

BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

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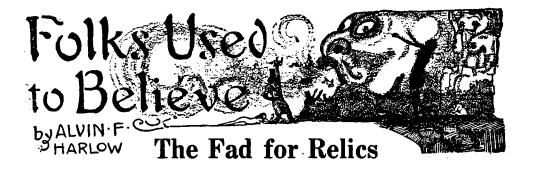
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EDIEVAL Christians had a craze for collecting relics, or supposed relics, of saints and sacred events; and they did not hesitate to claim relics of ethereal beings—as for instance, a feather from the wing of the Archangel Michael. Every abbey and church in Europe had its teeth, bones and bits of clothing from some holy personage. Relics even became an article of commerce. Canute, King of England in the Eleventh Century, commissioned his agent in Rome to purchase St. Augustine's arm for one hundred talents of silver and one of gold.

By the presence of these relics many miracles were said to have been performed—particularly by those which were believed to be portions of the body of Christ; but it is said that in some abbeys, when the saints did not readily answer prayers, the monks flogged the relics vigorously in the hope of bringing them to compliance.

A monk of St. Anthony, on a visit to to Jerusalem, saw there several relics "among which were a bit of the finger of the Holy Ghost, as sound and entire as it had ever been; the snout of the seraphim that appeared to St. Francis; one of the nails of a cherubim; one of the ribs of the verbum caro factum (the Word made flesh); some rays of the star which appeared to the three Wise Men in the East; a phial of St. Michael's sweat when he was fighting against the devil; a hem of St. Joseph's garment, which he wore when he cleaved wood, etc.; all of which," concludes the narrator, "I have brought very devoutly with me home."

King Henry III of England (1216-1272) once summoned all the great in the kingdom to come to London, and upon their arrival told them that the Great Master of the Templars had sent him a phial of the blood of Christ, which he had shed upon the cross-attested as genuine by the seals of the Patriarch of Jerusalem and others. The relic was carried in solemn procession to Westminster Abbey the next day, and the historian adds that though the road between St. Paul's and Westminster was very rough and miry, the king, as he rode along, kept his eyes constantly fixed on the sacred phial. Hales, in Gloucestershire, also possessed some of the blood of Christ.