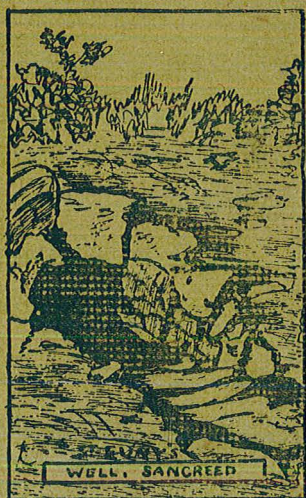
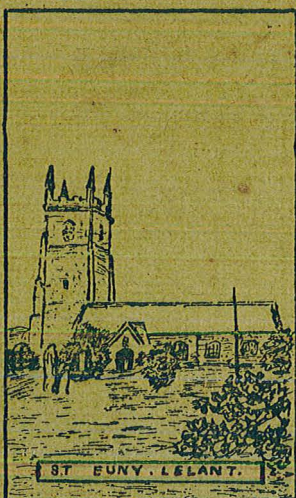
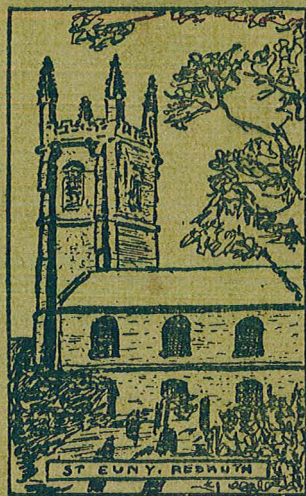




A CORNISH ST EUNY SAINT



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S. EUNY

A CORNISH SAINT

A Sermon preached at the Parish Church
of S. Euny, Redruth, on 4th February,
1923, by the

REV. G. H. DOBLE, M.A.

*Assistant Curate of Redruth, Examining Chaplain
to the Lord Bishop of Truro.*



J. PRATER & Co., PRINTERS, REDRUTH. 1924



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A.M.D.G.

S. EUNY, Abbot and Confessor.

GENESIS XII. i.

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee."

THIS Sunday is Feast Sunday in Redruth and Lelant, because February 1st is the Feast of S. Euny, and S. Euny is the patron of both parishes.

I.

You come to worship God here every Sunday because a holy man of God, named Euny, built a church here 1400 years ago. Nearly every parish in Cornwall is called after a saint, but our Cornish churches were not originally *dedicated* to the saints whose names they bear, as, e.g., S. Andrew's Church in Redruth is. They are called S. Euny's, or S. Mawes, or S. Just because S. Euny or S. Mawes or S. Just first built the church there. The Celtic saints who evangelised Wales and Ireland and Scotland and Cornwall and Brittany used to choose a spot for a church, generally where there was a spring (close to this church is a holy well, beside which a cross is said to have stood). They consecrated it by living there for forty days, fasting and praying, after which they built a tiny chapel of wood, or of small unhewn stones (such as you may see at Mañron and Gwithian and Perranzabuloe). They were nearly all monks and nuns, and they were usually accompanied by a few disciples, who lived with them, and worshipped in the little church they had built, and went out to preach and

Dedicated

(by kind permission)

to the Rev. H. W. SEDGWICK, M.A.,

Rector of Redruth,

Rural Dean of North Carnmarth,

and to the parishioners

of

"EUNY-REDRUTH."



Église catholique
en Finistère

Document numérisé en 2021

administer the sacraments in the surrounding district. You know how many places in Cornwall begin with *Lan*. "Every Cornish place-name bearing the prefix *lan*," says Canon Taylor, "implies a monastic foundation." Cornwall 1400 years ago was covered with tiny monasteries.

The Cornish saints lived a very long time ago, and the lapse of time and destructive agencies (like the Danish invasion and the Reformation) have very largely swept away the records of their lives. Of many we know little but their names. William of Worcester, an English traveller who visited Cornwall in 1478, before the Reformation, when each parish possessed a written life of its patron saint, tells us that Euny was a brother of S. Erth (formerly Ergh) and S. Ia (patron of S. Ives, formerly S. Ie's). "Sanctus Vuy, frater Sancti Herygh, jacet in ecclesia parochiali Sancti Vuy prope villam Lallant . . . ejus dies agitur die primo Februarii. Sancta Hya, idest Seynt Hy, soror Sancti Herygh et soror Sancti Vuy virgo, jacet in ecclesia parochiali villae Seynt Hy." ("Saint Uny, brother of S. Herygh, lies in the parish church of S. Uny, near the town of Lallant. His day is kept on Feb. 1st. S. Hya, i.e. S. Hy, sister of S. Herygh and sister of S. Uny, Virgin, lies in the parish church of the town of S. Hy,"—now S. Ives.) Euny therefore belonged to a party of missionaries from Ireland, among whom were Ia, Herygh, Gwinnear, Elwin, Crewenna (patron of Crowan), Breaca (Breage), Germoe and Sennen, who (as Leland tells us) crossed in frail coracles and landed in S. Ives bay. Many of them were put to death by a Cornish chieftain called Teudor. Euny must have been an active evangelist in West Cornwall, for his name is found in *four* parishes, which are by no means close to each other. Besides being the patron (i.e. the first builder, as explained) of the parish churches of Lelant and Redruth, he has a well (surrounded by the ruins of a carved granite shrine) called after him in Sancreed parish; and there is a chapel in Wendron parish known as Merther-Uny.

"The word Merther signifies a martyrdom, but more generally a chapel in honour of a martyr. Uny (Euny) was a well-known Cornish saint, therefore 'Merther Uny' would signify

either the site of his martyrdom and burial place, or a chapel of which he was the patron." (Euny does not seem to have been a martyr, and tradition, as we have seen, gives Lelant as his burial place).

"It is surprising that Merther Uny did not become a parish as it seems to have enjoyed semi-parochial dignity as late as the 14th century. In the Poll Tax of 1377 it appears as 'Parochia Sancti Eunini' (the parish of S. Euny). . . . The chapel appears to have been rebuilt late in the 14th century (and rededicated to S. Decumanus.) In 1397 Simon Body, Vicar of Wendron, obtained a licence to celebrate in the Chapel of S. Decuman in his parish once a year, viz., on the feast day of the Saint, August 27th. The remains of the Chapel of Merther Uny stand in a circular and elevated plot, now a garden, but popularly called the 'churchyard.' Remains of human interments have constantly been disclosed, and near the South entrance stands a magnificent Celtic cross of an enriched and most original design. Of the chapel itself, which was a plain rectangle, only the North wall is still standing, but four little two-light windows of 14th century design have been removed for the purpose of adorning a neighbouring cowshed." (C. G. Henderson). The chapel seems to have been used till the 18th century.

The name Euny is found in Brittany. The Bishop of Vannes in 580 was called Eunius, and a Breton mystery play exists of which the title is "Louis Eunius, or the Purgatory of S. Patrick." Professor Loth says that S. Euny is the patron of Plevin (Plou-Evin or Ewin) near Carhaix.

II.

Now because very little is known about many of these Celtic Saints, and because in some cases (owing to the very fact that the true story of their lives has perished) some rather childish legends about them have been handed down to us by second-rate writers, many people rush to the conclusion that these old Saints were harmless lunatics, or at any rate uninteresting personages. They are making a great mistake. We know very well what S. Euny and the other Cornish Saints

fin 5 parishes. Crowan s'appelait jadis Euny-Crowan. L'église paroissiale de Redruth s'appelait Merther Euny en 1291 et 1301.

x N. La chapelle de S. Decumanus i.e. a Degibmz. sur le Loc Pool.

must have been like, because more than one of the Celtic Saints had the good fortune to find as a biographer a really capable writer, who drew a truthful and vivid picture of his life. No biography can be more human or more full of charm than Adamnan's Life of S. Columba. What can be more fascinating than the story of S. Brandan?

The story of the Celtic Saints, far from being uninteresting, is a story of unequalled romance and poetic charm, for the Celtic race is an imaginative and poetic race. You and I ought to find the deepest interest in trying to reconstruct the Age of the Saints in Cornwall.

I am going to tell you what sort of man S. Euny must have been. I shall describe, first his outer life, and then his inner life.

(a) A thick forest covers this valley, and all the country between Carn Brea and the sea. On the top of Carn Brea is a fort and little town, thousands of years old. S. Euny has come here because this little town is the chief centre of population in the district. The first thing that strikes you as you look at him is his Celtic tonsure—all the hair of the front of his head from ear to ear is shaved off, while from the back of his head his long hair hangs down. He wears a white tunic and coarse woollen clothes. He has hanging at his side a wallet containing two or three books and a little food, also a case containing relics of the Saints. He has no money. He carries a shepherd's staff, and a large bell shaped like a goat's bell. ("Both the laity and clergy in Ireland, Scotland and Wales held in great veneration portable bells, and staves—crooked at the top, and covered with gold, silver or brass," wrote Giraldus Cambrensis in his Description of Wales in 1188. I have seen the great bell of S. Paul Aurelian (patron of Paul, near Penzance) in the cathedral of S. Pol de Leon in Brittany, the bell of S. Meriadec (patron of Camborne) is preserved at Stival in the diocese of Vannes, that of S. Columbanus at Bobbio in Italy. The Duke of Argyle tells us in "A Breton Pilgrimage" how he saw the bell of S. Ronan carried in the procession at

the great Pardon of Locronan). Wherever Euny goes the people ask his blessing "with extended arms and bowing head" (Gir. Camb.) He builds a church here, and hallows a churchyard round it, which at once becomes a little haven of rest in time of war, and a sanctuary, i.e., a place of refuge to which you may flee if you have the misfortune to kill anyone. We have a Higher Sentry, i.e., Sanctuary, close by our church here. "Their churches enjoy more than common tranquillity. For peace is not only preserved towards all animals feeding in churchyards, but at a great distance beyond them, where certain boundaries and ditches have been appointed by the bishops, in order to maintain the security of the Sanctuary."—(Gir. Camb.)

(b) Such was Euny in outward appearance. But the influence which S. Euny was able to exercise over the people of West Cornwall was due to the vigour of his inner life, to the beauty and strength of his character.

S. Euny was an *apostolic* man. It was partly, no doubt, owing to "the vagrant element in the Celtic spirit" that he left his native country and came here. The Celtic Saints were "born to wander," but he came to Cornwall not simply out of love of travel, nor to make his fortune—as the active young Cornishman to-day goes to America or South Africa: "The Lord has said unto him," as to Abraham of old, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." Like S. Paul, Euny is so full of the thought of the world to come that he feels he must go and tell others about Christ. He considers nothing worthy of his thoughts but God and heaven. He feels that "one thing only is needful": He has "suffered the loss of all things that he may win Christ." He passes his life "in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." Phil. III. : 8, II. Cor. xi. : 26, 27).

S. Euny was a man of *heroic virtue* and striking saintliness of life. What Giraldus Cambrensis said of Wales was true of

every Celtic people—"hermits and anchorites more strictly abstinent and more spiritual can nowhere be found; for this nation is earnest in all its pursuits, and neither worse men than the bad, nor better than the good, can be met with."

He and his companions "kept under their bodies" (I. Cor. ix. 27) by *rigid fasts* and strict self-denial. The rule of the Irish monk S. Columbanus was the strictest of all monastic rules.

Fasting and *prayer* go together (Matt. xvii. 21). Euny spent a great part of his time every day in frequent and earnest prayer. This spot was once the scene of almost ceaseless prayer.

Euny was, like all the Celtic saints, a scholar and a book lover. He carried with him a beautifully illuminated psalter and service book.

He was probably a great friend of animals. "The wild beasts of the forest came to know Columbanus; the birds would settle on his hands, and the squirrels run down from the tree tops to take shelter beneath his cowl. Even a wolf, who lived in a cave high up on the rocks, which Columbanus wished to make his place of retirement, gave up its den to him, and neither hurt nor disturbed him when he rested and prayed there."

Euny was a very *humble* man. A Celtic saint (Angus the Culdee), a great scholar and preacher, was so distressed by the admiration and praise he received that he fled in disguise to a strange monastery and asked to be admitted as a lay brother. "He said he wished for employment as a serving man. He cheerfully undertook the most laborious offices, and was engaged in field labour and the farmyard. He remained unknown for seven years, but at last his secret came out. He was sitting one day at work in the monastery barn, when he heard a child sobbing. He found that it was a little scholar from the monastery school hiding behind the straw, and very frightened

at being discovered. He had not properly learned his lesson, and was afraid to go to school. He begged Angus not to send him to his master, but to hide him in the barn. Angus was sorry for the child, for he had really tried to learn his lesson, but he was not a clever boy, and the lesson was hard. Angus took him in his arms and comforted him, and after a while the child forgot his trouble and fell asleep. Angus sang the lesson over and over softly while the child was dozing, and talked to him about it gently, so that presently the child stood up and could repeat it perfectly from beginning to end. Angus then sent him to the teacher, who was so surprised at the way the ordinarily stupid pupil repeated his lesson, that he obliged him to tell how he had learned it. "He who has taught this child his lesson cannot be a mere serving-man," thought the Abbot, and it flashed across his mind that it must be the monk Angus, who had disappeared suddenly seven years ago, and who had never since been heard of. He ran to the barn, embracing Angus with tender affection, but reproaching him with having deprived them all of his learning and experience for so long a time. They became bosom friends, and Angus returned to his literary work, and became "The bright Sun of the Western World." (Eleanor Hull; "Early Christian Ireland"). Thus did the Celtic saints practice the maxim "Love to be unknown" long before the "Imitation of Christ" was written. [Imit. Bk. I. c. ii.]

Such was S. Euny, our patron saint. May we follow his example!

S. Euny, Pray for us.

NOTE.

Dr. Borlase visited the well of S. Euny at Sancreed in the latter part of the 18th century. He says: "Two women were here who came from a neighbouring parish, and were busily employed in bathing a child. They both assured me, that people who had a mind to receive any benefit from St. Euny's well must come and wash upon the three first Wednesdays in May."

The place is called "Chapel Uny." A writer in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for May, 1844, signing himself "P," dating his letter from Penzance, says: "Chapel Uny is now totally ruined, though it is said to have been used for divine service four times in the year within the memory of persons but recently dead, and was certainly not long ago in tolerable preservation."



My best thanks are due to Scout Tom Clark, of the 2nd Redruth Troop B.P. Scouts, for his artistic design for the cover of this little book.

