

before he knew the Christ, indicating that he was a sinner. It matters little, however, what his name was before he became the Christopher—the Christ bearer.

**“ The Greatest Prince in all the World.”**

Long was the search of Christopher until he found “ the greatest Prince in all the world,” but at last he met a hermit who taught him of the Christ. This hermit told his pupil that he must often fast, but Christopher replied, and again we quote from the Golden Legend, “ Require of me some other thing and I will do it, for that which thou requirest I may not do.” The hermit next enjoined that he must make many prayers and Christopher replied: “ I may do no such thing.” Next the Hermit spoke to him of a river in which many pilgrims and others had perished and instructed Christopher: “ Because thou art noble and high of stature and strong in thy members, thou shalt be resident by that river, and thou shalt bear all them that pass there, which shall be a thing right convenient to our Lord Jesu Christ whom thou desirest to serve, and I hope He shall show himself to thee ” and Christopher replied: “ Certes this service may I well do.” So it came about that Christopher made his “ habitacle ” by the river and he had a great pole for his staff (according to some forms of the legend a young tree) and “ he bare all manner of people without ceasing.”

Once during the night, when Christopher was asleep in his “ habitacle,” he heard a child calling “ Christopher come out and bear me over.” Christopher went out and found no one. Again he heard the voice and again he went out and found no one. A third time he was called and now “ he found a child, beside the rivage of the river, which prayed him goodly to bear him over the water.”

The legend goes on to tell of how Christopher lifted the child on his shoulders and bore him over the river. As they went the river rose and swelled and the child became heavier and heavier, insomuch that Christopher “ had great anguish and was afeared to be drowned.” When they had passed over the river Christopher addressed the child saying: “ Child, thou has put me in great peril; thou weightest almost as I had all the world upon me, I might bear no greater burden.” And the child gave answer “ Christopher marvel thee nothing, for thou hast not only borne all the world upon thee, but thou hast borne Him that created and made all the world upon thy shoulders. I am Christ the King whom thou servest in this work.” Then we have the story of how the Christ directed Christopher to place his staff in the earth and of the blossoming of the staff. We will refer our readers to the Golden Legend, with its lovely old English phraseology, for what remains to be told in the legend, after Christopher (whether in the Pauline sense or as pictorially expressed in the picture) had borne the Christ. We will turn our attention now to the accompanying illustration.

As has been indicated there have been many paintings of St. Christopher of which the best known is that by Titian. It was the habit of mediæval artists to paint this saint, as Titian did, as a giant with enormously developed limbs and muscles; but, strangely enough, in all their pictures, the child is painted with the utmost delicacy and in each it is the very image of tenderness and almost flower-like in its fragility, with a poise more like to that of a butterfly than of any earthly child. Also, in all the pictures by the old masters that we have seen, the physiognomy of the child is that of the teaching Christ, the “ Solomonic Christ,” rather than a child in whom innocence and divinity alone are emphasised.

**Looking into the Past.**

A year ago, while in Switzerland, we visited a museum in Basle. When it was just about closing time we walked into the last of its galleries, tired and only half capable

of attention. Suddenly, before one picture, we were arrested by a strange feeling that we were actually looking into the past, we were gazing not upon the picture, but upon what might be described as its architype, upon the feelings and the conceptions that lay in the mind of the painter when he went to his canvas to paint his picture of St. Christopher. A closer attention to the picture soon dispelled what had appeared as something most strangely and indescribably alive; the doors were closing and we had to content ourselves with buying a photograph of the picture which is here reproduced. But, by the next morning, we had decided to stay another night in Switzerland, to return again to Basle, to have yet another look at the picture and to ascertain who painted it. That it was arresting to others besides ourselves was indicated by the behaviour of the only other visitor to the gallery that morning: as he stood a little behind us he murmured, with a kind of half conscious wonder: “ the water's water and the air is air.”

It is difficult to give a good impression of such a picture, especially of one with such rich depths of colour, in a black and white reproduction. But, in the original picture, the loveliest thing is the delicately poised figure of the child, a child with the face of a philosopher, but full too of solicitude and love, serious and reverent; the manner in which he grasps the hair of the saint and dominates the whole figure of the latter has an attractive humour about it, which is not at all incongruous to the subject, while the expression of the saint denotes joy and amusement rather than the “ anguish ” of which he complained. Indeed there is reason for introducing humour into the picture, for Christopher is “ afeard ” of the swelling of the river and humour is one of the best antidotes to fear. The saint's garments appear somewhat cumbersome and impracticable for his vocation, but Witz (the great Swabian artist who painted the picture) loved painting draperies and often, in the dresses of women especially, he exaggerated the draperies, but always with the effect of showing beautiful colouring, depths of light and shade and graceful, harmonious folds. Most artists painted St. Christopher with his limbs bare from the knees and Witz also has a picture in which the saint is shown with a much simpler garment which reaches to his knees. In the picture described, however, the artist has yielded to his own artistic feeling and inclination. In almost all the old pictures of the saint there appears the strange little figure, on the farther shore; usually he carries a lantern, but in this one it looks more like a basket.

**The Art of Witz.**

To understand the picture better it might be well to glance, for a moment, at one period in the life of its creator. Witz lived in the early part of the fifteenth century and in some ways he may be said to have introduced a style of art that was brought to perfection in the works of Dürer. At the time when he was in Basle, a great Church Council was about to be held there and it is probable that he and other artists were brought to the town to decorate the churches in preparation for this. Be that as it may, the great school of art, established by Witz, soon made Basle a very important centre of art. It is to be borne in mind that, in the Middle Ages, art was an important means of teaching Christianity, and whether or not Witz intended, in this picture, to paint with such an object in view there is no doubt that the principles of such a purpose must always have been more or less in his consciousness. And so we may, as people did in past ages, let meaning grow, for a short space of time, out of the picture, instead of seeing in it only one so perfect in technique that the “ water is water and the air is air.”

Great emphasis is laid upon the weight of the child in most of the legends of St. Christopher. It would be easy

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