

esting, of these legends are appended.

It is related that while the Holy Family was flying from Herod, it came to a field where a man was sowing wheat. Lady Mary said to him: "If any shall ask you if we have passed this way, you shall answer, 'they passed while I was sowing wheat,'" Next day Herod's officers came to the place, and lo! the grain was ready for the harvest. They asked the husbandman if an old man, a woman and a child had travelled that way. He truthfully replied, "they passed when I was sowing wheat." The tyrant's soldiers thereupon turned back. Allusive to this legend a curious superstition exists in the Scottish Highlands to the effect that, after Herod's officers had had their answer, a black beetle thrust up its head and said, "the Son of man passed here last night." Hence the Catholic Highlanders, whenever they come across one of these heretical insects, stamp upon it, saying, "Beetle, beetle, last night."

As the holy family continued on its way a forest was reached. All the trees save the aspen bowed down before the infant Saviour, who thereupon cursed the rebellious tree. For this reason, and because the aspen, so tradition has it, furnished the wood whereof the cross was made, its leaves have trembled ever since. It is a fact that its leaves are never at rest. The palm tree was more reverent, for one evening, as our Blessed Lady, wearied with the day's long journey, was resting beneath a date palm, she beheld fruit upon its branches, and besought St. Joseph to get her some. Her divine Son, mindful then, as he is now, and ever will be, of the behests of His Mother, commanded the tree to incline its branches so that its fruit might be within Our Lady's reach. The conscious tree knew its God, and at once obeyed.

One day the Holy Family encountered a band of robbers, one of whom called Damaschus, proposed to despoil and maltreat the wayfarers, but

his companion, Titus, came to their rescue, and by the gift of his girdle and forty groats, induced his fellow bandit to desist. Titus safeguarded the travellers to a shelter for the night. On parting on the morrow Our Lady said to their protector: "The Lord God will receive thee to His right hand and grant thee pardon of thy sins;" a gracious promise which thirty years afterward, in the awful hour of the crucifixion, was fulfilled when Titus, the penitent thief, hanging on the cross beside his divine Lord, was assured that that night he should enter paradise.

Of the subsequent wanderings of the Holy Family tradition tells us little. The Copts have a very old tradition that this notable company dwelt for a time in old Cairo, at the entry to Memphis, where there is an ancient church containing in its crypt three arcades sacred to Jesus, Mary and St. Joseph, which were built in memory of the Saviour's abode. The Coptic Christians still worship in this church.

The beautiful legend of "La Befana," as she is called by the Italians, may be deemed not unworthy of recital here. It is as follows: When the three Magi were on their way to Bethlehem "that they might worship also," they passed a woman cleaning her house. She asked them whither they were going. When they told her their errand, she begged them to wait until her work was done so that she might accompany them. They replied that they might not tarry and went their way. When her task was finished the woman set out to follow them, but she saw them never again. Ever since that day she has been wandering about the earth, looking for the holy Child. On the eve of the Feast of the Epiphany she descends the chimneys of houses, bringing gifts to the little ones, hoping ever, trusting ever, that among them she may find Him Whom she seeks. Of this legend the Santa Claus myth is doubtless a variant.

C. E. H.