

ST. DAVID'S DAY

by Hamish Hendry

There is a little corner of Wales which is very dear to all true Welsh folk. It is very close to the sea, near St. David's Head, and its interest gathers round an ancient cathedral of red stone and the holy man who is buried in this cathedral. This old building, with others, stands beside a little stream called the Alan, and here also is the city of St. David's, now a small village. It is all very lonely nowadays, this peaceful shrine near the restless sea, but in the Middle Ages it was a busy place. There were the comings and goings of great Kings and Queens with their followers, and many pilgrims of lesser name visited this shrine to do homage to the memory of the Welsh Saint. There are still many people who visit St. David's, the ancient Menevia, and the cathedral founded by the patron saint of Wales.

A great number of legends—stories of marvel and miracle—have been told about St. David. An angel is said to have been his constant attendant in his youth, and to have ministered to all his wants. In later years he began to preach, making long journeys through Wales and England, and visiting Jerusalem. When he preached to the people, so the old legends tell us, a snow-white dove sat upon the shoulder of the saint. The power to work miracles also was ascribed to St. David; he is said to have healed all diseases, and even raised up the dead. Many other strange and marvellous things are set down in the old chronicles as having been accomplished by the saint.

It is impossible to believe all these tales, and what we actually know to be true regarding St. David can be told in a few words. What is certain is that he was a great preacher and organiser in the early church, and his powers were so much approved that he was made Archbishop of Wales, taking up his residence at St. David's. We have also been told by the old chroniclers that he was a very good man, and this we can well believe. One of his biographers says of him that he was a guide to the religious, a life to the poor, a support to orphans, a protection to widows, a father to the fatherless. He is said to have died in A.D. 601.

Having been such a noble and good man the Welsh people have chosen to make St. David their patron saint. On the first day of March, in every year, they hold in remembrance the old preacher and teacher who lived so long ago beside the little stream in Menevia. They also keep in remembrance, by so doing, all that is good and noble in the history of the Welsh race. That is surely a right thing to do. For although Wales is now a part of Great Britain it has a history of its own, a language of its own, and a literature of its own. It is well that these things should be held in remembrance, both by the Welsh folk at home and those who have travelled into far lands, and they set apart St. David's Day as a special day for doing honour to all that is best in the ancient history of their country. It is a happy custom, alike for old and young.

Source:

Hendry, Hamish. E.F. Mason. "St. David's Day." *Holidays & Happy Days*. London: Grant Richards, 1901. 23 – 25.. Electronic.