



Many years ago, when the Editor of The Western Churchman was a very "wee" boy, he had a good aunt, who used to tell him lots of stories in the long winter evenings; and as he would like his young friends in the great Northwest to be as well off as he was, he has asked Aunt Mea and Aunt Ega to take charge of the Children's Corner. Now you will have lots of splendid stories, etc.—Editor.

The Legend of St. Christopher.

There was once a man who was so large and strong that he well merited the title of giant which everybody gave him. This man, whose name was Offero, was very proud of his strength, and one day he said to his comrades:—My friends, "I am sure my services would be appreciated by the most powerful of monarchs. I am going to offer myself to serve the greatest king on earth." Not long after Offero entered the service of a powerful sovereign, and for a long time was perfectly happy. One day, however, one of the courtiers spoke of the evil one, and at this word the king trembled. The giant, in surprise, asked him why he trembled.

"Because I am afraid," said the monarch, timidly.

"What!" cried Offero, "you are afraid? Are you not, then, the most powerful king on earth?"

"Oh! as to that, yes," responded the king; "but that does not imply that I have as much power as Satan, who is king of the lower regions."

"If that is so," replied the giant, "I shall leave you. I have sworn to serve the master of the world; therefore, I shall go and offer my services to the devil."

The giant went to find his new master. He enquired of every person he met the road to Satan's kingdom. When he perceived that they all knew his prospective master and trembled on hearing his name, he could not hide his satisfaction, and eagerly took one of the numerous routes indicated and hastened to present himself to the king of the under world.

His services were immediately accepted, and he found himself very busy, indeed. One day the Devil and Offero were out together. They arrived at four cross roads, and there stood a large wooden cross. No one was in sight, and the giant was very much surprised to see his master grow pale and tremble.

"Why, what is the matter?" he asked.

"I am afraid, that is all," said Satan, hesitatingly. "I am not as a rule afraid of a bit of wood, but a cross makes me think of Christ, and then I tremble."

The giant, who had never heard the name of Christ, demanded, impatiently, "Who is Christ? Is he more powerful than you, the king of hell?"

"Alas, yes!" said the Devil, in a doleful voice. "He is far more powerful than I, for He is King of Heaven."

"Very well," said Offero, "I shall leave you and go and enter His service."

He started on his journey, and asked everybody he met how he could get to the Kingdom of Heaven, where Christ ruled, but he found no one who could point the way. Finally, he encountered a long procession of men, women and children of all ages and of all nationalities.

"Who are you, and where are you going?" demanded the giant.

"We are Christ's servants, and we are going towards Heaven," answered the pilgrims.

Offero, delighted at this response, joined them, and, while en route, he often interrogated them, learning from them many strange things. They told him that before arriving at the Kingdom, they must cross a very deep and swiftly flowing river. There was no bridge and no boat—each person must work his own way as best he could. He also learned that one must wait patiently at the river until the summons came from the King. A messenger, dressed in white, they said, would appear suddenly and invite, sometimes one person and sometimes another to cross the river, and enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

The giant and the pilgrims soon arrived at the river, and while he was noticing how deep the water was, a messenger arrived and told a poor, sick woman that Christ wanted her, and that she should be perfectly well. The poor woman was overcome with joy, but when she reached the edge of the river she began to weep, because she was afraid to step in. Offero, who had a kind heart, approached her and offered to help her across. She was soon mounted on his back and arrived safely on the other side. The giant then begged her to tell Christ that he desired to serve Him, and added that until he received a messenger, he would employ all his strength in helping the feeble and timid to cross the river. To be always ready to help travellers, and Offero was very busy, he built himself a little cabin by the water's edge, where he lived.

One night, when the wind was blowing very hard and the waves were high and menacing, Offero heard a knocking at the door, and ran to open it. The darkness was so great that he was obliged to light his lantern. On opening the door, he found a little child, who looked at the waves with fright. On saying, "I must cross to-night," Offero replied, "Poor little one, it is a good thing I am here, for you could never cross alone."

The good man lifted the boy on his shoulder and dashed bravely into the water. But Offero soon perceived that the current was stronger than ever. The thought of the poor little boy sustained his strength, although at each step the water seemed colder, the waves higher, the current stronger, and the child heavier and heavier. At last the shore was reached, and he saw with surprise that his burden was no longer a child, but a beautiful man, who gave him a look of ineffable sweetness, and said: "Offero, I am the Christ you have served so long. I went upon the earth to save all those who otherwise would perish. If I seemed heavy, it is because I bore all the sins of the world. You carried me, Offero, and henceforth you shall be called Christopher—one who has borne the Christ. You have served me faithfully for many years, and I now invite you to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, where you may always be with Me."