

Saint George and the Dragon

as told by
Edward Cannon

The city of Lire was large and prosperous, with great walls and fine towers. The people grew rich buying and selling fine silks and spices. There was only one weakness to the city's invulnerable defenses, all the water for the city came from a single spring, high in the mountains at the mouth of a cave. By means of a narrow trench water was diverted to the city, where it was carefully stored in a great cistern. Because it was the only spring for many miles, the king kept a squadron of soldiers to guard it and patrol daily the trench bringing water to the city. A watch was set at night so that an enemy could not sneak unawares and poison the water. One day the sun darkened as a fell beast flew over the city. Panic reigned as people rushed to and fro, trying to find safety. It was impossible, and the great beast carried off many and devoured them.

More dreadful than the attack was that the great beast, a dragon, settled in the cave above the city. The soldiers fought bravely to defend the spring, but all were killed by the dragon's sharp claws and terrible sting. The dragon destroyed the trench that brought water to the city, and rent to pieces any who approached the cave, making it impossible to obtain water. The people quickly drank all the water stored in the city, and began dying of thirst. They sent men many miles to obtain water from other cities, but were repulsed by the residences there, fearing that the dragon might attack them also if they helped the citizens of Lire.

It was during this dreadful time that Saint George happened to come into the land, leading a legion of Cesar's best troops. Hearing of the dragon, and desiring to see it for himself, he traveled with a few of his most trusted soldiers to Lire. Arriving in the city, he was shocked to see the great destruction wrought by the dragon, and the equally great suffering of the people, caused by lack of water. In vain the people tried to persuade him not to provoke the beast. Undeterred by their pleas, Saint George ventured by night to view the beast. He found it sleeping at the mouth of the cave, jealously guarding the spring. The beast was so ferocious that even from a great distance his breath caught in his throat and his knees buckled. After viewing the beast, his heart swelled with compassion for the people of Lire. He retired to the wilderness to fast and pray for three days. While in the wilderness he observed a colony of ants, how individually each was weak, but together they accomplished mighty things. He was thus inspired that the people, if they worked together, could combat the beast where one must certainly fail.

Returning to the city, Saint George summoned his men and devised a plan whereby the people might obtain relief. All day he had the people gather wood, reeds, straw and any burnable thing. When night fell they build great fires, so great that dense clouds of smoke enveloped the city. At his command all of the soldiers clashed their shields and swords, and all the women and children of the city blew horns and beat on drums. The noise was so great that the dragon was roused from its lair and flew to the city. Because of the smoke and fire, it was unable to see the people, and they escaped harm. While the beast was thus distracted, all the men ran to the spring and filled every kind of vessel with water, carrying them quickly back to the city. At the dawn, the dragon returned to its den and the people ceased their tumultuous noise. All in the city rejoiced because of the water, and praised God for sending Saint George to them.

After a few days however, the water was exhausted, and the people had to create great fires again to obtain more water. Quickly all the fuel was exhausted in the city, and the people were without recourse. Saint George again retired to the wilderness to fast and pray. While in the attitude of praising God he spied a spider spin a web so fine as to be invisible, yet it clearly caught and held even the largest insects, who were then mercilessly stabbed to death by the spider. Inspired by this vision, he returned to the city, where he commanded all the women and girls to spin fine linen thread. They spun all day and all night, and all the next day. The men wove the thread into a great net, so strong as to be unbreakable. All that night the people prayed and sang hymns, and on the next day they drove all the cattle toward the dragon. It made a great slaughter, and consumed many. As evening approached, the dragon fell into a heavy slumber, and the soldiers crept upon it and threw the net over it. They quickly fastened the net at many places to the ground. The dragon let out a horrific screech, and thrashed about wildly, but the net was stronger than it. Saint George took a lance and stabbed the foul beast. He stabbed in one hundred and forty-four times before it stopped writhing, but finally it was dead. The people danced in the streets for joy and the whole land marveled at the power of Saint George and his God.

The End