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TABLE OF CONTENTS

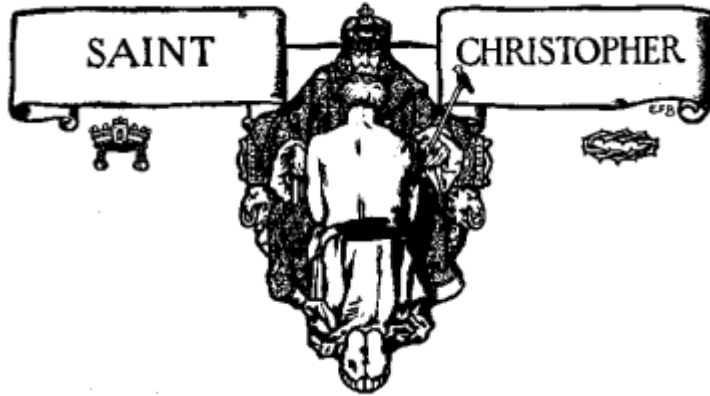
SAINT CHRISTOPHER	3
ST. CUTHBERT	13



CHRISTOPHER SHALT THOU BE NAMED, BECAUSE THOU HAST BORNE
THE CHRIST UPON THY SHOLDERS

CHAPTER I

SAINT CHRISTOPHER



In olden days it was no strange thing for soldiers to become saints, saints martyrs.

Saints! For the strong, white Christ drew the brave and stalwart to His side. Martyrs! For the old gods were yet alive, and torture and death awaited those who refused to worship them.

It was in the far east, in these days of long ago, that the lad was born who became St. Christopher.

In his boyhood he was named Offero, the Bearer, for already he was tall and strong, better able than were his companions to carry heavy loads. And because his mind was active even as his body, he was chosen captain of his comrade's games, leader of their expeditions.

How the growing lad loved the clean winds that blew across the desert as he braced himself for the race! How he

loved the hills covered with olives, as he crossed them ever a little ahead of his boyish followers!

As Offero grew taller and stronger, strange thoughts flitted to and fro in his mind.

When he was a man what would he do? He thought he would surely leave his home sheltered by the olive trees, and go out into the wide world, to the great cities of which he had heard. Power, Strength, these should be his gods, to these only would he offer homage. He would have been well-pleased to be a king and sit upon a throne ruling over great dominions, but as this could never be he would become a soldier and serve the most powerful monarch on earth.

Years passed and the stripling became a man. Head and shoulders he towered above his fellows, in stature as in strength he was a giant.

Then Offero deemed that the time for which he had longed was come. So he buckled on the bright, new armour which had been his pride for many days and fared forth into the world.

Those who turned to gaze after the tall young soldier smiled as they noticed his untarnished armour. They saw that his strength had not yet been tested on the field of battle.

From land to land Offero journeyed, taking service now with one sovereign, now with another, seeking ever to follow him who was too strong to flinch before a mortal foe. There were deep dints on his armour to show where the enemy's blows had fallen the heaviest and it shone less bright now than when he left his home an untried warrior. Strong as of old was the giant soldier, although he had endured hardships undreamed of in the days of yore.

One day a rumour reached Offero that in a distant country there dwelt a prince more powerful than any other in the world.

Power and Strength were still his gods, so he determined to hasten to the palace of the great king and beg to be enrolled in his army.

Over land and sea he journeyed until he reached the capital of the king. Through the gates of the city he entered, none caring to question or to delay a warrior who carried by his side so mighty a sword. Onward he strode until before him he saw the white walls of the palace shining in the sunlight.

In the palace the guards and courtiers made way for Offero to pass. Had they wished, not one of them had dared to stand between the giant and the king. So unmolested the soldier passed through the halls and entered the great chamber where the king sat upon the throne—a king whom none had ever seen to quail.

Low bowed the soldier before the monarch, while he begged that he might serve the king whose renown had spread far beyond his own dominions.

The king smiled well-pleased as his eye fell upon the well-knit muscles of the giant. He bade him to rise and from henceforth to serve him faithfully.

For many long years Offero was content. To fight beneath the banner of a leader so fearless was his chief happiness. When peace reigned he dwelt at court, satisfied still so that he might be near his lord.

One glad summer day, while peace held sway over the land, a minstrel reached the palace. Joyously the king welcomed the stranger and bade him sing to him songs of battle and of mirth.

Of distant lands, of wondrous deeds, of love, of hate, of war and peace the minstrel sang, while Offero stood near to the throne his eyes upon the face of his king.

As he gazed he saw his master again and yet again make a strange sign with his hand, upon his forehead. And each time that he made this strange sign, Offero saw a look

steal into the eyes of the king, which he had believed he nor any man would ever see there. "It is fear I see," murmured the soldier to himself, "surely it is fear I see in his eyes. And did not his hand tremble as he made that sign?"

Offero watched and waited, while his heart grew faint with misgiving. Could it be that there was a power before which his master was afraid, a strength before which he quailed?

When the songs of the minstrel were ended, and the guests and courtiers had strolled away, Offero drew near to the king and asked the meaning of the strange sign he had made upon his forehead and why his hand had shaken as with fear.

At first the king refused to answer, for well he knew how his soldier scorned fear and worshipped strength alone.

"If thou wilt not tell me, I can serve thee no longer, Sire," said Offero, "for surely it was fear I saw upon thy face." So the king, hoping that he might yet keep his servant with him, told him the truth.

"Always when I hear the name of Satan, the Lord of Evil, I am afraid," confessed the monarch. "I fear that he should have power over me, and I garnish me with this sign that he grieve not or annoy me."

The king was a Christian and the sign was the sign of the Cross. When Offero heard his master's words, he said "Farewell, O king, I go from hence to seek the Lord of Evil, because he is stronger than thou." And in the dawn of the following day he set out to find his new master.

It was not difficult to trace his steps, for in every city and village into which the soldier entered there were signs that but lately he had been there. Even in the desert and over the mountain-paths the footprints of the Evil One were to be seen. Cruel were his deeds and bitter was the bondage in which he held his vassals fast. Ofttimes Offero heard the cry of those whom he oppressed and saw the tears of women and little

children whom he had robbed. The giant would have ceased to search for so ill a lord, had not his love of power grown with his growth. It was clear that he could find no lord more powerful in the world than the Lord of Evil.

At length as he journeyed, Offero came to a dark and fearsome wood. He had scarce entered it ere the gloom struck terror to his heart. In vain he tried to throw aside his fear, as he strode deeper and deeper into the shade.

In the densest part of the forest he saw among the trees a company of knights, clad in dark armour. The faces of the knights were dark and terrible. One, who was their leader, a knight "cruel and horrible" to look at, demanded what Offero wished, that he had ventured into the court of the Lord of Evil.

"It is to take service under him, that I have come hither," answered Offero, "for I hear that he is the most powerful lord on the earth."

Then for many days the strong soldier served the Lord of Ill and in his service he did cruel and wicked deeds, so that men learned to tremble when he drew near to their homes. So great was their hatred of his evil ways that they called him "The Unrighteous." Offero paid little heed to his new name, for had he not at last found a master who would cower before none.

It chanced one day as the Lord of Evil left the wood, followed by his knights, that Offero rode close behind his master.

They reached the highway talking gaily of the town which they were on their way to besiege, when suddenly the Lord of Evil grew silent.

Offero looked up in surprise and started to see that his master had pulled his horse up sharply and was himself cowering as though he had been struck, while he covered his face with his hands.

Then without a word, his lord turned and galloped off the highway toward the desert, his knights following in grim amaze. Only when they had ridden many miles out of their way, did they again return to the high road.

Now Offero had seen by the roadside nought that could startle or alarm. Only a wooden Cross, "erect and standing," had been there.

As they rode along the highway once again, Offero asked his master why he had fled to the desert, since it had but delayed their journey. But the Lord of Evil refused to answer, though again and again Offero demanded the reason.

Then said Offero, "If thou wilt not tell me, I shall anon depart from thee and shall serve thee no more." So at length his master spoke.

"I will tell thee," he said, "What drove me to the desert. 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 whenever I see It.

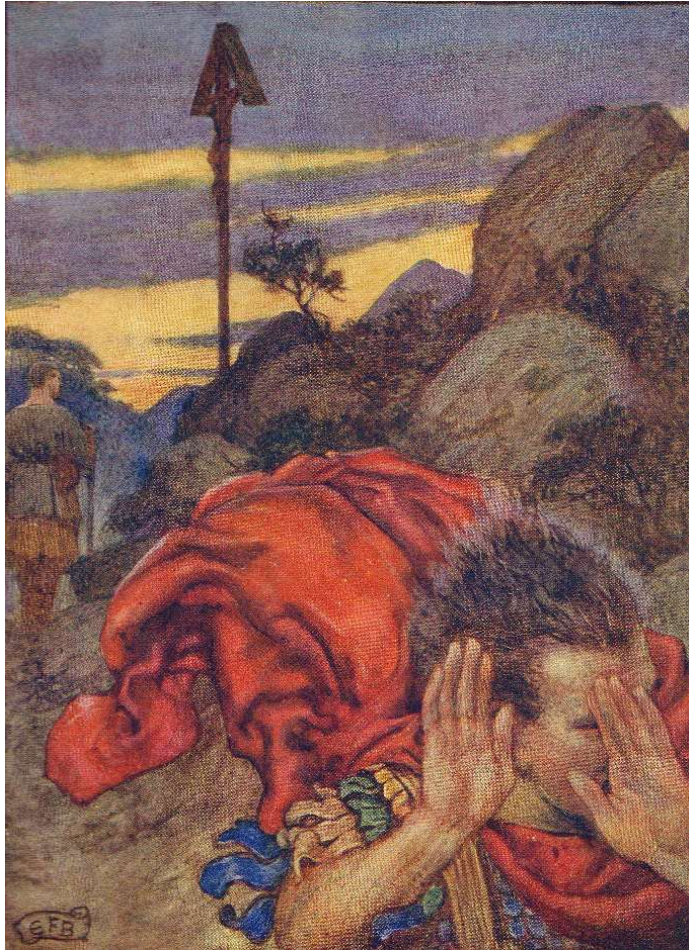
Offero listened to these words and marvelled. For it seemed to him a strange thing that anyone should fear a man who had been hanged upon a Cross. But he said to the Lord of Evil, "Then is Christ greater and more mightier than thou, when thou art afraid of His sign, and I see well that I have laboured in vain, when I have not found the greatest Lord of the World. And I will serve thee no longer, go thy way then, for I will go seek Christ."

Thus it was that Offero fared forth on his last long search. No longer as a soldier, but now as a pilgrim he journeyed, eager to reach his goal.

Many he met who were seeking the same Prince, and of them Offero asked the way. But they could help him little, for each one sent him along a different path.

Great and valiant kings he met, who wished him to tarry and serve them with his great strength, but to these he

paid little heed. His quest was to find the Man who once was hanged upon the Cross and Him only to serve.



WHEN I SEE HIS SIGN I AM SORE AFRAID

After long wanderings, Offero came to a desolate land, where no flowers bloomed, where no birds sang, nor was there any dwelling place to be seen in the desert, save only a single hut. In the hut lived a hermit. Far away beyond the cell, Offero caught a glimpse of a broad and mighty river. No bridge was

thrown across it, nor was there a boat to ferry travellers to the other side.

The pilgrim's strength was growing faint with the long search, and ere he could reach the hermit's hut he fell to the ground.

As he lay thus, helpless and alone, it seemed to the weary pilgrim that his eyes were opened. Far away across the mighty river the clouds lifted themselves like gates and the red lights shone through, and he saw a city, fair and set upon a hill. And a Voice cried, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors and Our King of Glory shall come in."

Then Offero as he gazed knew that he beheld the city of Him who was not only the King of Glory but the King of Love.

The vision faded and Offero awoke to find the hermit of the desert looking down upon him. He helped the weary pilgrim to his little cell and there for many days he cared for the stranger.

At first the days passed by unnoted by Offero as he lay in the lonely tent, but as strength stole back into his giant frame, he would creep to the door of the cell and lie there, looking out across the silent desert, wondering if ever again he would see the golden city, the city of the King.

Once, as the sun went down, the hermit sat by his side and told to his guest the wondrous story of the Cross and of Him who had suffered, yea and died thereon.

Never had Offero heard so strange a tale. Here was courage greater than he had dreamed, here was love stronger than death.

As the voice of the hermit ceased, Offero leaped to his feet, and holding high his sword he vowed that he would serve this strong, white Christ for evermore, for He alone was King upon earth as in heaven.

"Thou needest not thy sword to fight the battle of the Lord of Love," said the hermit, his voice grave as the sword flashed on high. "Far other are the weapons He would have thee use. This King, whom thou desirest to serve, requireth the service that thou must oft fast."

"Require of me some other thing and I shall do it," answered Offero, "for that which thou requirest I may not do."

"Thou must then wake and make many prayers," replied the hermit.

"Nay, but with my strength must I serve the Lord Christ," said Offero, for still in his heart he was proud of his strong right arm, of his stalwart limbs.

Then the hermit who had learned wisdom in the quiet of the desert saw that his strange guest must indeed serve the Christ in other guise than did he.

"Knowest thou the river at the edge of the plain," he asked Offero, "where many pilgrims perish ere they reach the other side?"

"I know it well," answered Offero, remembering that it was across the black stream that the city of gold had gleamed upon his sight.

Then said the hermit, "because thou art noble and high of stature and strong, thou shalt dwell by that river and thou shalt bear over all them that shall pass there, which shall be a thing right convenable to our Lord Jesus Christ whom thou desirest to serve, and I hope He shall shew Himself to thee."

"Certes," said Offero, the Bearer, "this service may I well do, and I promise to Him for to do it."

A few days later, the hermit guided his guest to the bank of the river. Swift flowed the stream and black were the waters when they reached the edge.

Offero as he glanced across at the distant hills saw that they were shrouded in mist. Could it be that he had once seen

the clouds above these hills lift themselves up like gates and the red lights shine through? Now there was nought in the distance save the mist driven by the winds.

On the banks of the river, the hermit bade Offero build a hut, in which to dwell, that he might be ready to help to the farther side those who came to the brink of the river.

"Pilgrims will come hither from all lands," said the aged man. "Some will have lost the strength which once they had and be feeble and worn, others will be too young to venture to the farther side alone and these thou shalt carry across the flood. As thou dost aid these wayfarers to reach the golden city, thou wilt be serving the King Himself. And it may be that after thou hast toiled thou shalt see once more the land that is not far off."

So Offero built for himself a hut on the bank of the river and dwelt there, that he might be ready to help those who wished to cross the river.

As the hermit had foretold, pilgrims from all lands came to the river's brink. Old men and young, maidens and little children, all called upon the strong soldier to help them to the other side.

And the patience of Offero never failed. With a great pity in his heart the strong man raised the weary pilgrims in his arms and stepped into the icy stream. In one hand he grasped a strong staff upon which he leaned when the swift flowing waters threatened to sweep him off his feet. Sometimes the wind blew fierce and lashed the river into a raging torrent, yet Offero never refused to cross if a pilgrim sought his aid while the storm was at its height.

High as the river rose, so great was his stature that never had the waves and the billows gone over his head. Yet had he been in sore straits, so that his feet had well-nigh slipped.

As he placed the pilgrims gently down on the farther side, he often saw a great light upon their faces, "a light that never was on sea or land," and he knew that their eyes had seen the palace of the king, nay, rather that they had seen the King Himself. Yet when he gazed into the distance he saw nought save the mist that hid the mountains from his sight.

With no glimpse of sunlit hills, no ray of light from the golden city, Offero laboured on. Even at midnight, as he lay upon his rough bed in the hut, if he heard a voice call, he arose and went to the help of him who cried.

Months and years passed away and at length Offero's strength began to fail. When the current ran most swift he feared lest he should not reach the farther side in safety.

Then one night as a fierce storm raged, Offero feeling strangely weary closed the door of his hut and lay down upon his bed. It was midnight and in such a storm surely no one would wish to cross the river. He would sleep sound for none would need his help.

But although he lay down, the giant could not sleep, for the thunder crashed and the rain beat ever more fiercely upon the little hut, while the wind threatened to overthrow it. Offero's ears had grown quick to hear the cry of pilgrims and now, even through the tumult, he thought he heard the voice of a little child calling to him.

He roused himself. On such a night he could not leave a cry unheeded, least of all the cry of a child. But when he opened the door and peered into the darkness he saw no one. So he shut the door of the hut and again lay down. No sooner had he done so than once more he thought, faint above the storm a voice called "Offero, Offero."

He roused himself hastened to the door and going out into the darkness looked on this side and on that, but saw no one.

Again he lay down and tried to sleep. But a third time he the aght he heard a cry and this time it was near at hand.

Offero sprang up and flinging wide the door he stepped out into the night. As he looked down he saw, almost at his feet a little Child, clad in white, whose eyes shone as stars in the darkness. The Child smiled as he gazed up into the giant's face and said in a voice that rang like music through the storm, "Offero wilt thou bear me across the river to-night?"

Without a word the giant stooped and gently raised the little Child and placed Him upon his shoulder, then grasping his stout staff he stepped into the raging stream.

So swift flowed the current that Offero all but lost his foothold, yet he struggled on while the waves rose higher and higher, reaching well-nigh to his lips. And the little child who had seemed so light a load, appeared at each step to grow heavier, until at length Offero felt as though the whole weight of the world was resting upon his shoulders.

Onward he stumbled, scarce able now to support the weight of the Child, or to struggle against the storm. He began to fear lest he should be drowned and so the little One with the starlit eyes should perish.

In his sore plight he forgot the pride he had been used to take in his own strength and cried aloud to his King to save him.

"Help OKing
Of Heaven, for I am spent and can no more!
My strength is gone, the waters cover me,
I stand not of myself. Help Lord and King."

Even as he prayed the mist, seemed to rise from the distant hills and once again there burst upon his sight the city of the King,

"the domes, the spires,
The shining oriels sunlit into gold."

With new strength Offero struggled on and at length with one last desperate effort he reached the farther bank.



CHRISTOPHER SHALT THOU BE NAMED, BECAUSE THOU HAST BORNE
THE CHRIST UPON THY SHOULDERS

Gently he set the little Child upon the ground and looking down upon him said, "Child, Thou hast put me in great peril; Thou weighest almost as I had all the world upon me, I might bear no greater burden!"

Yet even as he spoke the marvel that had befallen grew plain to the Bearer. For upon the face of the little Child shone

love so wondrous, so kind, that it drew him to his knees, while he cried, "Mine eyes have seen the King." And as he kneeled the Child said, "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 Jesus Christ the King, to whom thou servest in this work. Henceforth thou shalt no longer be called Offero, but Christopher shalt thou be named, because thou hast borne the Christ upon thy shoulders. And because that thou know that I say to be the truth, set thy staff in the earth by thy house and thou shalt see to-morrow that it shall bear flowers and fruits."

Then the Child vanished from his sight and Christopher saw Him no more, but he thrust his staff into the ground and lo! in the morning it had blossomed and as the Child had told, it bore "flowers, leaves and dates."

So Christopher went back to his work, a great joy in his heart, for he knew that even as he cared for others, he was serving Christ his Lord.

An old book called The Golden Legend tells how a Pagan king put Christopher to a cruel death, because he would not deny his Master. Of this you will wish to hear, but listen first how a poet who lives in our own day, dreamed that Christopher reached the City that was set upon a hill.

Long years after Christopher had carried the Christ Child across the river, he, "one glad day lay down to die," for he was now weak and old. But as he lay dying he heard a voice crying for help to cross the river. He had never left a cry unheeded and even now he struggled to his feet, determined to carry one more pilgrim to the other side. But he knew how feeble he had grown and he murmured to himself, "Christ must give me strength for this last task."

As he reached the edge of the water he stopped, his heart beating quick with sudden joy, for there awaiting him stood once again the Holy Child.

Christopher stooped to lift the little One, but even as he did so he felt that he was too faint to carry Him across the flood. In sore distress he prayed,

"Lord I have not strength to-day
Thou must go some other way:
These old limbs can lift no more
That dead weight which once they bore"

The Holy Child looked up into the face of his faithful servant and smiled as he answered,

"O Christopher let be!
Since thou once didst carry me,
I am come to carry thee"
"When," said He, "my weight did hurt,
Thou my beast of burden wert.
Now for thee, my Child and lamb,
I the beast of burden am."

Then He raised Christopher from his knees and Himself carried his saint across the river.

That, you will think, is a beautiful ending to the life of St. Christopher. But the story of the martyrdom is grim and terrible.

"When Christopher at length left the river where he had worked for his Master for so many years, he went to a city in Greece, called Lycia. The city was governed by a pagan king named Dagnus.

Christopher did not understand the language of the Greeks, so he did a strange thing. He stood in the market place and prayed aloud that God would help him to know what the people said. And his prayer was answered.

The pagans saw Christopher's lips moving but they could not see Him to whom he prayed, so they thought he must be either mad or foolish, and took no more notice of him.

But Christopher when he found that he could understand what the people said, hastened to those in Lycia

who worshipped Christ, that he might comfort them. For the king was torturing and putting many of them to a cruel death.

The judges of the city soon heard what the stranger was doing and going to him they struck him on the face.

"If I were not Christian I should avenge mine injury," said Christopher, as he clenched his hands lest he should disgrace his Master by a swift revenge.

Then he thrust his staff into the ground and prayed that it might blossom as of old. And when it bore flowers and fruits many of the pagans believed on Christ.

At length the king heard that 8,000 of his men had ceased to worship the gods. He was very angry with Christopher, who had shown them the way to Christ, and sent two knights to bring the stranger to him.

When the knights found Christopher he was praying and they were afraid to do the king's will. As they did not return, Dagnus grew impatient, and sent other two knights. But they knelt to pray with the man they had been sent to take prisoner.

"What do you wish?" Christopher asked the knights when he arose from his knees.

"The king hath sent us to take thee bound into his presence," they answered.

Then the old pride of strength leaped up in the heart of Christopher and he said, "If I would, ye should not lead me to him, bound or unbound?"

The knights were amazed at his courage, nor had they any wish to take him captive.

"Go thy way, where thou wilt," they cried, "and we will tell the king that we could not find thee."

But already Christopher was ashamed of his proud words and he bade them tie his hands behind his back and lead him to the king.

When Dagnus saw the stranger bound, he trembled and fell from off his throne, but struggling speedily to his feet he demanded the prisoner's name.



CHRISTOPHER BOUND BY ROMAN SOLDIERS

"Offero was I called before I was baptized and now am I known as Christopher, for I have borne the Christ upon my shoulders," answered he.

"Thou hast a foolish name," said the king, "for thou art named after One crucified, who could not keep Himself, nor may He profit thee. Why therefore wilt thou not do sacrifice to our gods?"

"Thy gods are made with hands," replied Christopher. "Eyes have they but they see not, they have ears but they hear not, and they that make them shall be like unto them."

"Gifts and honours shalt thou have if thou wilt worship our gods," said the king, "but if thou wilt still serve the Christ, thou shalt die and that with great pains and torments."

But Christopher had known his Master too long, too well, to deny Him now. So as he refused to sacrifice he was thrown into prison, while the four knights who had brought him bound to the king were beheaded.

Then Dagnus determined to try yet another way to conquer his prisoner. He sent two beautiful women into the dungeon that they might try to persuade Christopher to worship their gods.

But they, when they saw the prisoner kneeling in prayer were afraid and when he arose and asked them wherefore they had come, they answered, "Holy Saint of God have pity of us that we may believe in that God that thou preachest."

So Christopher told the women the story of Christ's life and death, and as they listened they determined that they too would become servants of the Man who had once hanged upon the Cross.

When the king heard that the women had forsaken the gods, he swore that they should be put to death unless they did sacrifice in the temple.

But they bade the king prepare the temple and command the people to assemble.

When this was done the women went into the house of the gods as though they meant to sacrifice. But no sooner had they reached the altar, than they took off their girdles and flinging them around the necks of the gods, they pulled the idols to the ground, so that they broke into pieces.

Turning then to the people, they cried, "Go call physicians and leeches for to heal your gods."



HE SENT TWO BEAUTIFUL WOMEN INTO THE DUNGEON THAT THEY MIGHT TRY TO PERSUADE CHRISTOPHER TO WORSHIP THEIR GODS.

In his rage, Dagnus showed no mercy, but ordered both the women to be put to death.

Then the king sent for Christopher and commanded that he should be beaten with rods of iron and that on his head should be placed a cross of red hot iron.

These among other pains Christopher suffered rather than deny his Lord.

At length he was bound to a stake, while forty archers shot at him with their arrows.

But lo! not an arrow reached him, for when they came near they were caught and hung in the air as though held by an unseen hand.

"Loosen the prisoner and bring him hither," cried the king. As the archers obeyed and began to untie the bonds that held Christopher fast, one of the arrows that hung in the air suddenly sped towards the king and struck one of his eyes.

Then Christopher cried, "Tyrant, I shall die to-morrow in the morning, do thou anoint thy eye with clay, mixed with my blood and thine eye shall be healed?"

The king was too angry to give heed to Christopher's words and ordered that he should be beheaded without delay. Thus after many torments Christopher suffered martyrdom and was henceforth known as St. Christopher.

After his death the courtiers begged the king, to anoint his eye as the prisoner had bidden him to do.

So the king laid clay upon his eye and cried aloud, "In the name of God and of St. Christopher." The next moment he knew that he was healed.

Then Dagnus determined to worship God and proclaimed that if any one throughout his realm should "blame God or St. Christopher" he should be slain with the sword.

St. Christopher's remains or "relics" as the old story says, were brought to France, and were to be seen for many years enshrined at the Abbey of St. Denis, near Paris.

In several Gothic Cathedrals enormous statues of St. Christopher were placed. He was usually represented as fording a river.

St. Gregory the Great tells of a monastery in Sicily that was named after the Saint.

Perhaps the most beautiful reference to St. Christopher is in these lines from an old hymn, "Christopher, limners (painters) grant thee to bear upon thy shoulders the Christ, because thou didst ever bear Him fixed firm, even in thy heart."



CHAPTER II

ST. CUTHBERT



St. Cuthbert was once a babe who laughed and clapped his tiny hands for joy when he was pleased, who cried and kicked his tiny feet in anger when he was displeased. He was so like other babes that no one dreamed that some day he would grow into a kind and gentle Saint.

When he was old enough to tend the sheep on the grassy slopes of Lammermoor, Cuthbert became a little shepherd lad. He was gay and careless as were his playmates.

The old folk among whom his childhood was spent loved Cuthbert well. When he became a Saint they often talked together of those early days when he seemed just like other boys. Only now they were sure that he had never been quite like his companions.

Some whispered among themselves that the Saint had been a royal babe, that his mother had been a beautiful princess, from the fair green isle of Erin. She, poor princess, had lost her crown and all her jewels. Worse had befallen her, for cruel men had dragged her to the market-place and sold her as a slave.

Others there were who cried that the barefooted shepherd lad had been no royal babe, nor was he of Irish birth. His home had been in the wild Border counties. With those blue eyes, that golden hair, how could he have been ought but Saxon? Why, his very name had a true old Saxon ring. Yes, their beloved Saint had been a little English lad.

So the old folks talked. But history does not tell us the birthplace of St. Cuthbert, nor if he were born in a palace or in a peasant's hut. We know only that when he was about eight years old both his father and mother were dead.

The little orphan boy was left alone with his nurse, an old woman who lived in a cottage on the Lammermoor hills. So kind was the old woman to her little charge that when he was grown up he never forgot her.

In summer-time Cuthbert was up with the dawn, wandering over the hills, making friends with birds and beasts. It was dusk before he found his way back to the cottage.

But in winter, when the snow fell fast, or the wind blew fierce, he could not roam. So he drew his little chair close to the clean-swept hearth, and while shadows flickered on the wall, his old nurse told him tales of the countryside. Rough tales many of them were, of wild, half-savage tribes, that dwelt far off among the mountain passes.

The boy could see the eyes of the warriors gleam as they tracked their foes through lonely glens, over desolate moorlands. Strange figures they seemed to the little lad, with faces and bodies stained with the juice of plants, and poisoned arrows at their side.

But there were other tales of holy saints and kindly monks who toiled and prayed in quiet old monasteries, and these too Cuthbert loved. He dreamed about these godly men in their quiet retreats, until he fell asleep in his little chair by the hearth.

Cuthbert grew up strong and brave as any lad in all the countryside. He was fond of games, yet sometimes he would slip away from his comrades, and throwing himself down on the side of the green hill, he would peer into the future. Would he be a soldier and fight for his country, the lad wondered, or a monk, like those who dwelt yonder in the old monastery of Mailros. Then his eyes would wander to the valley and follow the twistings of the river Tweed. They would linger at length on the monastery, where it stood guarded by tall pine trees, that looked from the distance like sentinels.

"Come and play with us," cried his playmates, breaking rudely into his dreams. But at such times Cuthbert paid no heed to their entreaties.

The old folks talked of his pranks in after days, as though they had never been played by other boys. They had seen him walking on his hands, standing on his head and turning somersaults so skillfully, that his companions clapped their hands. But surely these were feats that any boy might do. One strange tale the old folks did tell and it was this:

Once as Cuthbert was wrestling with his companions in a meadow, a little unknown child of three years old ran up to them.

The boys flung themselves apart and stared in astonishment at the tiny stranger. He, looking at none save Cuthbert, said in a grave tone, "Why will you spend your time in idle games, O Cuthbert?"

Cuthbert wished to go on playing, so he only smiled on the child, as he called to his comrades to begin their game afresh. Then the little stranger, seeing that Cuthbert paid no

attention to his words, flung himself on the ground and sobbed aloud.

The boys had kind hearts hidden beneath ways that were sometimes rough, so they ceased their game when they saw the child's tears and tried to comfort him.

But he sobbed on, heedless of them all, until Cuthbert came and stooped over him. Then once more he spoke in the same grave tone: "Why will you behave so foolishly, O Cuthbert? It becomes you not to sport among children, you whom the Lord hath consecrated."

Cuthbert forgot his game. He must find out by whom the child had been sent. But even as he said in an eager voice, "Tell me whose messenger you are?" the tiny stranger rose and running swiftly across the meadow was seen no more.

The boys were soon playing as gaily as before, all save Cuthbert. He could not forget the strange words, the tearful face of the little messenger. Such was the strange tale the old folk told when Cuthbert had become a saint.

Meanwhile the lad was tending his sheep on the grassy slopes of Lammermoor.

What a glorious world it was, thought Cuthbert. Far below him lay the valley, with hamlets and cottages that looked like tiny dots from where he stood upon the hillside.

The winding waters of the river Tweed made him long to wander down to the plain, but he could not leave his sheep although the river called. So he lay and watched it as it twisted and curved and twisted again, until he learned to love the magic windings of the Tweed.

How he loved too the tall, dark pines that stood near the monastery. It was in their mysterious shades, so his old nurse used to tell him, that the ancient gods were worshipped with charms and amulets and magic songs.

But Cuthbert was not left alone with his sheep and his dreams. For the boys from the valley would often clamber up the grass-covered hills, and they would wrestle and fight and race as growing boys delight to do.

It was at night, while the stars shone down upon him, as he watched his sheep, that Cuthbert saw strange sights.

The valley lay quiet in the starlight, and the shepherd lad could catch a glimpse of the monastery of Mailros, or Melrose as we call it now. He knew just where it lay in a little grassy glade, encircled by the tall trees of the forest.

Although it was night Cuthbert was sure that in his cell the holy Abbot Eata would be awake, kneeling in prayer before the great crucifix that hung upon the wall. Then he, alone on the silent hills, also knelt to pray. When he arose he thought that some day he would serve God as did the Abbot of Mailros. Like him he would dwell in the old monastery, leaving it at times to carry the gospel from the coast of Berwick to the Solway Firth.

He would journey through the mountain passes where men and women still lived half savage lives, to tell them of the gentleness of Christ. He would be kind too to the shepherd lads, as the holy Eata had been kind to him. Thus under the starlit skies did Cuthbert dream.

Then, one summer, in the month of August, 651 A.D., Cuthbert saw a marvellous sight.

It was dark and the boy had wandered from the mountain track, when far off on the horizon he saw a gleam of light. Brighter and brighter it grew, until it seemed a shining pathway to the skies. And lo! down the pathway sped white-robed angels on their way to earth. Why had the angels left the Paradise of God, Cuthbert wondered as he gazed.



SAINT CUTHBERT SEES A VISION WHILE LEADING HIS SHEEP BY NIGHT.

Soon he saw the angels climbing upward once more, and in their arms they bore a radiant soul. Scarce knowing what he did the boy began to move toward the light, but even as he did so it faded away.

Then in the darkness Cuthbert knelt to pray that he might live so that one day his soul too might be carried up the shining pathway of the skies.

When the morning dawned, Cuthbert heard that in his quiet cell the night before the Bishop of Lindisfarne had breathed his last. Then he knew that it was for the soul of the holy Bishop that the angels had come to earth.

A few days later, the shepherd lad made up his mind to go to the monastery at Mailros and ask Eata to train him as a monk.

But Eata wished to prove the lad, and as these were rough times in the Border counties, he sent Cuthbert away to serve God as a soldier until more peaceful days dawned. Then he might return to dwell in the monastery if he willed.

So Cuthbert rode away to seek his country's foes. Over rough mountain passes he journeyed, or sailed along the wild sea coast, helping the weak and those who had none other to fight for them.

Sometimes he was mocked by foolish folk, sometimes he was without food, but he learned to endure hardships as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

One day Cuthbert reached the banks of the river Tyne. He tarried to watch a raft loaded with logs of wood. It was being steered to the monastery that stood on the other side of the river. Suddenly a violent storm arose and the wind drove the raft down the river toward the sea.

From the monastery windows the monk saw that their comrades were in danger and they hastened to the river, and launched their boat to go to the help of the raftsmen. But the current was strong, the storm fierce, and their efforts were all in vain.

Soon a crowd of country folk gathered on the bank. As they watched the raft, they jeered at the monks and bade them make haste lest their comrades were drowned.

"Why do you scoff when you see these men are in danger?" asked Cuthbert. "Would it not be well to pray to the Lord to save them, rather than to mock at their peril?"

But in churlish tones the crowd answered, "Let no one pray for them; may God have pity on none of them, for they have taken away our gods. We care not what may betide them."

Then Cuthbert fell on his knees before the heedless folk and prayed that the monks might not perish. As he prayed, lo! the wind began to blow toward the shore, and the raft was soon in safety on the other side.

The country folk were silent now, ashamed to look at the stranger. But Cuthbert bade them praise God for His goodness and serve Him whom the winds and the waves obey.

Winter had come and Cuthbert was journeying over frozen moorlands, while snow fell thick and fast around him. His horse soon grew weary and stumbled, so that the lad was forced to dismount and guide the animal through the heavy snowdrifts. He had begun to fear that he was lost when he saw a tiny gleam of light in the distance. He urged on his horse with kindly words until at length they stood before the door of a lonely farmhouse.

Cuthbert knocked, and an old woman opened the door and drew the stranger in from the storm. She wished to give him food and begged him to stay until the storm was over. But it was Friday and on that day Cuthbert fasted from morning until night in reverence for the Passion of His Lord. So he told the old woman that he would wait only until his horse was fed and rested, then he would try to reach the nearest hamlet.

The storm raged as fiercely as ever when Cuthbert and his horse set out once more. He could not see a step before him, for the wind had risen and was whirling the snowflakes in his face. Before long he knew that he must find shelter or both he and his horse would perish. Just as he felt he could go no farther he saw before him an old hut. The walls were crumbling, the thatched roof was rent in many places, yet it would be some protection from the storm.

Cuthbert tethered his weary beast to the crumbling wall and feed him with a handful of dry grass that had been blown off the roof. He himself was hungry after his long fast, but there was no food in the hut. Too glad of shelter to complain, Cuthbert knelt to thank God for His care. While his master

prayed, the horse began to nibble at the thatched roof. As he did so he pulled out of the straw a bundle, wrapped in a linen cloth.

When Cuthbert rose from his knees he saw the bundle and unfolding the cloth he found what he needed most—bread and meat.

Once more he knelt to thank God for food as well as shelter, then, after sharing the bread and meat with his faithful beast, he lay down to sleep.

Months passed away while Cuthbert fought for the helpless and strove to free his country from her foes. Then when autumn came and touched the forests into splendour of scarlet and gold, Cuthbert journeyed back to Mailros. For quieter times had come and he hoped that Eata would receive him now.

It was evening as Cuthbert rode in at the gates of the monastery. The rays of the setting sun fell upon the lad, touching his fair hair with a golden gleam, lighting up his glad face until it shone with a beauty exceeding fair.

"Behold a Servant of the Lord," cried the Abbot Eata, as he welcomed the lad who was to be a soldier of Jesus Christ for evermore.

So in the happy harvest days, Cuthbert became a monk in the monastery of Mailros.

His dress was no longer the rough garment in which he had journeyed from place to place, but a long white robe. Over the white robe he wore a tunic and a large hood made of wool. On his feet were sandals, but these he took off when he sat down to meals.

There was work for all who dwelt in the Monastery of Mailros, for the monks swept and cooked and cared for the cattle. And ever as they worked their voices might be heard, singing glad songs of praise to God.

Among the monks none was more diligent than Cuthbert, but when the day's work was over, when the barley bread had been baked and the eggs cooked, he would steal away to his cell to read the Holy Scriptures, to speak to God in prayer.

Sometimes he was sent from the monastery to journey among the scattered hill folk, who knew naught of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As in other days Cuthbert rode, his spear in his hand, lest robbers should be lurking in dark ravines or desolate marsh lands.

The hill folk welcomed the stranger and listened to the tidings he brought with wonder written upon their faces, so strange to them seemed the story of the Cross. When they found that the boy priest understood their sorrows and oftentimes healed their sicknesses, they besought him to stay with them. But Cuthbert had other work to do and leaving the mountains he journeyed along the sea coast, where the wild tribes of the Picts had their home. Or he hired a boat and rowed along the rocky shores, heedless of wind and wave, until he reached a Pictish village, when he would tarry to tell again the story of the Cross.

As he laboured the years slipped away, until a day came, when Eata left Mailros to go to the monastery of Ripon, taking with him Cuthbert who was dear to him as a son.

At Ripon, Cuthbert was guest master. It was he who with willing hands drew strangers into the shelter of the monastery. It was he who washed the pilgrim's feet and chafed them with his hands until they grew warm beneath his touch.

Once, through bitter frost and snow, an angel came to the monastery in the guise of a pilgrim.

Cuthbert welcomed him with kindness and, as was his custom, he bathed the stranger's feet. With winning words he led him to the chapel, and together they knelt in prayer.

Then he placed a small table with food before the pilgrim and besought him to eat, while he went in search of new bread. "For," said he, "I expect it to be ready baked by this time."



SAINT CUTHBERT ENTERTAINS AN ANGEL IN THE DISGUISE OF A PILGRIM.

When Cuthbert came back with the loaves the pilgrim was no longer there. The guest master hastened to the door, but on the newly fallen snow no footfall was to be seen.

What could it mean, Cuthbert wondered, as he drew the table to an inner room. A strange fragrance filled the little chamber, a fragrance as of flowers delicate and rare, yet no flowers were there. But on a shelf before him lay three loaves, warm and of wondrous purity.

In a hushed voice Cuthbert whispered to himself, "It was an angel of God whom I received, who has come to feed others not to be fed. Lo! he has brought such loaves as this earth cannot produce. For they surpass lilies in whiteness, roses in fragrance, and honey in flavour."

Soon after this Eata and Cuthbert went back to Mailros, where they were sorely needed. For a terrible plague was spreading over the countryside and along the wild Northumbrian coast, and in every village men and women, as they lay dying, called for the holy Abbot Eata and Cuthbert, whom they named the gentle saint.

From village to village the holy men hastened, carrying healing and cheer to the terror-stricken folk. But before the plague was over Cuthbert, worn out by his labours, was seized by the dread disease.

As he lay tossing from side to side in his little cell, the monks besought God to spare the life of their dear comrade. Through the long nights they prayed, for they could not sleep while Cuthbert was in danger.

One morning the sick man heard how the monks had spent the night. He called for his staff and sandals, and to their astonishment struggled to his feet crying, "Then why am I lying here. It is not possible that God should refuse your petition."

But while St. Cuthbert grew well, the Prior of Mailros, who also had been smitten by the plague, grew worse, and

after seven days he breathed his last. Then Cuthbert was made Prior of the monastery in his stead.

Although the new Prior loved Mailros, he would often leave it to journey as of old among the hill folk. As he listened to the story of their cruel deeds he shed tears, while he took upon himself the penance of their evil ways. Then they grew ashamed to sin and grieve the holy man.

One evening Cuthbert reached a lonely monastery in Berwickshire. When the monks had gone to their cells for the night, Cuthbert stole down to the seashore. But one monk had watched him as he left the monastery and followed to see what the holy man would do.

To his dismay he saw Cuthbert step into the cold waters and walk out farther and farther yet, until the salt sea reached to his arms and neck. There he stood until the break of day, singing praises to God. Then he came back to the shore, and, kneeling on the rocky beach, he prayed.

And the brother who was watching saw two otters creep out of the rocks and steal up to the frozen saint. They licked his poor benumbed feet and wiped them with their hair, until they grew warm again. Then Cuthbert blessed them and sent them away, while he walked back to the monastery.

The next day the monk who had followed the Saint confessed what he had done and begged to be forgiven.

"If you will promise never to relate what you have seen during my lifetime, I will pardon you," said Cuthbert.

When the brother had promised never to speak of what he had seen, the monk blessed him and sent him away in peace.

In his wanderings Cuthbert often visited the village where his old nurse lived. And when he came she called her neighbours together that they might listen to the glad story he had to tell. Nor were they slow to come, for they had heard of

the wonders that had befallen him when he was a child tending sheep on the grassy slopes of Lammermoor.

Once as he talked to these simple folk a cry of fire arose. The wind was blowing fiercely in the direction of the village and the home of his old nurse would soon be in flames. The people were panic-stricken and ran hither and thither doing nothing.

"Fear not, dear mother," said the Saint to his old nurse. This fire will do you no harm." Then amid the tumult he fell upon his face on the ground and prayed. And as he prayed the wind sank to rest, so that the flames were easily quenched.

A few years later Eata, who was now Abbot of Lindisfarne, sent for Cuthbert, that he might make him prior of his monastery.

Lindisfarne is a flat and desolate island off the coast of Northumberland. When the tide ebbed the blasts of the north wind blew bitter across a dreary waste of sand. At low water Lindisfarne was no longer an island, for the folk could cross from the mainland to the monastery over a pathway of firm sand.

Here Cuthbert had need of all his courage, for the monks were both greedy and lazy. When the new Prior made strict rules and himself saw that they were obeyed, there was wrangling and strife within the old monastery walls.

But St. Cuthbert bore the rough words and ugly scowls of the monks with utter patience, and at length before his gentle ways their rough words grew soft, their harsh looks tender. They learned to love and to reverence their Prior.

While he dwelt at Lindisfarne, St. Cuthbert's fame spread far and wide. Kings and nobles, slaves and peasants came to the lone island to seek counsel or comfort from the saint.

Swiftly the years of service at Lindisfarne passed, until, when St. Cuthbert was forty years of age, he determined

to do as he had often wished to do. He would go to live as a hermit on the little island of Farne, that there he might the better serve God.

Farne was a desolate, demon-haunted island, where no water-springs were to be found, where neither fruit nor flowers were to be seen. Here, where others feared to dwell, Cuthbert built for himself a hut. The walls he made of stones and turf. One man could not lift the stones, for they were large and heavy, but the sea-folk told that angels came to the island and carried the stones for the saint and placed them on the wall. When he had thatched the roof, Cuthbert divided the hut into two small rooms. One was a cell, the other was for prayer—an oratory Cuthbert named it.

But there was no water on the island, and without water the Saint could not live. So he bored deep in a rock until he reached a spring. With a spade he dug the hard soil and planted a tiny plot of ground with barley. So scanty was the crop it yielded that the fisher-folk as they sailed past the island would point to it and say, "The Saint must be fed by angels or he would starve."

Close to the beach he built a large house, where the monks and pilgrims who visited the island might rest. Here, as though by a miracle, a fountain of water was found.

At first Cuthbert would leave his hut when he saw the boat from Lindisfarne rowing toward his little island, and go down to the shore to meet it. But soon he grew more strict and never left his cell. Only when the monks still came and looked in through the window of his hut, he would open it and talk to them while the hours passed swiftly away.

Even this he ceased to do at last, opening his window only to give his blessing to some stray pilgrim soul, leaving his cell only to do some act of charity.

The Saint was so quiet, so kind, that the wild beasts loved him, and even the seals came out of the sea to fawn

upon his feet, until he, looking down, gave them his blessing. Then they floundered back content to their watery home.

But the birds were hungry and they flocked to St. Cuthbert's little barley, plot thinking to steal the grain. Then the Saint reproved them, saying, "Why do you touch the grain which you have not sown? Do you think that you have more need of it than?" If nevertheless you have obtained leave from God to do this, do what He allows you, but if not, depart and do no injury to the goods of another."

The little birds listened in silence, then flew away twittering, and ever after the harvest of the Saint ripened untouched.

As for the crows, they were bold birds and croaked one to the other that the hermit had come to spoil their home. So they flew to his hut, settled on the thatched roof and began to peck at the straw. Their nests would be built easily this year, they said, as they prepared to fly off with their stores of straw.

But St. Cuthbert had been watching the foolish crows and now he bade them put back the thatch before they flew away. Then in the name of Jesus Christ he told them that they might no longer build their nests on the island.

The crows spread their wings and soon left Farne far behind, but in three days they came back. With hanging heads and drooping wings they surrounded the Saint, uttering timid cries, as though for forgiveness.

When St. Cuthbert saw that they were sorry for their fault he bade them be of good cheer and allowed them to build their nests on the island as they had been used to do.

The wild sea-birds were his friends and grew tame beneath his touch. Through long night watches they clustered around the Saint as he knelt on the rocks in prayer. And still the sea-birds on the lonely island are called, "The birds of St. Cuthbert."

Cuthbert had gone to Farne that he might live alone with God. But his fame spread throughout England and Scotland, and many who were sick and sad journeyed to visit him. For very holy was the hermit, they had heard, very wonderful were the cures he wrought.

St. Cuthbert could not stay in his cell when he saw so many ailing folk on the island. He went down to the shore to welcome them, to lay his healing hands upon them and "no one returned home with the same sorrow of mind that he had brought."

Eight years had passed away, eight blessed years St. Cuthbert called them, when a great procession reached Farne. Noblemen and monks, led by their "devout and God-loved King Egfrid," had come to beseech Cuthbert to become Bishop of Lindisfarne.

The Saint shrank from the honour. He would fain have stayed on his lonely island. But when the king knelt at his feet and with tears begged him to yield he could not refuse.

It was winter when Egfrid came to Farne. In spring of the following year, on a glad Easter morn, St. Cuthbert was in the city of York. There, in the presence of King Egfrid, seven bishops and many priests, he was consecrated. From henceforth he was known as the Bishop of Lindisfarne.

Although he was now a bishop, Cuthbert lived simply as of old. He laboured and prayed in the monastery; he journeyed over the mountains and moorlands, from the Tyne to the Firth of Forth.

Once "as this holy shepherd of Christ's flock was going round visiting his fold, he came to a mountainous and wild place, where many people had got together. But among the mountains no church or fit place could be found to receive the Bishop and his attendants. They therefore pitched tents for him on the road and each cut branches from the trees in the neighbouring wood, to make for himself the best sort of

covering that he was able." For two days Cuthbert tarried there to tell the people the glad gospel of Jesus Christ.

When he set out on his journey again, the crowds followed him. Little cared they for hunger, or for thirst, so only they might be near the man of God.

For two years St. Cuthbert laboured as Bishop of Lindisfarne, then feeling that his strength was failing and that death was not far off, he gave up his bishopric. On Christmas day, in 686 A.D., he went back to the little island of Farne.

The monks of Lindisfarne often sailed across to the island to see their beloved master, to listen to his words. Each time they went back more sorrowful, for they saw how weak St. Cuthbert had grown. Once a storm kept the monks at Lindisfarne for five days, but as soon as a boat could be manned the Abbot sailed to Farne to find that St. Cuthbert had been too ill to move.

"How have you lived with no one to give you food," asked the Abbot.

The Saint lifted a corner of the mat on which he lay and pointed to five onions.

"This," he said, "has been my food for five days, for when I was parched with thirst I cooled and refreshed myself by tasting these."

When the Abbot sailed again for Lindisfarne he left two monks to wait upon St. Cuthbert. As he grew weaker the Saint begged the monks to sing the midnight psalm. Ere it was ended angels carried his soul to Paradise. Almost his last words were, "Have peace and divine charity ever amongst you."

The monks finished the psalm, and then, hastening to the shore, they lit two torches that those at Lindisfarne might know that they would see St. Cuthbert no more on earth. For this was the signal for which the Abbot had bidden the monks to watch.

As the light of torches shone through the darkness the monks at Lindisfarne wept. Then in hushed voices they sang, "Eternal rest give to him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him."

Thus died the holy St. Cuthbert, Bishop of Lindisfarne, when he was about fifty years of age.

But the fisher-folk, who sail along the wild Northumbrian coast, say that at night a figure is often to be seen sitting on the rocks close to the sea. They say it is St. Cuthbert who sits there, a heap of little grey stones by his side. In his hand is an anvil with which he shapes the stones into beads, which are called, "The beads of St. Cuthbert."

"But this as tale of idle fame
The monks of Lindisfarne disclaim."

