

ST. ANDREW'S DAY IN AMALFI

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VERY blue are the waters of the Bay of Salerno to-day, as I look down upon them from the overhanging stone balcony of my apartment in the ancient Capuchin monastery of Amalfi, high up the steep cliffs above the city, on this last day of November. The Italian shore is all beautiful, but nowhere does it display greater beauty than in these sister bays of Naples and Salerno. Fair, too, are the ancient cities of Italy; but nowhere else do historic charm and scenic loveliness blend as they do in this crumbling city of Amalfi. Mrs. Oliphant wrote in no exaggerated strain, when she said, "Beyond the promontory of Sorrento, along that enchanted coast which rounds towards Amalfi, is one of the loveliest of earthly landscapes . . . the clinging mountain road to Amalfi has remained in my recollection as the most exquisite I have ever traversed." In the evil-smelling streets of this mediaeval city, amid its antique moss-clad paper mills, where hissing cascades turn creaking water-wheels, and beside its bejewelled cathedral and turretted churches, you are carried back at once into the Middle Ages, the days of the voyaging Crusaders and "Corsair Algerines." Here, with the decaying relics of ancient pride and glory all around, you can indulge to your heart's content in romantic day-dreams, even in this bustling prosaic age.

Cast your eyes down the rugged stony steps, thickly dotted with olive trees, and over-run by terraced vineyards, and—far below—you see the towers, red-tiled roofs, and factories of Amalfi clustering around the rocky base; and clambering up the gullies and precipitous cliffs, its scattered dwellings innumerable hanging like swallows' nests, in most cases, to the face of the crags. The shattered walls of the monastery have been restored and the interior has been modified to serve as a modern hotel—the famous Hotel Cappuccini Convent—the vineclad pergola of which, with the heavenly outlook over Salerno Bay, is the subject of many favourite and familiar pictures, often seen in art-store windows.

There is a tradition, of very doubtful nature, that Amalfi once extended further into the bay, but many wharves and buildings lie submerged. Longfellow tells of this desolating catastrophe, and of the passing of its once commercial greatness:

Vanished like a fleet of cloud,
 Like a passing trumpet blast,
 Are those splendours of the past,
 And the commerce and the crowd!
 Fathoms deep beneath the seas
 Lie the ancient wharves and quays,
 Swallowed by the engulfing waves;
 Silent streets and vacant halls,
 Ruined roofs, and towers, and walls.

The imagination is doubtful, but havoc and desolation there have been since the building of Amalfi in A. D. 600, when—as an old chronicler says: “It became a very considerable city, and was the seat of a republic which maintained its freedom until 1075.”

To-day is St. Andrew's Day—a day very dear to all Scottish hearts; but why is it causing such a stir amongst the peasantry and the citizens of Amalfi? The shining white road, along the shore, where

Sweeps the blue Salernian bay
 With its sickle of white sand,

as far as one can trace its windings, is alive with gaily clad people. Hundreds of boats are being beached below the long sea-wall of the town, discharging multitudes of laughing noisy passengers. Crowds are descending the steep paths from the hills above, or slowly climbing down the endless stone steps which lead from houses perilously perched on the crags and heights of the mountains around. Many peasants carry quaint musical instruments, and there is much singing and melody in the air. All are moving leisurely towards the cathedral in the centre of the crowded little city.

The cathedral claims to shelter in its crypt, in a gorgeous shrine, the relics of St. Andrew—the veritable bones of the first-called of the Disciples of the Lord. A further claim is made that, once a year, these bones exude, miraculously, a mossy green material called St. Andrew's manna, and the occasion is one of great ceremony and festivity. When Goldwin Smith visited Amalfi, nearly thirty years ago, this season was at hand; but he did not delay to witness the anniversary, and merely notes in his diary: “On the day when I halted at Amalfi in 1899, preparations were being made for an annual miracle, an exudation from the bones of St. Andrew, which an Amalfian mariner had been so fortunate as to secure from some Byzantine relic-monger in the Middle Ages.” The late Marquis of Bute, however, followed up very diligently the various legends, of which there are several, as to the fate of the bones of St. Andrew. “Did any of these relics actually reach Scotland nearly a thousand

years ago?" he asked, "so that, in consequence, St. Andrews became a famous cathedral city, the most sacred shrine and the religious metropolis of Scotland, and gave to Scotland her Patron Saint?" It was the scholarly and liberal-minded Principal Tulloch—one of the greatest of the twenty-three Principals of St. Mary's College, St. Andrews since its foundation in 1516—who confessed that he did not spurn as utterly fictitious the traditionary legends about Scotland's Patron Saint. Writing from Patras, on a tour he was making in 1864, he said:—

Here I was particularly interested in enquiring about St. Andrew, whose bones were said to have been carried from Patras to St. Andrews by St. Rule. The Greeks claim that they still lie here. They are kept in the Church of St. Andrew, in a very plain chest in a corner of the building, very different from the grand coffin in which the body of St. Spiridion lies at Corfu. Poor St. Andrew! What is the truth as to that melancholy martyrdom of his on the cross—the "crux decussata"? Did he have anything to do with Patras? All these legends seem to grow in interest to me, while I yet feel more and more the necessity of analysing them cautiously, and distinguishing their spiritual beauty and traditional significance, from their historical absurdities. . . . My friend the polemic Evangelical theologian pronounces the whole to be just "rubbish".

Doubtless there can be no credence given to the story that St. Regulus on October 29th, 370 A. D., was wrecked on the shores of Fife, with a company of nuns, carrying some bones of St. Andrew, which he had taken from their tomb in Patras, although this is solemnly recorded by Bishop Elphinstone in the Aberdeen Breviary dated 1488. There is little consistency in the various legends current during the Dark Ages in Europe. The *Chronicles of the Picts and Scots* specify the year 761 (A. D.,) the last year of the reign of King Angus, as that of the bringing of St. Andrew's bones, and they quaintly assert that "Ye relikis of St. Andrew ye Apostle cam to Scotland." After the saint's martyrdom at Patras in Achaia, his remains were in all probability entombed in the church there, still called the Church of St. Andrew. Thereafter, a distribution of various portions of the remains appears to have taken place. Constantine the Great removed some, in the 20th year of his reign, to the Church of the Apostles in Constantinople—taking no doubt, the lion's share of the relics. But when that city was sacked, Cardinal Peter Capuano carried some relics to Amalfi, where they were placed in a shrine in A. D. 1208. It is also said that, in 584, Gregory the Great had deposited an arm and three finger bones in the monastery of San Gregorio in Rome, and these Bishop Acca

took to Hexham, in Northumberland, England, where he built the great abbey of St. Andrew. Curiously enough, it was also an arm bone and three fingers which St. Regulus was reported to have taken across the North Sea. Acca was later expelled from Hexham, and fled north to Pictland, taking the relics of St. Andrew with him, and he presented them to Angus, or Hergust, King of the Picts. The king placed them in a costly gold case, and built a shrine, about A. D. 732. Over the shrine, which was resorted to by crowds of pilgrims, arose a vast cathedral—the largest of Scottish cathedrals—on the rocky headland of Muckcross, which also bore the name Kilrymont, and later St. Andrews. The cathedral was only completed in 1318, for under successive Archbishops, Primate of the ancient Columban communion, its construction was carried on for 158 years. It still stands, an imposing ruin. To adopt Professor D'Arcy Thompson's words in a recent article: "The cathedral is a vast ruin. The eastern wall and great window are well-nigh all that remain of a church that was the greatest in the land; not Ely itself has so long and so magnificent a nave . . . and here King Robert the Bruce gave thanks for the victory of Bannockburn to St. Andrew the guardian of the realm. The spoils of Bannockburn helped to enrich the cathedral with plate and cloth of gold." Here was founded the earliest Scottish university, bearing the name of St. Andrew, and it still carries on its service to higher learning, as it has done for five long centuries, under the shadow of the great minster also hallowed by the name of St. Andrew. Attracting students and men of learning from far and near, the university city grew in fame and wealth, but it was the cathedral with its enshrined relics that gave St. Andrews even greater repute. "Relics of an Apostle must attract pilgrims", wrote Andrew Lang, "and be very good for trade, and hence arose a city on a remote spot which can never have had any advantages in the way of commerce." Dean Stanley once expressed, in choice and memorable language, this claim to unique distinction made by the ancient ecclesiastical and academic capital of Scotland, when he spoke from the Lord Rector's chair in St. Andrews:

Other sacred and historic localities of your country have been long ago deserted by the stream of events. The White House of St. Ninian lies a stranded wreck on the shores of Galloway. For nearly a thousand years the holy island of Iona has ceased to be "the luminary of the Caledonian regions." But this temple at St. Andrews, as of another Minerva, planted on another storm-vexed Sunium—this secluded sanctuary of ancient wisdom—with the foam flakes of the Northern Ocean driving through its streets, with the skeleton of its antique magnificence lifting its gaunt

arms to the sky—still carries on the tradition of its first beginnings. Two voices sound through it—"One is of the sea, one of the cathedral"—each a mighty voice.

But our surroundings to-day are not in Scotland—they are in Italy, and in the city of Amalfi on the greatest day of her civic and ecclesiastical year. Crowded, as the buildings of the city are, in a narrow precipitous gorge, its dwellings, factories, churches and pinnacled edifices so press upon the narrow thoroughfares, which are paved with cobble stones, that they resemble ascending stone stairs. Vehicular traffic is difficult and dangerous, and passage on foot is very toilsome. Bastions and high walls are everywhere, and the prison-like houses are gloomy, and can hardly be reached by the sunlight. A fierce mountain torrent, the foaming Canneto, tears down a rocky channel, alongside the main thoroughfare, and the turbulent waters turn, to-day, as they have done for eight hundred years, innumerable water-wheels, which operate ancient paper-mills, famous macaroni factories, soap works, and other industrial enterprises. Longfellow truthfully sings thus:

Amid her mulberry trees
Sits Amalfi in the heat,
Bathing ever her white feet
In the tideless summer seas.

In the middle of the town,
From its fountains in the hills,
Tumbling through the narrow gorge,
The Canneto rushes down,
Turns the great wheels of the mills,
Lifts the hammers of the forge.

'Tis a stairway, not a street,
That ascends the deep ravine,
Where the torrent leaps between
Rocky walls that almost meet.
Peasant girls their burdens bear,
Sunburnt daughters of the soil,
Stately figures tall and straight;
What inexorable fate
Dooms them to this life of toil?

Amalfi has the oldest paper factories in the world, some of them having been carried on since the twelfth century. During the Arab occupation of Sicily, many Italian cities, Padua, Treviso, and later, Florence and Milan, learnt the art of paper manufacture. Amalfi was among these pioneer paper-making centres. But if Amalfi in those distant days was a centre of industry, a great

port for commercial shipping, and a centre of government, it was also a home of culture and science. At La Cava, between Amalfi and Nocera, the father of International Law was born, and the city itself was long regarded as the cradle of scientific navigation, for one of its citizens was credited with the invention of the Mariner's Compass. The claim that in 1307 Flavio Goio made here the first ship's compass was long accepted. Old chroniclers speak, however, of one Flavius Bembus, born in Amalfi, as the inventor. Doubtless there was some confusion here, for it was the historian Flavius Blondus who told in his *Italia Illustrata* (1450) that traders from Amalfi had introduced the floating magnet among the Mediterranean fishermen, but its discoverer was unknown, and as early as 1269 Peregrinus had described a form of pivoted compass. The poet Panormita referred to this very plainly in the line "Prima dedit nautis usum magnetis Amalphis." Most probably the error about Flavius as the supposed inventor was due to Giraldus, who, in his *Libellus de re nautica* asserts that one Flavius of Amalfi was the first to make the compass. Barlow, the English nautical authority, does not mince matters when he declares that "the lame tale of Flavius, of Amelphus, in the Kingdom of Naples, devising it, is of very slender probabilitie." Nor can Marco Polo be given the credit of bringing the compass from the East, where the Celestials, of course, had long used it; for in spite of the opinion of Dr. Gilbert, of Colchester, Sir Henry Yule emphatically and authoritatively declares, as a result of minute research, that "No one now imagines Marco Polo to have had anything to do with the introduction of the Mariner's Compass." Amalfi was not only for some centuries an independent political power, having its own coinage, a great export trade, and fame as a university centre; but was an early archbishop's see, with jurisdiction over the Bishops of Scala, Minori, Lettre, and the diocese of Capri, and also had the title of a principality belonging to the renowned House of Piccolimini. Now it is a worn and broken city, where meanness and magnificence jostle each other everywhere; yet if one can forget the poverty, misery and filth, and the gloom and the evil smells of the crowded alleys, one can enjoy a continual feast of romantic enchantment, under the blue arching sky overhead, cloudless and unchanging, and with an environment of sculptured edifices, carved columns, and broken arches meeting the eye on every hand. Down every narrow lane and alley a glimpse is gained of the enchanting Campanian sea, whose peaceful surface is scarcely fretted by the jagged rocks along the shore, into all the crevices of which the little tideless waves play with a noiseless ripple. This vision of the ancient city

and of the blue dreamy sea, "brought a sweet calm" confessed Mrs. Oliphant, the novelist, "to my sad sick heart after a time of serious anxiety and illness."

Sweet the memory is to me
Of a land beyond the sea,
Where the waves and mountains meet.

To-day the principal square, scarcely larger than a tennis court, is crammed and jammed with a gay mob, which seems to be ever on the move. Up and down the contracted streets, and seething up the steep steps which lead to the three great west doors of the cathedral, the restless tide of human beings sweeps and swirls. This cathedral is, indeed, the crowning glory of Amalfi. Its pointed tower, turret-like and elegant, glistens as though encrusted with jewels, and the broad west front and spacious walls of nave and aisles shine outside with prismatic colours. Brilliant mosaics, blue, amber, ruby, and gold, clothe its walls externally with gorgeous effect. Only in the perfect climate of southern Italy could such splendid decoration survive exposure to the open air, and withstand the weather and wear of centuries. Its effect is Saracenic. It is as bizarre as an Arab mosque. The three great west doors, nearly a thousand years old, almost rival the world-famous bronze Byzantine gates of Salerno. Inside, the cathedral is so gloomy and dark that, unless the altar be illuminated by tiers of lighted candles, as at high mass, one must walk about "by faith, not by sight." On the Sunday afternoon of my visit I wandered in the dim darkness of the interior, and in one corner I was surprised to find myself in the midst of a Sunday School class of poor Amalfian children, conducted by some ladies of the city. I immediately recalled the little-known fact that it was in an Italian city, in Milan, four hundred miles north of Amalfi, that St. Charles Borromeo, about 1580, founded and himself taught the first of all Sunday Schools, two centuries before Robert Raikes gathered his Sunday scholars together in the city of Gloucester, in England. I asked myself, as I tried to discern the ragged, unkempt children crouching around their teachers in the gloom, "Is it not possible that this Amalfi Sunday School is a survival, to-day, of the schools begun so long ago by the great Cardinal Archbishop of Milan?"

On this St. Andrew's Day, what a mob it is that almost fiercely besieges the cathedral! They scramble, and push, and perspire to get to the foot of the colossal bronze statue of the saint, and unceremoniously press each other to kneel before the richly wrought

gilt tomb, in which repose the relics of St. Andrew. To-day the relics are to be brought out, and carried through the narrow winding streets in procession. Just before the procession emerges from the great central door, there is unwonted commotion in the small crowded square, for two miserable dogs have engaged in a fight, and for a time all else is forgotten. The packed mob squeeze and push to clear a space for the noisy combat, and there is a great uproar of human voices, and confusion of howling snarling dogs. While the hubbub lasts, the sacred procession is wholly unheeded, and the priests and acolytes must wait. At last the doors open, the bells of the city churches ring out loud peals, there is a great blare of trumpets, and down the steep steps of the cathedral the dazzling train descends. It is led by a curiously caparisoned band, blowing the strangest variety of musical or unmusical instruments, some of them of fearful and wonderful form, like twisted snakes, others like misshapen bagpipes; but some like lyres, hung with bells in rows, which the player strikes with a metal rod as he holds the device aloft. Excepting that the music is very lively, and very noisy, I found it impossible to determine what the airs were. The dog fight is now forgotten, and all kneel as the relics of St. Andrew, in a very ornate portable tabernacle, are carried past, surrounded by a closely crowded group of clergy and uniformed officers. The Sacred Host is also borne along, and choristers innumerable move by, with priests of every girth and height, and many stately officials strangely garbed. Some of these last were, I understood, noblemen; but to me most interesting of all was the crowd of plain, humble fishermen, wearing red and blue tuques, and many showing glittering fish-scales upon their coarse garments. St. Andrew was a fisherman, but I wondered how many of them thought of that—doubtless most of them pictured him as wearing gorgeous robes and a glittering mitre, like a bishop, when he trod the earth, two thousand years ago. Lastly, came the bishops, and an archbishop, all of them wearing mitres, and carrying jewelled staffs. With strange mixed feelings I gazed upon this ancient festival, this unceremonious mingling of the sacred and profane, this jostling of reverence and irreverence in the streets, this vulgarity and bustle, and through the midst of it all the moving dumbly along of the silent earthly remains of the First-Called of the Apostles, if tradition can be trusted.

Up and down the winding streets, and across the crumbling bridges which span the turbulent Canneto, the procession continues its course through the staring crowds, and the air is very noisome, and damp and decaying odours mingle with garlic and tobacco;

but at last we emerge upon the wide shore road, and a sweet delicious air blows in from the open sea. The band never ceases to sound its discordant music, and the priests and choristers keep up their strange chanting, while boyish thurifers waft misty clouds of incense, as those relics of St. Andrew make their annual pilgrimage around Amalfi. Poor weary relics of the brother of Peter—poor scattered bones of the Saint whose anniversary is celebrated to-day—there has never been any rest for them since Constantine disturbed them at Patras sixteen long centuries ago!

But my thoughts, perforce, will go across the wintry seas, from this noisy Campanian city, and these sun-baked heights above me, and from these blue Tyrrhenian waters before me, to the remote breezy, storm-beaten headland of far-away Fife, where cathedral-crowned St. Andrews claimed to have in early days given sheltering rest to some relics—some prized bones of the saint. Whether the Greek Regulus, or the Northumbrian Acca, carried them to the lonely Scottish shore, we cannot know; and where the travelled bones now lie, we cannot know; but the glamour of patriotic glory has gathered around the name of the saint, and in every land Scotsman faithfully gather together on St. Andrew's Day.

Thus my thoughts still will wander, as I pace the Amalfian shore to-day, and across the sea again they fly from Scotland—not to Rome, nor to the ruined Gregorian monastery there, nor to the shrine of the Church of the Apostles in the Byzantium of the Moslem infidels, nor yet to ancient Patras on the bare stony shores of Achaia, where St. Andrew was martyred; but they fly to the low brown hills, girding the Lake of Gennesareth, in the land of holy memories, to Bethsaida. Yes, to Bethsaida, whose arid steeps are beauteous with pink oleander, and dark *Cedrus libani*, and where the distant snows of Hermon close in the scene as with a glistening encircling diadem.

There, in that humble eastern village, the brother of Simon Peter was born, and there the memory of him may fitly linger in peace and quietness, when his scattered bones can find no rest in the sacred shrines and busy cities of men.