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## ST. CHRISTOPHER.

### A CHRISTMAS IMAGINATION.

By Isabel Macdonald.

Since the Middle Ages onwards St. Christopher has been a favourite subject for artists whether they might be painters or sculptors or of those who used as their medium glass, metals or wood. Yet in spite of his popularity then and now there is, perhaps, no saint of whom less is known historically. It has been established that there was a man named Christopher who died a martyr's death in the third century. However legend may weave itself around him, however beloved he may be—and he is one of the most beloved of all the saints—however great his inspiration for religion and art, apart from the fact of his martyrdom, all that is known of the saint is told us in his name—Christopher. That is all and yet it has conveyed more to artists and caught more the imagination of the multitude than many printed volumes of biography would have done.

Legend has it that St. Christopher was a Canaanite and a giant. In the Golden Legend it is stated that he was twelve cubits high, twice the height of a very tall man. One day it came into his mind that he would seek out and serve the greatest prince in all the world and so, to quote from the Golden Legend, "So far he went that he came to a right great king, of whom the renomee generally was that he was the greatest in the world" and so Christopher became the servant of this king. Once a minstrel sang a song to the king in which there was frequent mention of the devil. "And the king, which was a christian man, when he heard the name of the devil, made anon the sign of the cross on his visage." And when Christopher saw this "he made great marvel what sign it was" and pressed the king to tell him. On the

king's refusal to do so Christopher said he would leave his service. And so the king agreed to answer him. "Alway," said the king, "when I hear the devil named I fear he should have power over me, and I garnish me with this sign that he grieve not ne annoy me." Upon hearing this Christopher decided that the devil was more mighty than the king and so he set out to find the latter that he might serve him. On his pilgrimage he met a great company of knights and one cruel and horrible came to him and demanded whither he went. Christopher replied "I go seek the devil to be my master" and the devil replied "I am that thou seekest"; and Christopher took the devil for his master. As they passed along the highway they saw a cross and the devil was afraid and fled so that they found themselves in "a sharp desert." Again Christopher doubted whether he had found the greatest prince in all the world and insisted that the devil should tell him the cause of his fear. At last the devil gave answer: "There was a man called Christ which was hanged on the cross and when I see his sign I am sore afraid and flee from it wheresoever I see it." So Christopher told the devil, "Then he is greater and more mightier than thou, when thou art afraid of his sign, and I see well that I have laboured in vain when I have not founden

the greatest Lord in all the world. And I will serve thee no longer, go thy way then, for I will go seek the Christ." Thus Christopher went in search of yet another Master. Just here we might interpolate again a reference to the name of the saint. In olden times and down into the Middle Ages great importance was attached to a name and sometimes, as in the case of St. Paul, an individual would change his name. Tradition does not say that Christopher always bore the same name and in fact it would be contrary to the spirit of the legend to suppose this. Some traditions have it that he was named Rebrobus



ST. CHRISTOPHER.  
REPRODUCED FROM THE PAINTING BY WITZ AT BASLE.

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