He did so, and was straight taken into the service of the princess; and found means to make himself known to her, and to persuade her to go away with him to Spain, where these faithful lovers arrived in safety.

Meantime St. Anthony of Italy pursued his journey till he came to a strong castle, in which a giant lived. In this castle were seven daughters of the king



St. Andrew restores to their proper shapes the daughters of the king of Thrace, who had been transformed into swans.

of Thrace, six of whom were changed into swans, and the other was forced to sing the giant to sleep. St. Anthony killed the giant and then made haste to Thrace, to give the king news about his daughters.

St. Andrew of Scotland, in the course of his travels, came at length to this castle, and found the king of Thrace calling to heaven in behalf of his daughters. St. Andrew told the king, that if he would become a Christian, his daughters should again appear in their own forms. The king was in a rage at this offer, and ordered his knights to attack the stranger, but he showed such valour that he made them all submit to him. On this the king agreed to become a Christian, and his daughters got their own shapes again. When the king went back to his palace, St. Andrew left the country, and the six young ladies set out to follow him, out of respect for the service that he had done to them.

These royal ladies came to Ireland, where they met with thirty cruel wild men, who dragged them through thorns and briars till the woods rung with their cries. St. Patrick, who happened to be in this part of the country, rushed upon the wild men with such fury, that he killed many of them, and forced the others to save their lives by flight.

St. David of Wales went to the court of Tartary; and showed such proofs of his strength and courage, that the emperor made him his champion. The emperor's son at length happened to be killed by the Welch champion in one of the warlike games, which put the emperor into such a rage against St. David, that he resolved to destroy him, but thought it would be safest to do this slyly; so he told him to go through an enchanted garden, and bring him the head of Ormandine the enchanter. St. David went boldly to the enchanted garden where he found a sword chained to a rock, and on its handle was written, "He that can lift me up shall conquer all." St. David at once grasped the sword, but in a moment he sunk upon the ground, and by the art of the enchanter was thrown into a sleep.

While the other champions were doing these great exploits, St. George of



St. George rescues the daughters of the king of Thrace from the wild men of the woods.

England, after being kept seven in prison, found means one night to break out of his dungeon, and then went onward till he arrived at the garden of Ormandine, where St. David had at that time slept seven years. When St. George saw the enchanted sword, he seized it, and pulled it up: the castle then sunk into the ground, and the wicked enchanter was carried away with it. After this, St. David went back to the court of Tartary, and St. George went to Barbary.

St. George heard on his journey, that the king of Morocco and his nobles were gone to enjoy the pleasure of hunting. He then put on a hermit's gown, made haste to the palace, where a number of beggars were waiting to receive alms from the fair Sabra. St. George mixed with the crowd; and when he saw the princess, he slipped the diamond ring, which she had given him, into her hand: she then led him into the hall, and gladly agreed to escape before the tyrant should come back, who had long tried to force her to marry him. Towards the evening of the same day, the princess and a Moorish servant contrived to meet St. George at the hermit's cave, where our champion put on his armour. Then taking the fair Sabra behind him, and being attended by the Moor, he galloped off as quickly as he could, till he had got quite out of the kingdom of Barbary.

After a tiresome journey, they found themselves near a large forest; and as they were faint with hunger, St. George left his lady with the Moor, and went boldly into the forest to procure some food. He had the good fortune soon to kill a deer, and returned with a haunch of venison; but how greatly was he shocked to find the Moor torn in pieces by two lions, and the creatures asleep on Sabra's lap! After getting the better of his first alarm, he ran them through with his sword, and gave thanks to Heaven for the safety of his beloved princess.

St. George and his lady at length came to Constantinople, where a great feast was held in honour of the emperor's marriage. In this city they had the good fortune to meet the other six champions, who, after many strange adventures, had also arrived at Constantinople with their ladies. Here the

THE SEVEN CHAMPIONS.



St. David seizing the enchanted sword in the garden of Ormandine

Christian champions showed wonders of courage in war-like games, with the knights of Greece, Hungary, and Bohemia. On the last day of these sports, St. George of England came into the field on a beautiful black steed; while the lovely Sabra sat in a car of triumph, to be a witness of his noble exploits. There was hardly any knight who would engage against the hero of England; and when at last some of them made trial of his strength, he threw down men and horses with such ease, that the field was soon cleared. The heralds crowned him with the garland of victory, and Sabra felt the highest pleasure in hearing the shouts of all the people.

But while the Christian champions were happy in the friendship of the emperor, and the enjoyment of their charming brides, the king of Morocco and the pagan princes, whose daughters had followed these champions, declared war against Christendom. On this the emperor of Constantinople made peace with his other foes, and then begged the champions to depart from his country. The Christian heroes and their ladies now left Constantinople; and agreed that every one should repair to his own land, and raise forces to subdue their enemies.

When the cause of their return was known, such numbers of people flocked to join them, that by the next spring they had an army of five hundred thousand men; who chose St. George to be their leader.

The pagans got together an army still greater than that of the Christians; but when they came to choose a general, they could not agree among themselves, and the dispute rose to such a height, that the kings of Persia, Egypt, and Jerusalem, soon drew off their armies, and went back into their own countries. Those who staid with the king of Morocco, split into parties, and fought a dreadful battle among themselves, with such fury, that the fields were covered with dead bodies, and the rivers stained with blood.

The Christian army at last came to the borders of Egypt; and when they marched into the inner parts of that country, they found the villages and most of the towns empty. St. George was fearful that this was only a plan laid to deceive him so he told his soldiers to remain in their ranks, and to have

THE BATTLE OF MARSTON

their arms ready in case of a sudden attack. They then marched to the
the in perfect order, as they were near the palace, when the gates were
of an iron and the king of Egypt, in deep mourning, walked
the head of the nobles, and the great officers of the kingdom, with
swords and lances. On their coming near the Christian camp, the
and the king, while the king in hand, some heard in
the king and he went daily for many years, till he died
of the Christians. The king, who had agreed to this, and made a promise
to the king, that the king of Egypt should bring to St. George's
the king of Egypt.

The king, who had now returned, and told St. George, that he
had been told in English, that to show to the king, that some
should come to see him, and assist for the cause.

St. George, who had the king of England, who was
the king of Egypt, the king of the sea.

The king of England, who had the king of the sea, the king
of a great army, and was to be seen in the king's
camp, and the king of the sea, and the king of the sea.

The king of the sea, who had the king of the sea, the king
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their arms ready in case of a sudden attack. They then marched to the capital in perfect order, till they came near the palace, when the gates were thrown open on a sudden; and the king of Egypt, in deep mourning, walked forth at the head of his nobles, and the great officers of the kingdom, with broken swords and lances. On their coming near the Christian champions, they all fell upon their knees, while the king in humble terms begged for peace.

St. George said he would freely forgive him, if he and all his nobles should become Christians. The king gladly agreed to this, and made a promise of his own free-will, that the crown of Egypt should belong to St. George and Sabra after his death.

An English knight now arrived, and told St. George that his Sabra, who had been left in England, was condemned to be burnt, unless some champion should appear to take her part against her false accuser.

When St. George heard this he set out for England, where he arrived on the very day fixed for Sabra's death.

The king of England caused the heralds to summon the accuser who came forward on a proud steed, adorned with gold and precious stones. The lady's champion was then called, and St. George rushed through the crowd, demanding that he might fight in her defence.

The heralds sounded a charge, and the two knights engaged. At the first onset, their spears were broken into pieces, and men and horses were thrown to the ground. The accuser leaped up, and struck so fiercely, that he cleft his enemy's shield in two. St. George then put forth his strength, and smote off the accuser's right arm, so that he sank to the earth, and died.

St. George now set sail with his beloved Sabra for Persia, which on reaching, he found the other six champions had conquered. After completing their conquest, the seven champions took shipping for England, where they were received with every mark of joy.

The six champions then embraced St. George; and then set out together to return to their native countries, where they lived honoured and beloved, and after their deaths their names were enrolled among the saints of Christendom.