

Legendary Anecdotes of Trees.

(From Dr. K. *Tru's Daily Bible Illustrations*, vol. 7, p. 151-155.)

About midway on the road between Jerusalem and Bethlehem stood formerly an old terebinth tree, which travellers, who saw it standing three hundred years ago and upwards, declare to have been the noblest and loftiest tree of the kind they ever beheld. A tree like this, in such a place, could not fail to have some tradition connected with it. Indeed, we should not have been surprised had we been told that David had rested under its shade, with his bread-and-cheese-laden ass, on his way to the camp of Saul. All that was affirmed, however, was, that beneath the spreading branches of this very tree, the virgin mother and her Divine child rested on the way between Jerusalem and Bethlehem; and in this belief the tree was highly revered by pilgrims for many ages. Not content with this simple statement, which had probability enough in its favour on the supposition (itself untenable), that the tree had been equally conspicuous and magnificent at an era so remote,—the tradition goes on to spoil all by informing us, that the tree bent down its branches as if in adoration of, or as if more effectually to shade, its creator, whom it recognised in that infant child nestled in his mother's arms. Nor was this the only marvel related of the tree; for we are assured by Romish travellers that it was avouched by a Moslem shepherd, that he had seen it covered with flames, but they speedily disappeared; and when he proceeded to examine it, he found it not only uninjured, but the foliage more freshly green than it had been before. This tree is not to be seen now; for what the fire of heaven had respected, the fire of earth had not. Some mischievous shepherds had kindled a fire around the trunk, whereby the tree was killed, and in great part consumed. The remainder was manufactured by the monks into crosses and chaplets, and distributed as articles of great

worth and value. The prime mover in the profanation died on the night after, as if by the judgment of heaven. It is added, that many attempts to plant another terebinth tree upon the spot had been made without effect, as the young plants would not take root; but an olive tree had sprung up of its own accord, and had at length been accepted as a substitute. We owe this curious information to persons who travelled towards the close of the seventeenth century, in the early part of which the tree seems to have been destroyed.

Another local memorial, like to the first of these, was found at Matarieh, on the border of Egypt, in a tree, beneath which the holy family reposed upon their arrival in that country, and which, like the terebinth, bent down its branches in homage to them. This tree, which is a sycamore, still exists, and we have succeeded in finding a representation of it, being, we apprehend, the only one extant, in Dr. William Holt Yates' work on Egypt, from which this figure we give is copied. Near this a celebrated well, called Ain Shems, or Fountain of the Sun, concerning which there is a superstitious legend of the Latins, that it suddenly appeared to meet the wants of the holy family in the retreat they had chosen. "In order to visit this well," says Dr. Yates, "we turned a little out of the beaten track, and entered a tolerably thick plantation on the right, where, in the midst of date trees, citrons, etc, we reclined beneath a venerable sycamore, supposed to be the identical tree whose wide-spreading branches afforded shelter to the holy fugitives from the parching rays of the sun. It is cut in all directions, and has been denominated 'the tree of the Madonna.' Its shape is singular; it is very large, and the upper part of it has been blown down or struck by lightning; a number of young branches grow out from the top of that which remains. It is, beyond all doubt, *very aged*, and there is nothing inconsistent