

submits to the operation for their removal. His wife is sitting opposite with a book on her head. The surgeon has his head covered with a Nuremberg funnel, the instrument through which dullards have the juice of wisdom poured into their heads. The hole in the head cannot be made by the skilful operator without inflicting pain on the patient for whom sympathy is expressed in the faces of the spectators. A friend sits near with a flask of some soothing lotion in his left hand. The background is a landscape with a church in the center. The inscription reads: "Meester snijt die keye ras, myne name is bibbert das," which means, "Master cuts the stones out; my name is Trembling Badger."

## THE BLOSSOMING ROD.

BY PHILLIPS BARRY.

A LEGEND of St. Joseph, that when a husband was being chosen for the Virgin, his staff put forth leaves and blossoms, and the Holy Spirit was manifested in the form of a dove, is locally current in Malta.<sup>1</sup> The first documentary record of it is not earlier than the eleventh century;<sup>2</sup> by the thirteenth it is well established in the hagiography.<sup>3</sup> The miracle of the dove alone is found already in the *Protevangelium Iacobi*, written about the year 358.<sup>4</sup> Obviously, the later tradition of the hagiography embellished this simpler form of the story when the legend found its way into folk-lore. As now current save in Malta, however, only the marvel of the blossoming rod remains.<sup>5</sup> With the etiology of this miracle as part of the lore of the pastoral staff the present essay will deal.

<sup>1</sup> O. Dähnhardt, *Natursagen*, II, p. 265: "Als für die hl. Jungfrau ein Mann gewählt werden sollte, befanden sich in einem Kloster viele Jünglinge. . . . Man versammelte sie alle im Chor der Kirche, und brachte lange Wanderstäbe herein, worauf jeder einen wählte. Auch brachte man mit den Stäben zugleich eine weisse Taube herein, welche nun auf den Altar gesetzt wurde. Jene Stäbe waren aber sämtlich dürr und abgelagert,—der Prior sprach jedoch, 'Derjenige dessen Stab grünen wird, soll der Bräutigam sein.' Und gleich darauf blühte der Stab des hl. Joseph, trieb Blätter, Knospen und Schösslinge,—die weisse Taube aber flog ihm zu."

<sup>2</sup> C. Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha*, p. 67, an interpolation in Codex B of the Pseudo-Matthæan Gospel.

<sup>3</sup> O. Schade, *Narrationes de Vita et Conversatione B. M. Virginis*, VII: "[Joseph] virgam aridam. . . . ad manum pontificis dedit, que vidente populo universo Iudeorum, frondibus et fructibus et floribus germinavit, et spiritus sanctus descendit, et in columbe specie in ea resedit."

<sup>4</sup> C. Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha*, p. 18, "τὴν δὲ ἰσχάτην ῥάβδον ἔλαβεν Ἰωσήφ, καὶ ἰδοὺ, περιστέρα ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ τῆς ῥάβδου."

<sup>5</sup> O. Dähnhardt, *Natursagen*, II, pp. 265-6, from Italy and the Tyrol.

In the hagiography the staff is a characteristic attribute of a saint, the case type of which was suggested by the habit of the monk whose staff was allowed him by St. Pachom as a part of his equipment.<sup>6</sup> When seen in a vision the saint appears staff in hand<sup>7</sup>—in his capacity of thaumaturge he cannot be without it. In fact, its prominence in legends of miracle-working is sufficiently marked to suggest hagiographic influence in folk-tales of wizards and sorcerers. Even Christ, as Dr. Carus has pointed out, was early represented with a magician's wand.<sup>8</sup> Of the miracle of the staff which, when planted in the ground, comes to life and grows into a tree, numerous instances are on record down to the seventeenth century.<sup>9</sup>

The earliest known documentary witness is *The Martyrdom of Matthew*, an early hagiographic romance of the second half of the fourth century, most probably written in Egypt.<sup>10</sup> In this text Jesus, appearing to St. Matthew, gives him a staff which according to directions he plants in Myrna, a city of the cannibals. The staff forthwith becomes a great tree:

“νῦν οὖν ὦ Ματθαῖε, δέξαι τὴν ῥάβδον μου ταύτην, καὶ . . . εἰσελθε εἰς Μύρνην τὴν πόλιν τῶν ἀνθρωποφάγων, καὶ φύτευσον αὐτὴν. . . ἦν δὲ θαῦμα μέγα καὶ θαυμαστὸν, ἣ γὰρ ῥάβδος εὐθέως βλαστήσασα ἠΰξήθη καὶ ἐγένετο εἰς δένδρον μέγα.”<sup>11</sup>

Gregory of Nyssa (d. 390) records an Armenian tradition concerning a tree said to have been raised from the staff of St. Gregory, planted by himself:

“εὐθὺς γὰρ οὐ μετὰ πολλὸν χρόνον ἢ μὲν βακτηρία ταῖς ὄχθαις ἐρριζωθεῖσα, δένδρον ἐγένετο. . . ὄνομα δὲ μεχρὶ τοῦ νῦν ἐστὶ τῷ δένδρον ἢ βακτηρία, ὑνημόσυνον τῆς Γρηγορίου χάριτος καὶ δυνάμεως.”<sup>12</sup>

Next in chronological order are a story told by one Postumianus, who about the year 402 visited the Thebaid (of which

<sup>6</sup> Jerome, *Regula S. Pachomii*, LXXXI: “Nemo . . . habet praeter ea quae in commune monasterii lege praecepta sunt. . . exceptis his. . . et bacello.”

<sup>7</sup> E. A. W. Budge, *St. George of Cappadocia*, p. 328: “I saw a monk. . . having wings. . . and he had a golden staff in his right hand.”

<sup>8</sup> *The Open Court*, March, 1914, “The Portrayal of Christ,” pp. 157-9.

<sup>9</sup> After this it disappears from the hagiographic tradition.

<sup>10</sup> J. Flamion, *Les Actes Apocryphes de l'Apôtre André*, p. 318. At an early date the hagiographic romance became a distinct literary genre, constructed according to a stereotyped form.

<sup>11</sup> R. Lipsius and M. Bonnet, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, I, 2, pp. 220, 225.

<sup>12</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, “De Vita S. Gregorii Thaumaturgi” in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, XLVI, cols. 929-931.

mention will be made in a later paragraph),<sup>13</sup> and an anecdote of Bishop Shenute of Atripe related by his pupil and successor Besa:

"Notre père, apa Schnoudi, . . . . prit son *bâton de palmier*, vint près du puits, l'étendit, le planta, et à l'instant, le bâton prit racine, fit pousser en haut des branches et des régimes des dattes."<sup>14</sup>

Besa calls the staff of Shenute *bai*, whence as a loan-word the Greek *βαις*, "palm-branch."<sup>15</sup> It appears that, beginning with St. Anthony, Egyptian monks carried staves of palm. A text written in the Fayumic dialect, and consequently relatively early, shows that the palm-staff had become a conventional attribute, assumed even by the devil when disguised as a monk.<sup>16</sup> As furnishing additional evidence, the following documents may be here cited, as translated from the Coptic.

1. *Vie de St. Paul de Thebes* (c. 400): "Le bienheureux Antoine se leva, il sortit. . . son *bâton de palmier* à la main."<sup>17</sup>

2. *Vie de Schnoudi* (457): "Mon père saint apa Schnoudi s'approcha de la meule, il posa sur elle son *bâton de palmier*."<sup>18</sup>

3. *Ibid.*: "Il frappa un palmier dans la terre de l'île avec la petite branche qui était dans sa main."<sup>19</sup>

4. *Vie de Jean Kolobos* (c. 500-600): "Mais le vieillard. . . abba Amoi venait chaque jour du matin avec son *bâton de palmier*, et le chassait."<sup>20</sup>

5. *Vie de SS. Maxime et Domece* (uncertain date): "C'était un homme. . . ayant sur sa tête une cuculle. . . il avait en ses mains un bâton" (in Coptic, *shbôt nbai*, "staff of palm").<sup>21</sup>

In an Arabic text of the *Acts of Matthew*, a document of

<sup>13</sup> See below.

<sup>14</sup> E. Amelineau, *Monuments pour servir à l'histoire de l'Égypte chrétienne*, p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Macc. xiii. 51; John xii. 13.

<sup>16</sup> E. Amelineau, *Monuments pour servir à l'histoire de l'Égypte chrétienne*, "Vie de Paul de Tamoueh," p. 766: "Le diable. . . prit la forme d'un moine, vêtu d'une peau, et qui portait de petits rameaux de palmier." A Bohairic text on St. Macarius, the Egyptian, states that "the staves of monks were of palm." (G. Zoega, *Catalogus Codicum Coptiorum*, 128.)

<sup>17</sup> E. Amelineau, *Annales du Musée Guimet*, XXV, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> E. Amelineau, *Monuments pour servir à l'histoire de l'Égypte chrétienne*, p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

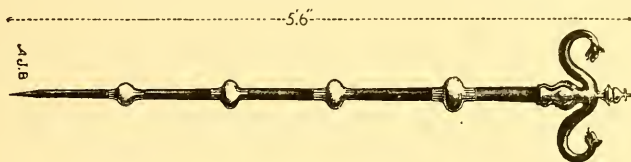
<sup>20</sup> E. Amelineau, *Annales du Musée Guimet*, XXV, p. 335.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268.

Egyptian provenience,<sup>22</sup> the following directions are given to the evangelist:

“Strip from thee this dress, and put on the dress of priests. And shave the hair of thy head and of thy beard. And gird up thy loins, and take the *bough of a palm-tree in thy right*<sup>23</sup> hand.”

A ritual use of the palm-branch had been long familiar in the mysteries of Isis.<sup>24</sup> As the caduceus, borne in the same ceremonies, became the characteristic attribute of the Coptic bishops,<sup>25</sup> so the



A COPTIC CROZIER.\*

palm-stave passed into Egyptian Christianity as the property of the monks. In the case of Shenute the reported miracle of the staff planted by the well and growing to a tree has perpetuated in hagiographic tradition a misconception of the usual method of propagating the palm itself.

“The date palm, unlike the majority of palms, produces offshoots, or ‘suckers,’ at the base of the stem. . . . In all regions where its culture is an important industry, (it) is almost entirely propagated by removing and planting the offshoots.”<sup>26</sup> This fact is clearly stated by Theophrastus<sup>27</sup> and Pliny.<sup>28</sup> Trognus, however, according to Pliny, reported that the palm was grown from leaves

<sup>22</sup> The Acts of Matthew, known only from an Arabic manuscript of the fourteenth century, and an Ethiopic translation of later date, must have previously existed in Coptic, and may be tentatively assigned to the period of monastic literary activity in Egypt, c. 400-600.

<sup>23</sup> A. S. Lewis, *Mythological Acts of the Apostles*, p. 102.

<sup>24</sup> Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, XI, 10: “ibat tertius (sacerdos) attollens palmam auro subtiliter foliatam, nec non Mercuriale etiam caduceum.” *Ibid.*, 11: “Hic horrendus. . . . Anubis, laeva caduceum gerens, dextera palmam virentem quatens.”

<sup>25</sup> A. J. Butler, *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, II, p. 218 ff. Compare Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, XI, 8, 11.

<sup>26</sup> Bureau of Plant Industry, Washington, D. C., Bulletin 53, *The Date Palm*, pp. 14, 20.

<sup>27</sup> Theophrastus, *De Causis Plantarum*, I, 2: “ὁ φοῖνιξ δέχεται γὰρ καὶ ἐτέρας γενέσεις παρὰ τὴν σπερματικὴν, τὰς τε γὰρ ῥάβδους φασὶ μισχεῖν περὶ Βαβυλῶνα τὰς ἀπαλωτάτας, καὶ ὅταν ἐμβώσονται, μεταφτεῖνόναι.”

<sup>28</sup> Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XIII, 8: “Et ab radice avulsae vitalis est satus.”

\* From A. J. Butler, *Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, II, p. 220.

in Babylon.<sup>29</sup> Even Pliny himself in another chapter, mistook the meaning of *ῥάβδους* in his Greek source and stated that the palm was grown from its young branches.<sup>30</sup> It is not surprising, then, that a Coptic hagiographer endowed with the *Lust zu fabulieren* characteristic of his people, should perpetuate the misinformation. An additional reason for the error lay in the fact that a number of exogenous trees, cultivated by the ancients for fruit or for shade<sup>31</sup>—among them the olive, ash, willow, hazel, apple, and fig—were propagated by slips or cuttings.<sup>32</sup> With this bit of horticultural lore as furnishing the basis of fact, legends of the miraculous growth of trees from the staves of holy men and women readily became part of the hagiographic tradition.<sup>33</sup> In witness whereof, the following documents may be put in evidence.

1. *Olive. Martyrdom of St. Epime* (Coptic, c. 400-600): "Tum servi Iulii deposuerunt corpus S. Apa Epime. Cum essent in manu eorum baculi e ligno olivæ isti statim pulchros fructus protulerunt."<sup>34</sup>

An Abyssinian legend ascribed the origin of a certain olive tree at Buk to the planting of a stick of dry wood by Jesus.<sup>35</sup>

2. *Ash. Acta S.S. Bertarii et Ataleni* (c. 900): "Fige in terram baculum et excipe martyrium. . . . At ille, figens palum in terram, horam praestolatur ultimam. . . . Lignum aridum deseruit siccitas, et induit viriditas. . . . hinc erecta grandis arbor fit *fraxinus* pulcherrima."<sup>36</sup>

3. *Hazel. Miracles of St. Germain* (878): "Per pagum Tullensem iter carpens. . . . *columnam* quam forte manu gestabat virgam humi defixit. Explicata praedicatione. . . . ramusculos iam frondesque produxerat."<sup>37</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XVII, 9: "Nam folia palmarum apud Babylonios seri atque ita arborem provenire Trogum credidisse demior."

<sup>30</sup> Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XIII, 8: "Satus et ramorum tenerrimis,"—the phrase being a close rendering of Theophrastus, *De Causis Plantarum*, I, 2:

"τὰς γὰρ ῥάβδους. . . . φασὶ μοσχέειν τὰς ἀπαλωτάτας."

<sup>31</sup> Theophrastus, *Historia Plantarum*, II, 4: "ἢ ἐλάα βλαστάνει. . . . καὶ ἀπὸ δάβδου."

<sup>32</sup> Theophrastus adds that olive wood will sprout, even when made into a door-post or an oar: "ἐκ βλαστάνει δὲ μάλιστα τὰ ἐλαίνα. . . . ἐὰν ἱκμάδα λαμβάνη, . . . ὥσπερ ἤδη τις στροφέως τῆς θύρας, ἐβλάστησε, καὶ. . . κώπη ἐν πῆλω." (*Historia Plantarum*, V, 9)

<sup>33</sup> Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XVII, 13: "Avolsi. . . . stolones vixere. . . . hoc modo plantantur punicae, *coryli*, *mali*, sorbi mespilae, *fraxini*, *fici*."

<sup>34</sup> I. Balestri and H. Hyvernât, *Acta Martyrum Aegypti*, p. 97.

<sup>35</sup> R. Hofmann, *Das Leben Jesu nach den Apokryphen*, p. 184. An Arabic version of the story, ascribed to the Egyptian bishop Cyriac, makes the number of trees three, without naming the species. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>36</sup> *Acta Sanct. Boll.*, 6 July, II, 319.

<sup>37</sup> *Acta St. Boll.*, 31 July, VII, 257. Hazel-wood was believed to possess magical properties, as shown by the lore of the divining-rod.



*Vita S. Alenae* (c. 1200?): "Sancta Alena... baculum... in terram defixit, capellam intravit, et divinis laudibus expletis regressa, baculum germinasse, foliaque produxisse invenit, qui in *corylum* quae adhuc durat... excrevit."<sup>38</sup>

4. *Apple. Anecdote of St. John the Lamb*<sup>39</sup> (980): "Baculum... infigans humo, 'sicut,' inquit, 'est impossibile lignum hoc aridum terrae radicibus inhaerere, florere pariter et fructificare, sic impossibile scias verba quae dicis in me impleri posse.' Mox... lignum superficiem mutavit, terrae inhaesit, corticem induit, viruit, floruit, fructum protulit."<sup>40</sup>

A later document specifies that the tree bore a peculiarly fragrant variety of apple, called after the saint himself.<sup>41</sup> It is also of record that the crozier of St. Boniface, set in the ground after his martyrdom by a pious woman to whom he had given it, became an apple-tree bearing apples of amazing beauty and sweetness.<sup>42</sup> A certain St. Janbonus, or John the Good, was said by a sixteenth-century writer to have raised an apple-tree from a dry stick, charred in the fire.<sup>43</sup>

5. *Fig. Vita S. Petri de Alcantara*<sup>44</sup> (1669): "Tunc ad illum guardianus, 'pater,' inquit, 'non inutile videbitur... inter has arbores ficulneam aliquam plantare... ' Ad quae S. Petrus... baculum... terrae infigit. Sed infudit illo instanti Deus virtutem, ut etiam sine cortice radices agens, ramusculos ac frondēs emitteret."<sup>45</sup>

As far as is known, the legend of the fig-tree grown from the staff of Pedro de Alcantara brings to a close the hagiographic tradition of the blossoming rod.

<sup>38</sup> *Acta Sanct. Boll.*, 17 June, III, 393.

<sup>39</sup> Bishop of Maastricht, c. 631.

<sup>40</sup> *Acta Sanctorum Belgii*, II, 426.

<sup>41</sup> *Acta Sanctorum Belgii*, II, 423: "Poma suavissimi odoris, quae ab eo tempore poma S. Iohannis ab hoc ydelicet S. Iohanne appellata fuerunt."

<sup>42</sup> *Acta Sanct. Boll.*, 30 Jan., II 1158, "Vita S. Thiadildis": "baculum... in terram fixit, sed mox... virorem recepit, radices alte in terram misit, floruit, fructum dedit, et melioris mala generis, (nam de arbore malo baculus praescissus fuit) nec temporibus illis nec postmodum nostris ab hominibus visa sunt aut gustata."

<sup>43</sup> *Acta Sanct. Boll.*, 22 Oct., IX, 760 (cf. 794): "Sanctus vir Janbonus... habens in manu pomi arboris ramusculum... in terra fixit, et oratione facta, flores ilico apparuere."

<sup>44</sup> San Pedro de Alcantara, one of the most noted of Spanish saints, is remembered for his reforms in the rule of the Discalced Friars. As confessor of St. Theresa, his influence led to her reforms in the rule of the nuns.

<sup>45</sup> *Acta Sanct. Boll.*, 19 Oct., VIII, 730.

The willow, universally noted for its tenacity of life, will grow, as Pliny observed, even when the slip is planted upside down.<sup>46</sup> A reference to the cultivation from slips of this tree is found in the *Shepherd* of Hermas (c. 140):

“λέγει μοι ὁ ποιμήν, λάβωμεν πάντων τὰς ῥάβδους, καὶ φυτεύσωμεν αὐτὰς, εἴ τινες ἐξ αὐτῶν δυνήσονται ζῆσαι. . . τὸ δένδρον τοῦτο ἰτέα ἐστι, καὶ φιλόζωον τὸ γένος. ἐὰν οὖν φυτεύθωσι καὶ μικρὰν ἰκμάδα λαμβάνωσιν αἱ ῥάβδοι, ζήσονται πολλαὶ ἐξ αὐτῶν.”<sup>47</sup>

Pliny states that rustics carried staves of swamp-willow, dreaded by snakes.<sup>48</sup> The sprouting of neglected staves was doubtless too common to pass for a miracle.<sup>49</sup> A tree thus grew from the staff of the Irish St. Mochoemog:

“Et ponens santus Mocoemog mastigiam suam in terra ibi, oblitus est eam, que crevit in magna arbore.”<sup>50</sup>

Evidently the croziers of these early bishops, easily thrust into the ground, were pointed, like those of the Coptic bishops at the present day.<sup>51</sup> Of this fact mention is actually made in the case of St. Patrick.<sup>52</sup>

So far nothing has appeared in the etiology of this miracle which is without foundation in fact, save for the rapidity with which the slip grows into a tree. In this feature of the legend is retained an element which is traceable to the mythology of the Egyptian Osiris,<sup>53</sup> whose character of vegetation-deity appears already in the Pyramid Texts, as shown by the following utterance:

“The yama-tree grows for thee, the nebes-tree turns about its head to thee.”<sup>54</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Hermas *Shepherd*, III, 8 Similitude 2.

<sup>47</sup> Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XVII, 13: “quae vel inverso surculo seritur.”

<sup>48</sup> Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XXIV, 44: “serpentes et hunc fruticem fugiunt, baculumque rustici ob id ex eo gerunt.”

<sup>49</sup> Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XVII, 27: “casus. . . defractos serere ramos docuit, cum pali defixi radices cepissent.”

<sup>50</sup> “Vita S. Mochoemog,” 18 in C. Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, II, 173.

<sup>51</sup> A. J. Butler, *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, II, 219: “In every case these staves have the lower end pointed.” Compare also Fig. 30, *ibid.*, p. 220, reproduced above.

<sup>52</sup> W. Stokes, *The Tripartite Life of St. Patrick*, p. 469: “The hinder end of the crozier went through his foot and wounded it greatly. Patrick said, ‘Why didst thou not protect thyself?’ ‘Methought,’ saith Oengus, ‘that it was a rule of the religion.’” The crozier referred to was the celebrated *Bachaill Isu*, or staff of Jesus, with which St. Patrick was miraculously invested when he visited the islands of the Tyrrhenian sea after Pope Celestinus had refused to ordain him. (*Ibid.*, p. 420.)

<sup>53</sup> An actual version of the Osiris myth has passed into the Latin hagiography, “Vita S. Mochoemog,” 2.

<sup>54</sup> K. Sethe, *Die alten Pyramidentexte*, 1019.

In Christian tradition, a legend of a tree bowing its head before the infant Jesus first appears on Egyptian soil. Sozomenus (c. 400) records it as current at Hermopolis:

“παρ αἰγυπτίοις ἠνίκα διὰ τὸν Ἡρώδη ἐφυγεν ὁ Ἰωσήφ . . . ἐλθεῖν εἰς τὴν Ἐρμούπολιν, ἅμα δὲ εἰσιόντι παρὰ τὴν πύλην μὴ ἔνεγκον τοῦτο το δένδρον μέγιστον ὃν (a persea-tree) τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὴν ἐπιδημίαν ἐπὶ τὸ Ἐδαφος κλίνειν καὶ προσκυνῆσαι.”<sup>55</sup>

Another version of the story passed into the Pseudo-Matthæan Gospel:

“Tunc infantulus Iesus laeto voltu in sinu matris suae residens, ait ad palmam, ‘Flectere, arbor, et de fructibus tuis refice matrem meam.’ Et confestim inclinavit palma cacumen suum.”<sup>56</sup>

In a thirteenth-century legendary of the Virgin Mary both versions appear,<sup>57</sup> whence by way of the vernacular metrical hagiographs<sup>58</sup> it passed into oral tradition, as illustrated by the English “Cherry-Tree Carol” and a number of folk-tales.

Plutarch tells that the coffin containing the body of Osiris was said to have been carried by the river to Byblos, where it landed beside an erica-tree.<sup>59</sup> At once the tree put forth a new shoot, which grew to a great size, entirely concealing the coffin. This form of the story cannot be separated from the account in the *Tale of the two Brothers*, an allegorical version of the Osiris-myth:

“Two drops of blood over against the double doors of his Majesty . . . They grew as two great persea-trees,—each of them was excellent . . . His Majesty sat beneath one of the persea-trees, and it spake thus . . . ‘I am Bata, I am alive, though I have suffered violence.’”<sup>60</sup>

The barren olive-tree to which St. Pantaleon was bound, according to the Coptic legend, put forth fruits as the milk flowed from his severed neck.<sup>61</sup> Other records in the hagiography attest

<sup>55</sup> Sozomenus, *Historia Ecclesiae*, V, 21, in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, LXVII, 1281.

<sup>56</sup> *Evangelium Pseudo-Matthæi*, 20 in C. Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha*, pp. 87 f.

<sup>57</sup> O. Schade, *Narrationes de Vita et Conversatione B. M. Virginis*, XXIV, XXX.

<sup>58</sup> E. Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden*, p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, 15; “ἡ δ' ἐρείκη κάλλιστον ἔρνος ὀγιῶι χρόνωι καὶ μέγιστον ἀναδραμοῦσα, περιέπτμξε καὶ περιέφυ καὶ ἀπέκρυψεν ἐντὸς ἐαυτῆς.”

<sup>60</sup> F. L. Griffith, *Library of the World's Best Literature*.

<sup>61</sup> F. Rossi, *Memorie della R. Acad. dei Lincei*. Ser. V, 1893.



a belief that the mere presence of a saint would stimulate new growth in dead wood.<sup>62</sup>

1. *Martyrdom of St. George*<sup>63</sup> (Coptic, c. 400-600): "The righteous man sat down by the foot of the wooden pillar...and it straightway took root and became a large tree....When....



ST. CANNA.\*

<sup>62</sup> Two parallels from Greek tradition, referring respectively to Hermes and Dionysus, may be cited:

1. Pausanias, II, 31, 10: "καὶ Ἑρμῆς ἐνταῦθά ἐστι... πρὸς τούτῳ τῷ ἀγάλματι τὸ ῥόπαλον θεῖναι φασὶν Ἡρακλέα, καὶ ἦν γὰρ κοτίνου, ... ἐνέφν τῆι γῆι, καὶ ἀναβλάστησεν αὐθις," (a story which Pausanias did not believe.)
2. Nonnus, *Dionysiaca*, XIV, 141-2:

"καὶ χλοεροῖς πετάλοισι κατάσκιος ἤερι γείτων  
ἴστος ἐὼν κυπάρισσος ὑπέρτατος."

<sup>63</sup> E. A. W. Budge, *St. George of Cappadocia*, pp. 222-3.

\* "Holding in her hand a staff, bursting into leaf and flower." From a fifteenth-century tomb at Beaumarais. Reproduced from S. Baring-Gould, *Lives of the British Saints*, II, p. 70.

Dadianus the governor saw the tree, . . . he asked one of his rulers, 'Whence is this new sight, this fig-tree?'"<sup>64</sup>

2. *Vita S. Brigidae* (c. 839): "Fundamentum ligneum quo altare fulciebatur manu tetigit, quod lignum in commemorationem pristinae virtutis usque ad praesens tempus viride, ac si non esset excisum et decorticatum, sed in radicibus fixum, virescit."<sup>65</sup>

Similarly, St. George, when put to the test by Magnentius, makes the seats of the governors to grow and blossom like trees:

"When he had finished his prayer and said 'Amen' . . . the Spirit of God came upon the thrones, and they budded, and the legs put forth roots and blossomed; those that were of fruit-bearing trees put forth fruits, and those that were not put forth leaves only."<sup>66</sup>

It may be added that the notion of plant-growth being hastened by the supernatural influence of a saint is also of Egyptian provenience, being found in the *Acts of Peter and Andrew*:

"παράχρημα δὲ πᾶς ὁ ἀγρὸς ἐβλάστησεν, καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ σταχὺς πλήρης σίτου."<sup>67</sup>

"Similar miracles of the sudden maturing of crops have passed into the Latin hagiography,<sup>68</sup> likewise into popular tradition."<sup>69</sup>

The conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing evidence is that the legend of the blossoming rod is a complex product of mythologized fact and literalized symbolism, the former relating to a well-known method in arboriculture, the latter ultimately to the worship of the vegetation-deity. Once established in the tradition the legend was capable of indefinite adaptation, becoming a mere hagiographic commonplace.<sup>70</sup> The story told by Plutarch, that Romulus's spear, cast from the Aventine to the Palatine, became a cornel tree,<sup>71</sup> was taken over bodily into the late Irish life of St. Columba:

<sup>64</sup> This story has been taken over into the spurious *Acts of St. Charalampus* (*Acta Sanct. Boll.*, 10 Feb., II, 383), one of a number of hagiographs for which material was drawn from the legend of St. George.

<sup>65</sup> *Acta Sanct. Boll.*, 1 Feb., I, 136.

<sup>66</sup> E. A. W. Budge, *St. George of Cappadocia*, p. 216.

<sup>67</sup> *Acta Petri et Andreae*, 4, written in Egypt c. 400-500. (J. Flamion, *Les Actes Apocryphes de l'Apôtre André*, p. 311.)

<sup>68</sup> *Vita S. Fintani*, 5: "Primo enim sulco seminato, statim frumentum crevit et maturuit." (J. Reeves, *Vita Sancti Columbae*, p. 107, note d.)

<sup>69</sup> O. Dähnhardt, *Natursagen*, II, p. 61.

<sup>70</sup> Of such adaptation many cases occur in the hagiographic documents which need not be cited at greater length.

<sup>71</sup> Plutarch's *Romulus*, XX: "καταδίσσης δὲ τῆς αἰχμῆς εἰς βάθος . . . τὸ δὲ ξύλον ἐστεξεν ἢ γῆ ζωφίτος οὐρα, καὶ βλαστὸν ἀνῆκε, καὶ βλαστὸν ἀνῆκε, καὶ στέλεχος ἐμμεγεθὸς κρανεῖας ἔθρεψε."

"The Devil made a cast of a holly javelin.....across the stream....Columb Cille.... cast it across the stream.... And that javelin grew where it touched the earth, and it is a great blooming holly tree."<sup>72</sup> It requires little boldness to trace the origin of any patriarchal tree to a staff planted by some saint. Such trees were held sacred,<sup>73</sup> not by association with pre-Christian tree worship, but through the deeply laid belief that the estate of a saint was sacrosanct.<sup>74</sup>

In illustration of the readiness with which a legend may pass, as in the case of the story of St. Joseph, from literary to oral tradition, a study of the theme of the "tree of forgiveness" may be put in evidence.

Sulpicius Severus (c. 402) records from one Postumianus, who had recently visited Egypt, certain details of the monastic rules for the neophytes. Obedience was the first law of the order. The novitiate was submitted to three years' probation, during which time he was bound to execute every command of his superior, however difficult or perilous or humiliating the task might be.<sup>75</sup> In one instance the abbot, on receiving the oath of the applicant, showed him a dry stick of wood which he planted in the ground and directed to be watered daily until it should put forth leaves. The neophyte did as he was bidden, carrying water from the Nile two miles away. At the end of three years the dry stick blossomed and became a tree, the same which Postumianus himself saw.<sup>76</sup> In the hagiographic tradition of the Coptic church, the young monk referred to in this anecdote is identified as the famous St. John

<sup>72</sup> Henebry, "The Life of Columb Cille," in *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, V, 52.

<sup>73</sup> *Acta Sanct. Boll.*, 1 Feb., I, 189, "Vita S. Severi," (of a tree which drove woodcutters insane, killed cattle that ate the ivy growing on it).

<sup>74</sup> See my article, "Saints and Sainthood," *The Open Court*, Jan., 1914, p. 49.

<sup>75</sup> Sulpicius Severus, "Dialogues," I, 17: "Praecipua...ibi virtus et prima est oboedientia, neque aliter adveniensi, a monasterii abbate suscipitur, quam qui tentatus fuerit et probatus, nullum unquam recusaturus, quamlibet arduum ac difficile indignumque toleratu abbatis imperium."

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 19: "Quidam itidem ad eundem abbatem recipiendus advenerat, cum prima ei lex oboedientiae poneretur, ac perpetem polliceretur ad omnia vel extrema patientiam, casu abbas storicinam virgam iam pridem aridam manu gerebat: hanc solo figit atque illi advenae id operis imponit, ut tamdiu virgulae aquam irriguam ministraret, donec quod contra omnem naturam erat lignum aridum in solo arente viresceret. Subiectus advena durae legis imperio, aquam propriis humeris quotidie convehebat quae a Nilo flumine per duo fere millia petebatur....Tertio demum succedentium temporum labente curriculo, cum neque noctu neque interdiu aquarius ille cessaret operator, virga floruit. Ego ipse ex illa virgula arbusculam vidi."

Kolobos, or the Dwarf,<sup>77</sup> of Scete on the border of the Libyan desert.

“Certain jour Abba Amoi prit un morceau de bois sec, il se rendit dans un introit éloigné de sa cellule dans le désert, d’environ douze milles et il la planta là. Et Abba Amoi appela Abba Jean, son disciple, il lui dit, ‘Jean, mon fils, donne une vase d’eau chaque jour à ce morceau de bois, jusqu’à ce qu’il produise des fruits.’ . . . Faisant ainsi pendant trois ans, l’arbre vécut, il poussa en haut, il produisit des fruits.”<sup>78</sup>

A tree, alleged to have been the one raised by St. John, was pointed out to Père Claude Sicard, a French Jesuit, who visited the monasteries of Egypt in the year 1712.<sup>79</sup> Through the Arabic Synaxary, the story of the “tree of obedience,” as it was called, is doubtless still familiar as a record of an amazing miracle.<sup>80</sup> Yet in its origin it was not a miracle, since we know that among the monks of Egypt there were some who like St. John the Dwarf himself had a sense of humor.<sup>81</sup> It is reasonably certain that the neophyte was supplied with a properly cut slip needing only cultivation to become a tree.

The passage of the story from the hagiography to secular literature was by way of an Arabic text. One Hassan, long ill-treated by his father-in-law, when the latter has fallen into misfortune by reason of his sins, compels him to do penance by giving water every day to a dry stick planted in the plain of Damas, one hour’s walk from the nearest river. For three years the penitent waters the stick; it then grows green and becomes a peach-tree.<sup>82</sup> The peculiar turn given to the story is in the notion that the act constitutes not a test of obedience, but a form of penitential task. It is in this form that it finally reaches the level of popular tradi-

<sup>77</sup> John Kolobos lived in the first half of the fifth century.

<sup>78</sup> E. Amelineau, “Vie de Jean Kolobos,” in *Annales du Musée Guimet*, XXV, 347.

<sup>79</sup> *Acta Sanct. Boll.*, Oct. VIII, 40: “Aspice arborem hanc, vocatur arbor oboedientiae, et a duodecim saeculis, cunctis tempestatibus restitit, et aggressionibus ferarum et Arabum,—nunc crataegus est, sed olim siccum baculum fuit at abbate Poemene in hac sterili et fervida arena defixum. Hic abbas quondam celebri Joanni Parvo mandatum dederat, ut baculum quotidie irrigaret, quod morigerus ille monachus constanter per duos annos praestitit.”

<sup>80</sup> Graffin-Nau, *Patrologia Orientalis*, I, 352.

<sup>81</sup> St. John Kolobos fled to the mountains during incursion of the wild tribes from the desert. When asked if he feared death, he replied: “In the name of Christ my God, no. . . . If I stay, and the barbarian kill me, he will on my account suffer damnation!” (E. Amelineau, *Annales du Musée Guimet*, XXV, p. 391.

<sup>82</sup> Humbert, *Arabica Analecta*, pp. 89-126, cited by Basset, *Revue des traditions populaires*, XXII, 291.

tion, as found in folk-tales of the "tree of forgiveness."<sup>83</sup> From Rumania comes one of the best versions, of which the following is a brief summary:

"A fisherman in a bargain with the devil for riches, vows to give over in sixteen years that which is dearest to him. At the end of that time, his son, the intended price of wealth, following the advice of his tutor, dresses as a cleric and goes into the forest. There he comes to a house inhabited by a woman and her twelve sons, all brigands. One of them takes the youth to the Devil's cave in the woods, whence the imps repel him with cries of 'no clerics here!' Upon which he asks by what penance a murderer shall win grace. The imp replies, 'Let him plant the stick with which he killed his first victim, and water it with water he shall bring in his mouth till it grows and puts forth leaves, flowers and fruits, to be a sign that his sins are forgiven.' The brigands scorn penance; their mother, however, induces the youngest son to plant the stick with which he committed his first murder. Together they water it till it becomes a tree loaded with golden apples, which, falling to the ground, burst and release white doves. The other sons go before a judge, confess their crime, make restitution and are pardoned. As to the father of the youth, he spends his wealth in giving alms."<sup>84</sup>

In the medieval legend of St. Joseph, the miracle denotes the successful issue of an ordeal, or a rhabdomantic ceremony. The scriptural account of Aaron's rod must be similarly interpreted. It shows, moreover, that the cult application of a method in arboriculture was in use centuries before our era. As the rod was said to be of almond, a tree grown from seed,<sup>85</sup> it is evident that the story had reached a mere conventional form. In the Oriental legend of Rabrab,<sup>86</sup> or St. Christopher, which dates from the sixth century, the blossoming of his staff attests the validity of his mission to the heathen:

"Beatus Rebrebus, ingressus domum Domini, ante altare fixit virgam suam, . . . et procidens in faciem suam adoravit, dicens, 'Domine Deus meus, fac virgam istam frondescere, si vere vocasti me ad meditanda eloquia tua.' Et statim virga fronduit."<sup>87</sup>

<sup>83</sup> R. Basset, *ibid.*, pp. 290-292.

<sup>84</sup> A. and A. Schott, *Walachische Märchen*, No. XV.

<sup>85</sup> Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XVII, 30.

<sup>86</sup> *Rabrab* (Aramaic, "tall"; Syriac, *razrab*, *raverreb*), whence Rebrebus, Πέπρεβος, of the texts, according to Gildemeister. (*Anal. Boll.*, X, 396.)

<sup>87</sup> *Analecta Bollandiana*, X, 396: "Passio S. Christophori," 4.



A pretty story from a Greek hagiographic text tells how the chastity of an aged monk was vindicated after his death:

“Un vieillard servait une vierge, et certains disaient, ‘ils ne sont pas purs.’ Le vieillard, en mourant, ordonna de planter son bâton sur sa tombe, et le troisième jour, il porta des fruits.”<sup>88</sup>

To the same category belong popular legends of persons unjustly charged with various crimes, whose innocence was similarly proven. In the German ballad of the Tannhäuser, a product of sixteenth-century anti-clericalism,<sup>89</sup> the salvation of the penitent minstrel is revealed by the blossoming of a cracked staff belonging to Pope Adrian IV.<sup>90</sup> In this ballad, the Pope’s oath by his staff recalls the words of Achilles:

“Ay, by the staff in my hand, since once from its stock on the mountains  
Sundered, ne’er ’t will again put forth fresh branches and verdure!”<sup>91</sup>

Oaths by the royal scepter, or by the bishop’s crozier, were most binding. The Homeric allusion implies a belief that the blossoming of the staff would indicate perjury.<sup>92</sup>

\* \* \*

The results of the foregoing investigation may be summed up as follows:

1. The miracle of the blossoming rod planted and grown to a tree, as current in the Latin hagiography, entered the literary tradition by way of Egypt.
2. In its origin it recalls the method of growing certain trees from slips, as well as the symbolism of the vegetation-deity literalized as if founded on fact.
3. The presence of the miracle in modern folk-lore is due to hagiographic influence, as shown by the literary genealogy of the legend of the “tree of forgiveness.”

<sup>88</sup> Nau and Clugnet, “Vies et récits d’Anachorets,” (IV-VIIe siècles) in *Revue de l’Orient chrétien*, 1903, p. 93, cited by R. Basset in *Revue des traditions populaires*, XIX, p. 336.

<sup>89</sup> First printed in 1515.

<sup>90</sup> J. Kuoni, *Sagen des Kantons St. Gallen*, p. 131, (a traditional text):

“Der Papst nahm das Stäbli in seine Hand,  
Vor Dürre war es gespalten,  
‘So wenig das Stäbli mehr Läubli trägt,  
So wenig kannst Gnade erhalten.’”

<sup>91</sup> Homer, *Iliad*, 234-5.

<sup>92</sup> Giraldus Cambrensis, V, 179: “Ita ut iuramenta super haec [croziers] longe magis quam super evangelia praestare vereantur et peierare.”