

**THE LEGEND OF ST.  
CHRISTOPHER: A DRAMATIC  
ORATORIO, FOR SOLO VOICES,  
CHORUS, ORCHESTRA, AND  
ORGAN**

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The Legend of St. Christopher: A Dramatic Oratorio, for Solo Voices, Chorus, Orchestra, and Organ by Isabella Parker & Horatio Parker

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**ISABELLA PARKER & HORATIO PARKER**

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NOVELLO'S ORIGINAL OCTAVO EDITION.

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THE  
LEGEND OF ST. CHRISTOPHER

A DRAMATIC ORATORIO

FOR SOLO VOICES, CHORUS, ORCHESTRA, AND ORGAN

THE VERSE BY

ISABELLA PARKER

THE MUSIC BY

HORATIO PARKER.

(Op. 43.)

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# THE LEGEND OF ST. CHRISTOPHER.

## CHARACTERS.

OFFERUS. *Bass.*

THE KING. } *Tenor.*  
THE HERMIT. }

THE QUEEN. *Soprano.*

SATAN. *High Baritone or Robust Tenor*  
(*Tenore robusto*).

THE ANGEL. *Soprano.*

(*May be sung by the QUEEN.*)

THE CHILD. *Soprano.*  
(*Preferably a boy's voice.*)

A CHORUS.

## PROLOGUE.

5  
\*  
In the grey dawn of early time,  
The Church on earth arose ;  
Upbuilt with battlements sublime,  
Against her mighty foes.

And many a noble saint of old,  
The fair foundation laid ;  
And living stones, of price untold,  
The stately fabric made.

In glory of un fading light  
Their faithful record lives ;  
The touch of Time the vision bright  
Unchanging lustre gives.

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

(*An open space before the palace of KING ORIENS. A dense wood is on the left, and a road in the distance, upon which the KING is seen approaching in a chariot, with soldiers and trumpeters.*)

CHORUS OF MEN.

The King ! the King returns in triumph !  
Come forth and bid him joyful welcome.  
Haste, come forth !

### CHORUS OF MAIDENS.

(*With laurel wreaths and garlands of flowers.*)

He comes, our King, in regal pride and glory ;  
Our faithful legions follow in his train ;  
Their noble deeds, renowned in song and story ;  
We count, and welcome them with glad  
refrain.

Hail to our King, our heroes hail !  
Our loyal welcome shall not fail ;  
Your praises rise on honour's wing,  
While in high chorus here we sing.

(*The KING arrives.*)

SOLDIERS' CHORUS.

Sing victory, sing victory, our glorious King  
returns,  
Triumphantly, triumphantly, his chariot  
homeward sped ;  
In loyal hearts, in loyal hearts, the flame of  
triumph burns ;  
The conqueror, the conqueror, we crown his  
honoured head.

(*They place the wreath upon his head.*)

DOUBLE CHORUS.

*Women.*

Hail to our King and heroes brave !  
Right royal welcome do we give ;  
While banners high above you wave,  
Long, long in gladness may ye live.

*Men.*

Hail to our King and maidens fair !  
Right royal welcome do ye give ;  
Garlands of flowers ye maidens bear,  
Long, long in gladness may ye live.

(*OFFERUS, the giant, emerges from the wood and kneels before the KING.*)

*Offerus.*

Mighty King, to thee I bend,  
Humble homage offer thee ;  
Kindly my request attend,  
And grant to me,  
Thy slave to be.  
I entreat, my offer thou'lt receive ;  
Brave and faithful service will I give.

*King.*

Thy name, bold wanderer !

*Offerus.*

Offerus my name. Immortal gods have  
given me strength and stature to excel. And  
long in poverty have I sought the mightiest  
earthly monarch, that my service might be his.

*King.*

Thy service I receive, thou Offerus, and bind  
thee to obey my commands.

*Offerus.*

Henceforth thy slave am I, for thou the  
mightiest art.

*King.*

Give thy service unto me,  
Rich rewards I offer thee.

*Offerus.*

Burden-bearer is my name,  
Service is my only claim.

*King.*

Thou art mine, and mine alone,  
Till life be done.

*Offerus.*

I am thine, and thine alone,  
Till there come a mightier one.

## SCENE II.

(*A hall in the Palace. The QUEEN and her attendants wait while the KING enters with his retinue, followed by OFFERUS.*)

*Queen.*

The dear delights of home and peace  
Once more, my love, are thine.  
Could strife and war forever cease,  
What joy, what bliss were mine !  
Then no more my heart in sorrow  
Should be sad for the coming morrow.  
Yet proud am I thy noble deeds to hear,  
And willing tribute to thy courage bear.

*Chorus.*

Yes, proud are we thy noble deeds to hear,  
And willing tribute to thy courage bear.

*King.*

Thy welcome voice, beloved,  
Is music to my heart.  
Now gladly will I linger,  
Nor willingly depart.  
The memory of battle's fierce affray  
Is banished and forgotten, far away.

*Queen.*

From cruel voice of clanging arms  
Thou comest to thy rest ;  
Free from the fear of dread alarms,  
This refuge is thy best.  
Rest thee here, love shall unfold thee ;  
Peace within her arms shall hold thee.

*King.*

Come, Offerus, present thee to our Queen.  
(*OFFERUS advances and kneels.*)

*Offerus.*

Most royal lady, here I kneel  
To offer thee thy rightful due ;  
Command me, and with earnest zeal  
I gladly give my service true,  
Thee and my royal master to obey,  
With proud submission, from this happy day.

*Queen.*

Rise, Offerus, I take thy service, brave and  
worthy man.

*Offerus.*

I will serve thee, I obey thee, most gracious  
Queen.

(*Exeunt all but KING and QUEEN.*)

*King.*

There is a king, albeit a slave;  
How gentle is he, and yet how brave!  
May heaven delay the fateful hour  
When he shall find a mightier power.

*Queen.*

How can he find on earth a mightier?  
Art thou not lord of all the kingdoms now?

*King.*

I am, but powers there be I cannot dare  
To brave. I must before them bow.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

(*An open glade in the forest. The KING and his followers are resting after the hunt. A deer starts from the wood and OFFERUS draws his bow. The KING trembles and crosses himself.*)

*King.*

Hold, Offerus, send not the shaft! Knowest  
thou not this dreadful wood is haunted?

*Offerus.*

Haunted, by whom?

*King.*

By the presence of the Fiend.

*Offerus.*

Who's the Fiend that thou should'st fear him?  
Fear I know not, though a slave.  
Thou, O King, hast found thy master,  
Him I seek and thee I leave.

(*He sends the arrow and moves towards the wood. Fires flash in the distance.*)

*King, Queen, and Chorus.*

Stay, good Offerus, O stay,  
Terrors are before thee.  
Darkest clouds close o'er thee,  
Wings of demons hover  
Round thy path and over;  
Dost thou not discover  
Horrid phantoms in the way?

Leave us not, good Offerus;  
See the lurid gleaming  
Of the fires upstreaming  
In the forest glowing,  
Where thy steps are going,  
Thy great gifts bestowing  
On the Fiend, to leave us thus.

(*OFFERUS, moving slowly, turns.*)

*Offerus.*

I see the darkening path,  
And yet I cannot stay.  
A stronger king than thou,  
I must before him bow.  
I would not feel thy wrath,  
But him I must obey.

*King and Chorus.*

Farewell, our hero, gallant Offerus. Thy  
vow leads thee forth to mightier power devoted.  
Farewell!

(*They watch him as he disappears in the wood.*)

ACT II.

SCENE I.

(*A desert plain. OFFERUS meets SATAN at the head of an armed legion.*)

*Satan.*

See where comes bold Offerus,  
He hath learned no evil.  
Fears nor man nor devil,  
He shall come and dwell with us.  
Man, who art thou, and whom dost thou seek?

*Offerus.*

I seek that Fiend, who maketh kings to  
tremble. I would have him for my master.

*Satan.*

Prince of all this world am I.  
Come, thou noble creature,  
Yield thee, body, mind, and soul  
Unto my supreme control.  
Fit reward shalt thou enjoy,  
For thy kingly nature.

Thus my followers I lead  
Through this barren region,  
Storms and whirlwinds do not flee;  
Naught on earth can conquer me.  
My commands they ever heed,  
Faithful demon-legion.

*DEMONS.*

Satan, our king, thy reign we own,  
Thy might alone,  
In all our ranks it holdeth sovereign sway.  
Thee we obey.



*Offerus.*

I also thee obey.  
Yield me unto thy will.  
Thou shalt have utmost sway  
O'er my strength and my skill,  
Thy every behest to fulfil.

*DEMONS.*

Thus we march, a mighty legion,  
Through the world's wide fields afar,  
All its woes and ills unheeding,  
Discord dire and ruin spreading,  
And throughout the fairest region  
Bring confusion, rage, and war.

Shrines and altars fall before us,  
Naught is sacred in our eyes ;  
Drink we deep in fullest measure  
Of the cup of earthly pleasure ;  
Mirth and music merrily share we,  
Pleasure's flowing goblet bear we,  
And there is naught we fear in earth or skies.

Thus we march, &c.

(*Exeunt singing.*)

## SCENE II.

(*They arrive at a cross. SATAN trembles and turns away. The sound of women's voices is heard singing :—*)

Asperges me, Domine,  
Hyssopo et mundabor.  
Lavabis me, lavabis me,  
Et super nivem de alabor.

*Offerus.*

Ha, my master, tremblest thou ?  
This high cross thou fearest,  
Nor, in terror, dar'est  
Even to look upon it now.  
Why showest thou these signs of fear ?  
The mystery to me declare.

## CHORUS.

On the cross the Lord of Heaven  
Died, to ransom man, His creature ;  
There His blessed life was given  
To upraise the fallen nature ;  
Therefore are the signs of fear :  
None but saints the sight can bear.

*Offerus.*

Thou art my master no longer ;  
I seek the Lord who died,  
For He is greater and stronger.  
I follow far and wide  
Till I His face may behold,  
And learn His love manifold.

*Satan.*

Offerus, beware, beware !  
How canst thou endure  
Fast and vigil, watch and prayer,  
Heaven to secure ?  
Earth's delights I give to thee,  
Heaven is far above ;  
Lose not present liberty  
Future hope to prove.

Offerus, beware my wrath,  
Heavy shall it fall on thee ;  
Ruin shall attend thy path—  
Thus now do I warn thee.  
All the kingdoms of the world,  
All their glory great,  
These I own, and alone  
I can bestow them.

All this glory and power I give thee ;  
Come, faithful servant, I bid thee ;  
Call not vengeance upon thee.  
Stay, Offerus, stay.

*Offerus.*

Ask me not my vow to break.  
Him, the Highest, will I seek ;  
Unto Him, the Lord of Heaven,  
Shall my life henceforth be given ;  
There, at length, my restless mind  
True content and peace shall find.

## CHORUS.

Farewell, our hero, gallant Offerus !  
Thy vow leads thee forth to mightiest power  
devoted.  
Love guide thee in thy quest of Him who  
only can give thee peace and joy, and meet  
reward for noble strife. Farewell !

## ACT III.

## SCENE I.

(*A hermit's cottage in a dense forest. The HERMIT opens his door to OFFERUS, who is clad in worn garments.*)

*Offerus.*

Tell me, good father, where to find the Lord  
of Heaven.

*Hermit.*

Enter, son, rest thee, and let me bathe thy  
feet, for they are sore and travel-stained,

*Offerus.*

Glad am I to rest. I am weary,

*Hermit.*

Rest thee here, my son; refreshment will I  
offer thee.

(*The HERMIT brings food and a long flowing  
garment.*)

*Hermit.*

The story thou shalt hear  
Of Him, the Saviour blest,  
Who came our life to share,  
And lead us to His rest,

Wise men had foretold His coming,  
From the Orient land they came,  
Star-led, through the desert roaming,  
To the town of Bethlehem,

Through many blessed years  
His dwelling was with men  
Bearing their griefs and cares  
And soothing every pain,

When His work on earth was ended,  
Willingly He gave His life,  
And to heaven once more ascended,  
Conqueror in the deadly strife,

*Offerus.*

Most wonderful thy story! How thankfully  
I hear it from thy lips. Thy voice, good father,  
brings a memory strange to me.

*Hermit.*

It is not strange, for I was Oriens, the  
monarch proud, who now for many years have  
served the King of kings.

Come, and I will show thee  
All the Church's beauty,  
Where her worship holy  
Daily doth arise.  
With her blessing o'er thee  
Thou shalt learn thy duty,  
And in service lowly  
Train thee for the skies,

## SCENE II.

(*The interior of a Cathedral. Priests are  
seen robed in beautiful vestments. The HERMIT  
and OFFERUS enter and kneel.*)

## CHOIR.

Asperges me, Domine,  
Hyssopo et mundabor.  
Lavabis me, lavabis me,  
Et super nivem de alababor.

(*OFFERUS, greatly moved, drapes the HERMIT aside.*)

*Offerus.*

Tell me, good father, what can I do for the  
Christ, my Master.

*Hermit.*

Come, and I will show thee  
All the Church's beauty,  
Where her worship holy  
Riseth day by day.  
In that worship lowly,  
Learn thy constant duty,  
And with light before thee,  
Tread the blessed way.

## CHOIR.

Gloria in excelsis Deo,  
Et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis.  
Laudamus te,  
Benedicimus te,  
Glorificamus te.  
Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam  
tuam.  
Domine Deus, Rex Cælestis, Deus, Pater  
Omnipotens.  
Domine Fili Unigenite, Jesu Christe.  
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris,  
Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.  
Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem  
nostram,  
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis.  
Quoniam tu solus sanctus,  
Tu solus Dominus,  
Tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe,  
Cum Sancto Spiritu, in gloria Dei Patris.  
Amen.

*Offerus.*

(*With great firmness.*)

In gloria Dei Patris, Amen!  
Now let me go, my father, where I may serve  
the Lord.

## TRIO.

*The Hermit, Offerus, and an Angel.*

Learn the blessedness of giving,  
Give thy strength, thy soul, thy spirit  
For the Master ever-living  
Claiming no reward, no merit.  
So in boundless liberty shalt thou walk for  
evermore.

Thy best labour freely given  
In the largest, fullest measure,  
Dear to man, beloved of heaven,  
Thou shalt taste immortal pleasure,  
And unending rest remains, when thy noble  
life is o'er.

## HYMN.

Jam sol recedit igneus,  
Tu lux perennis unitas,  
Nostris beata trinitas  
Infunde lumen cordibus.  
  
Te mane laudum carmine,  
Te desprecamur vespere,  
Digneris, ut te supplices,  
Laudamus inter cœlestes.  
  
Patri simulque Filio,  
Tibique, Sancte Spiritus,  
Sicut fuit, sit jugiter  
Sœclum per omne gloria.

## SCENE III.

*(The HERMIT'S cottage.)*

*Offerus.*

Tell me now, father, what can I do for the  
Christ, my Master?

*Hermit.*

Yonder is the river, deep and rapid, where  
many cross in danger. Build thee a hut upon  
its banks and carry them through the flood.

*(Light fills the cottage. An Angel sings:—)*

Blessings of heaven  
Richly are given,  
Service most worthy  
Waiteth before thee.

## SCENE IV.

*(A small hut on river bank. There is night  
and storm. A child's voice sings:—)*

Offerus, wilt thou not bear me across?  
*(OFFERUS appears, but, seeing nothing, re-enters  
the hut. The child's voice repeats:—)*

Offerus, carry me over to-night!  
*(Again he goes forth but finds nothing. The third  
time the voice is heard nearer:—)*

Offerus! Offerus! carry me over to-night!  
*(And a little child is seen. OFFERUS lifts the child  
and enters the stream. There is great violence  
of the elements, but a quiet light upon the  
child's head.)*

*Offerus.*

Bearing thus my precious burden  
Through the wild and angry flood,  
Every moment heavier growing,  
As the weight of all the world.  
In the tumult of the surges  
Power Divine my spirit urges,  
Till I win the blessed guerdon  
Of my Lord's approving word.  
*(The storm subsides. OFFERUS reaches the shore.  
The dawn appears faintly.)*

CHORUS.

Know, O mortal, thou hast borne  
In thine arms the Holy One,  
Christ, and the sin of the world.  
Peace be with thee! Lo, the morn  
On thy head its light hath thrown.

*Hermit.*

Christopher be now thy name,  
Thine henceforth by rightful claim.  
This, through the ages yet to be,  
Shall bring high honour unto thee.

CHORUS.

Labour nobly, bravely on  
Though the stormy waves arise.  
On the far eternal shore  
He is watching evermore,  
Who, at length, thy work shall own,  
And with joy divine shall crown  
With the saints in Paradise.