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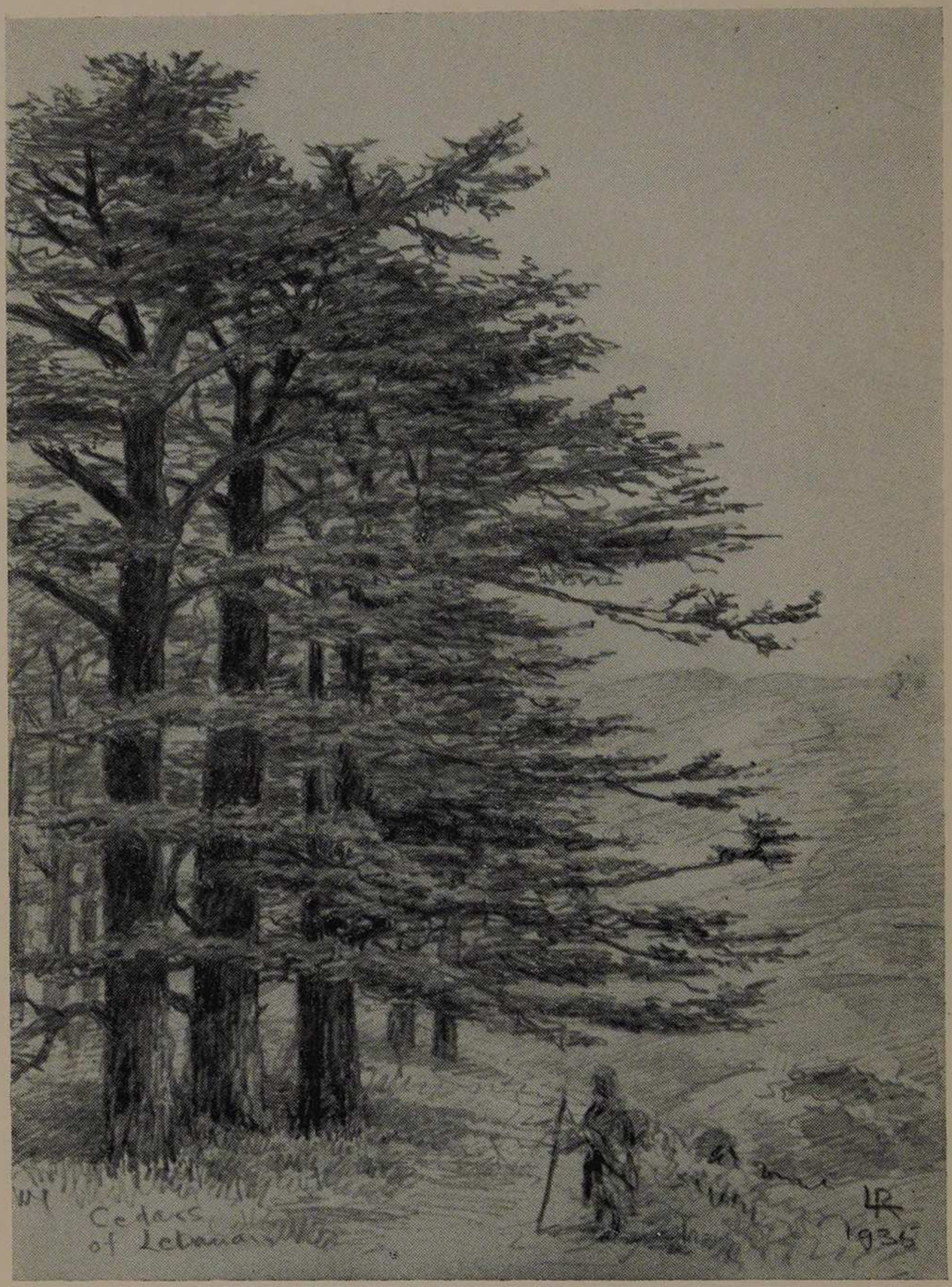
TREE LORE IN THE BIBLE



CEDARS OF LEBANON.

Frontispiece.

TREE LORE IN THE BIBLE

BY

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Archdeacon of Gibraltar
and Editor of THE TREE LOVER *Quarterly Magazine*

With 8 Illustrations from
Pencil Drawings by the Author

"The leaves of the Tree were for the healing of the nations."—Rev. xxii. 2.

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PREFACE

THE bulk of the studies contained in this volume have appeared from time to time in *The Tree Lover* magazine, of which the author is editor.

They have been retouched and furnished with fresh illustrations. The inspiration for several of these drawings he owes to photographs supplied direct from Palestine by his old friend John Crowfoot; that of the Lebanon Cedars to one lent him by his still older friend Dr. G. A. Cooke, Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, and successor of the illustrious Edward Pococke, who is mentioned on page 51.

The little volume owes much to the standard Bible Dictionaries and Commentaries, but supplies, it is hoped, something of the touch which only a genuine tree lover can give. If it may help, in some degree, to make tree lovers more familiar with the Bible, and Bible lovers with the trees, the author will be more than satisfied. For such an opportunity he is grateful to the authorities of S.P.C.K.

L. R.

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CHAPTER I

THE WISDOM LITERATURE

PROBABLY the earliest dendrological treatise on record—a treatise unfortunately no longer extant—is that of King Solomon, in which he "spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Libanus to the hyssop"—wild marjoram—"that springeth out of the wall" (1 Kings iv. 33).

The country over which he reigned was rich in tree-life, as the Old Testament abundantly indicates. It took centuries of senseless and cruel denudation to make Palestine what it was but yesterday—a proverb of aridity.

There are apparently some twenty-seven different species mentioned in the Old and New Testaments, though the identification of some of these is still disputed: but the gamut of Solomon, of which the climax or topmost note was *Cedrus Libani*, and the little fragrant herb the lowest member, may well have included a still greater variety. For, after all, the Hebrew Scriptures are not a botanical

treatise, and make no claim to be exhaustive in their enumeration.

If we felt justified in attributing to Solomon the Book we call Ecclesiastes (whose author certainly impersonates the Wise King), we should have record of that monarch as a planter, to match the record in the Book of Kings of his liberal exploitation of the timber of Lebanon. In that book we read (Eccl. ii. 4, 5, 6):

> "I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and parks, I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruit; I made me pools of water, to water therefrom the forest where trees were reared."

The references to trees in Proverbs—the only book in which we can trace Solomon's hand with certainty—are few and unimportant.

The Apocryphal Book called The Wisdom of Solomon is many centuries later and belongs, like Ecclesiasticus, to the period when Hebrew and Greek thought were interfused. We may consider the tree references of these two books side by side with the wonderful Book of Job: for these three, together with Proverbs, form the group known to scholars as the "Wisdom Literature"—the slender, but not insignificant contribution of the Hebrew people to the

world's philosophy ; the exposition of that type of wisdom of which Solomon is the traditional exponent.

The Book of Proverbs may be quickly dismissed. Apart from the familiar metaphors of "root" and "branch" (or rather "green leaf"—xi. 28; xii. 3, 12) and of "uprooting" (ii. 22), the only matter of interest to us is the repeated reference to the symbolic "Tree of Life," which emerges at intervals throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Of this we may treat again elsewhere. It reminds us how in tree lore as in so many other matters, the inspiration of the Hebrew writers purified and transfigured the mythical heritage they received from pagan ancestors, and made it the vehicle of high monotheistic teaching.

In Ecclesiastes, besides the very significant passage already quoted, which shews that something like scientific forestry on a large scale was at any rate contemplated in Old Testament times, we have only the famous picture of a fallen tree as symbolic of irrevocable destiny (xi. 3):

> "If a tree fall toward the south or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there shall it lie."

The writer of Wisdom, again impersonating Solomon, describes himself (vii. 20) as endowed with an unerring knowledge of " the diversities of plants and the virtues of roots." But the most elaborate tree-passage in this work is one in which, following the writer of Isaiah (xliv.), he describes in detail the fashioning of a wooden idol. It is a passage full of a scathing contempt for idolatry, but equally full of the atmosphere of carpentry and of the knowledge of the varied uses of wood (xiii. 11. sqq.):

" Yea, and if some woodcutter, having sawn
down a tree that is easily moved,
Skilfully strippeth away all its bark,
And fashioning it in comely form maketh a
vessel useful for the service of life;
And burning the rest of his handiwork to
dress his food eateth his fill ;
And taking the very refuse thereof which
served to no use,
A crooked piece of wood and full of knots,
Carveth it with the diligence of his idleness
And shapeth it by the skill of his indolence;
Then he giveth it the semblance of the
image of a man . . ."

This wooden image he props up carefully lest it should fall—and then falls down himself

WILD CYPRESS (Berosh).

Facing p. 15.

and worships it. And if he risks his life upon the deep, he

"Calleth upon a piece of wood more rotten
than the vessel that carrieth him."

The Book of Ecclesiasticus differs from those already named in its sumptuous "catalogues" of different species of trees and plants. The first of its references indeed can claim little originality (i. 20):

"To fear the Lord is the root of wisdom,
And her branches are length of days."

But where Wisdom is depicted as singing her own praises (xxiv. 12 sqq.) we have a brilliant and rich enumeration:

"I took root in a people that was glorified;
Even in the portion of the LORD'S own
inheritance.
I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus;
And as a cypress tree on the mountains of
Hermon.
I was exalted like a palm tree on the sea
shore:
As cinnamon and aspalathus have I given
a scent of perfumes.

"As the terebinth I stretched out my branches,
And my branches are glory and grace:
And my flowers are the fruit of glory and riches."

With a like eloquence the heroic High Priest Simon is described in the fiftieth chapter:

"As an olive tree budding forth fruits,
And as a cypress growing high among the clouds."

Height and spread, grace and beauty, fragrance and utility all stand out in this luxuriant picture. An equally vivid, but less radiant, canvas is the description of the "children of the ungodly," who are likened to scrubby, ill-fed growths, with only rock to cling to and with roots diseased. They

". . . shall not put forth many branches,
And are as unclean roots upon a rock."

But the tree-sense in this Hebrew literature finds its climax in the Book of Job where, curiously enough, there is no mention of individual species. It is with this Book—by general consent one of the most sublime in all literature—that we will complete our preliminary study of Tree Lore in the Bible.

What could be more intimate, and at the same time more true to Nature than Job's description of his past days of prosperity in terms of tree-life? He does not compare himself with a tree; he speaks as it were from within its bark (xxix. 19):

"My root is spread out to the waters;
The dew lieth all night upon my branch;
My glory is fresh within me."

Other references in the book show a sentiment of intimate affection for the tree. Such are the indignant cry of chap. xiii. 25:

"Wilt thou harass a driven leaf?"

and the pathetic exclamation of xix. 10:

"My hope is plucked up as a tree";

and the tragic utterance of xviii. 16:

"His roots shall be dried up beneath,
And above shall his branch be cut off."

Finally, there is the more elaborate comparison (xiv. 7-9) of the tree's wonderful power of recuperation with the frailty of human life:

" For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down,
that it will sprout again,
And that the tender branch thereof will not
cease.
Though the root thereof wax old in the earth
And the stock thereof die in the ground,
Yet through the scent of water it will bud
And put forth boughs like a plant—
But man dieth and wasteth away . . ."

CHAPTER II

THE SYMBOLIC TREES OF PARADISE

THE story of Eden may have been put into its final shape, as most modern scholars would probably agree, about the middle of the ninth century B.C.; but some of the elements of which it is composed date back far beyond any period that can be assigned to Moses: doubtless to what we call "the dawn of history." Parallels to the early narratives of Genesis are found elsewhere, and notably in the famous Chaldean tablets of some 3,000 years B.C.

A comparison of the finished Bible with the legends that preceded it helps us to understand something of the meaning of "Inspiration." For the primitive mythical matter is sifted and moulded till it is purified of all its grosser polytheistic features and made the vehicle of high monotheistic teaching.

One goes back again and again to the first three chapters of Genesis, and finds beneath the picturesque symbolism profoundest truths of nature, human and Divine.

Our immediate concern, however, is with the tree lore of the Earthly Paradise; which resolves itself into the study of the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge.

The association of trees with the story of Creation brings to mind a curious myth of the Australian aborigines, wherein the first man was fashioned out of the bark of a tree, a legend that has its parallel in Virgil (Æn. viii. 315) and Homer (Od. xix. 163). In Genesis the link between man and tree is not so close as that; but God is represented as ordaining that man should wake to life embowered in a Garden of Trees.

> "The Lord God," we read (Gen. ii. 8, 9), "planted a garden eastward in Eden . . . . And out of the ground He made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

How delightful here is the combination of beauty and utility. Only a tree lover could have evolved that phrase: "pleasant to the sight."

There is some ground for supposing that earlier versions of the story were content with

one comprehensive tree of Life and Knowledge, and that this tree was definitely an object of worship. There is to be seen in the British Museum a sculptured relief shewing King Assur-nazir-pal (ninth century) engaged in such worship; and it is known that at the New Year festival in Assyria a bare tree trunk was set up and decorated and made the centre of elaborate ceremonies.

The Hebrew writer, realizing the dangers of idolatry, relegates his Tree of Life (central though it be in the Garden) to a mysterious background in the story, and makes the Tree of Knowledge but the impersonal and innocent vehicle of a fatal choice.

Can we envisage the form in which these two trees were first conceived? Certainly not that of our "Arbor Vitæ" (*Thuya orientalis*), whose sole claim to the title, surely, lies in its gallant struggle for survival in the atmosphere of our smoky towns.

According to Professor Sayce, who places the original Eden at Eridu—now eighty miles from the head of the Persian Gulf, but anciently the point of entry of Euphrates and Tigris into the sea—the Tree of Life is the sacred Palm Tree: and with him many would agree. The Date Palm is a veritable tree of life to desert

dwellers: and it may be a Palm—though a very formal and decorative one—that figures on the Assur-nazir-pal tablet.

The other tree is, by long-standing tradition, identified with a more familiar type ; one at once "good for food" and "pleasant to the sight." Readers of Dante will remember his beautiful symbol of apple-blossom in the *Purgatory* (xxxii. 73), and "Adam's Apple" will to the end of time remain, in popular language, the title of the fatal fruit. It is a sapling from this tree, gleaming with inaccessible fruit—

"Pomi ad adorar soavi e buoni"—

that furnishes the disciplinary torment of the gluttonous souls in Purgatory; and the Tree itself—stripped by Adam's sin alike of fruit and leaf—stands in Dante's Earthly Paradise, a symbol of the Roman Empire, the providential instrument of discipline for the civilized world.

The differentiation of the two trees in the scriptural story may probably be accounted an advance on primitive tree lore; suggesting that life and knowledge are not one thing, and that an abuse of the latter may lead to deprivation of the former.

PALMS IN THE DESERT.

Facing p. 23.

The sacredness of trees is a commonplace of ancient religions, alike in East and West. We have the stupendously ancient Bodhi tree of India, and China's "Tree of Heaven," the Ailanthus, so familiar in our gardens and in the London parks, and the rarer and more mysterious Ginkgo (*Salisburia*), saved for us, some say, from a far-off geological era by centuries of careful planting in Chinese temple precincts. The close association of trees with the idolatrous nature-worship of the early Semites is specified in the Book of Deuteronomy (xii. 2), where the inhabitants of Canaan are described as "serving their gods under every green tree"; and again in the Prophets: Isaiah (lvii. 5), Jeremiah (ii. 20; iii. 6, 13), and Ezekiel (vi. 13). This refrain, "every green tree," coupled with "every high hill," is fraught with associations of a cruel and obscene type of nature-worship. The trees specified are Oaks or Terebinths. It is an inference—and perhaps a precarious one—that the famous "Oaks of Mamre" (Gen. xiii. 18, etc.) had a definitely religious significance for Abraham; though his planting of a Tamarisk in Beer-sheba (xxi. 33) is linked with the worship of Jehovah. The same may be said of the "Palm Tree" of Deborah (Judg. iv. 5), under

which she is said to have dwelt and "judged Israel." Critics who remember the episode of the Mulberry trees, whose rustling was to be the signal of David's attack on the Philistines (2 Sam. v. 24), may be tempted to find in the Palm a medium of divination for the prophetess; but is not its welcome shade a sufficient excuse for her choice of a stance?

If we turn to the West, we find the Oak and Yew held sacred by our early predecessors in Britain; Ash ("Yggdrasil") and Elm reverenced and mythologized by our Teutonic and Scandinavian cousins. The classics furnish us with abundant details of the dedication of particular trees to particular deities. Typical are Virgil's lines in the Seventh Eclogue:

"Populus Alcidæ gratissima, vitis Iaccho,
Formosæ myrtus Veneri, sua laurea Phœbo."

("The Poplar is most dear to Hercules, the Vine to Bacchus, the Myrtle to lovely Venus, and his own Laurel to Phœbus Apollo.")

As early as Homer the oracle-bearing Oaks of Dodona (Iliad, xvi. 234, etc.) are celebrated as revealing the will of Zeus; and on the strength of the episode of David's Mulberries some would suggest that the idea of divination

underlies that of a "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil."

In the Bible, however, that Tree disappears from view after its first mention in Eden; but the Tree of Life reappears at intervals and is with us at the end. Its further fortunes are pursued in the chapter which follows.

CHAPTER III

THE TREE OF LIFE

UNLIKE the Tree of Knowledge, its companion in the Creation Story, the Tree of Life reappears at intervals all through the Bible, and is with us at the close. Its first appearance after Genesis is in the Book of Ezekiel. It was probably from Ezekiel that Dante took his conceit of symbolizing the Roman Empire by the "Tree in the midst of the Garden."

That prophet, in his thirty-first chapter—surely the most poetical of all his utterances?—likens the Assyrian and Egyptian Empires to a stupendous tree. That tree is named as a "Cedar in Lebanon," and yet (here speaks the exile in much-irrigated Babylonia) with rivers abounding everywhere. A tree it is that overshadows the world and its history, and whose home eventually turns out to be Eden, "The Garden of God."

The lover of trees and of poetry must read for himself that wonderful chapter, with its

three episodes: the Mystic Tree's pre-eminence in beauty and grandeur, its doom and crashing fall, and the sympathetic repercussion in the forest.

Here the trees clearly typify the nations of the world; and their human reactions recall a fine phrase of Isaiah (vii. 2) describing the terror of King Ahaz at the prospect of invasion: "His heart was moved, and the heart of his people, even as the trees of the forest are moved by the wind."

The phrase "Tree of Life" occurs four times in the Book of Proverbs, but in no such picturesque context as that we have just been studying. It is identified successively with "understanding" (iii. 18), with "the fruit of the righteous" (xi. 30), with "the fulfilment of desire" (xiii. 12), and with "the healing of the tongue"—*i.e.*, "a wholesome tongue" (xv. 4). Here it has become a bare metaphor, but the recurrence of the phrase helps to bridge the gap between the first and the last book of the Bible.

It is in the Apocalypse that the symbolic Tree comes to its own and stands forth in its greatest splendour.

Early in the Book (ii. 7), in the message to the persecuted Church of Ephesus, comes the

promise: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." And in the last chapter (xxii. 2), which forms, as it were, the peroration to the entire Bible, comes the final picture of the Tree whose fruit forms the reward of the pure—"who have washed their robes"—and to be excluded from which is to be eternally lost (xxii. 14, 15).

Like Ezekiel's Lebanon Cedar, it stands by the water-side. "He shewed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. . . ."

Here are the four rivers of Genesis merged into a comprehensive stream which, "proceeding from the Father and the Son," suggests the outpouring of the Spirit of God —"The Lord, the Life-giver." And the Tree of Life itself has become a grove, or an avenue of fruitful trees adorning each side of the heavenly river, with a line, it would seem, of the same (for the phrasing is obscure) running down the middle of the street:

> "In the midst of the street thereof; and on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life."

Its ubiquity is matched by its perennial fruitfulness: "bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit every month." And finally we learn that its healing property is of world-wide application: "The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."

If the water proceeding from the Throne is the Holy Ghost, what are the tree and its fruit? Early Christian mysticism identified the tree with our Saviour's Cross: and for Venantius Fortunatus, the bishop-poet of the sixth century, the fruit was the atoning Lord Himself.

"Faithful Cross, above all other
One and only noble tree!
None in foliage, none in blossom,
None in fruit thy peer may be:
Sweetest wood and sweetest iron,
Sweetest weight is hung on Thee!"

A hundred times it has been repeated that the Bible story begins and ends in a Garden: that in a Garden the human race fell into sin and ruin, and in a Garden was entombed and rose again to life the Conqueror of sin and death, the second Founder of the race.

Evelyn, in his *Sylva*, tears himself from the

study of the Hornbeam to picture the delights of heaven as a counterpart to those of his beloved woods on earth. He figures a Paradise

> "where all the trees are Trees of Life; the flowers all amaranths; all the plants perennial, ever verdant, ever pregnant; and where those who desire knowledge may fully satiate themselves; taste freely of the fruit of that tree which cost the first gardener and posterity so dear; and where the most voluptuous inclinations to the allurements of the senses may take and eat and still be innocent; no serpent to deceive; none to be deceived."

Has not good Evelyn's Paradise picked up, with its reminiscences of the Christian Apocalypse, something of the savour of Islam?

For ourselves, we would fain add one more to the allegorical interpretations of that picture of the Heavenly Jerusalem, conceived as the Kingdom of God upon earth. "*Beatus est Naturæ Amor*," says the motto of one of our most meritorious societies, and we reply, "Twice blessed!" The love of Creation links us together fraternally as children of the All-Father, and the growing interest in tree

lore throughout the world provides a fresh bond of union for those hitherto severed by barriers of race or nationality; and so

"The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."

CHAPTER IV

WOODCRAFT AND TREE HUSBANDRY

"The whole earth is at rest and is quiet: they break forth into singing. Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us."

THIS striking passage from the Book of Isaiah (xiv. 7, 8) evinces a keen sense of the devastation caused by irresponsible activities of the lumberman. The Dramatis Personæ are worthy of notice.

The person addressed is the King of Babylon, the typical lumberman of human lives, ruthless and merciless, the track of whose invasions is like the trail of axe and fire in primeval forests. His downfall has brought a breathing-space to a much harassed world; a sense of relief which issues in a burst of song.

The speakers are Berosh and Erez, two forest giants; and it is surely a mark of conspicuous tree-sense and tree-sympathy in the writer that he has formed a habit of listening to their conversation.

Berosh and Erez are, as it happens, the

two trees that figure most largely in the construction of Solomon's Temple. Erez is the world-famed Cedar of Lebanon, whose very name signifies strength; Berosh is not quite so easy to identify, but is most probably either the tall Lebanon Juniper (*Juniperus excelsa*) or the wild Cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*). Both of these are boon companions of the Cedar in his mountain haunts.

The sense of relief is a measure of the antecedent anxiety. When the feller is about, the giants of the forest are least of all immune. Strength and bulk (as in the case of the Californian Redwoods) are but an additional temptation to the exploiter.

We shall find in the Bible but few hints of the existence of scientific forestry or silviculture, apart from the culture of fruit trees; but here we have discovered, at any rate, a vivid realization of the havoc wrought by the indiscriminate use of the woodman's axe, and of the pathos of felling: and that is only one degree removed from the impulse to afforestation.

If we turn from the figurative to the actual exploitation of the forest giants, we have to confess that the greatest of Hebrew kings was an avid consumer of timber. The back-

ground of the 5th, 6th and 7th chapters of the First Book of the Kings is one of busy felling, sawing and transporting on a vast scale. To supply the material for Solomon's great schemes of construction—the Temple building took seven years and the Royal Palace thirteen, in all a Twenty Years' Plan—thousands of cubic feet of timber were necessary. Hiram's army of lumbermen in the northern forests—working at Solomon's expense and supplemented by an army of 10,000 less expert Hebrews working in monthly shifts—must have converted huge tracts of primeval woodland into treeless waste.

How far, in those early days when the denuding forces of nature had not their full play in the track of the lumberman, natural reforestation may have compensated for the wreckage, it is impossible to estimate. But Solomon's hint in his letter to Hiram (1 Kings v. 6): "Thou knowest that there is not any among us that can skill to hew timber like unto the Zidonians," is significant, implying a long-standing tradition of felling among Hiram's subjects, which Solomon's demands must have intensified and accelerated. Here we have the first historical reference to an age-long process of devastation which has reduced

the once stupendous forest of Lebanon to the condition which the modern pilgrim deplores.

What have we, besides the clearly marked sense of outrage put by the prophet into the mouths of the trees themselves, to lend colour to the idea that any positive forest culture was practised ?

The most obvious reference is one which was quoted in the opening chapter of this book (p. 12), Ecclesiastes ii. 4-6. The writer, speaking in the person of that monarch to whom the forests of Lebanon paid so heavy a toll, declares that, after considering " what it was good for the sons of men that they should do under the heaven," the first things to which he set his hand were building and planting. " I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and parks, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruit: I made me pools of water, to water therefrom *the forest where trees were reared*."

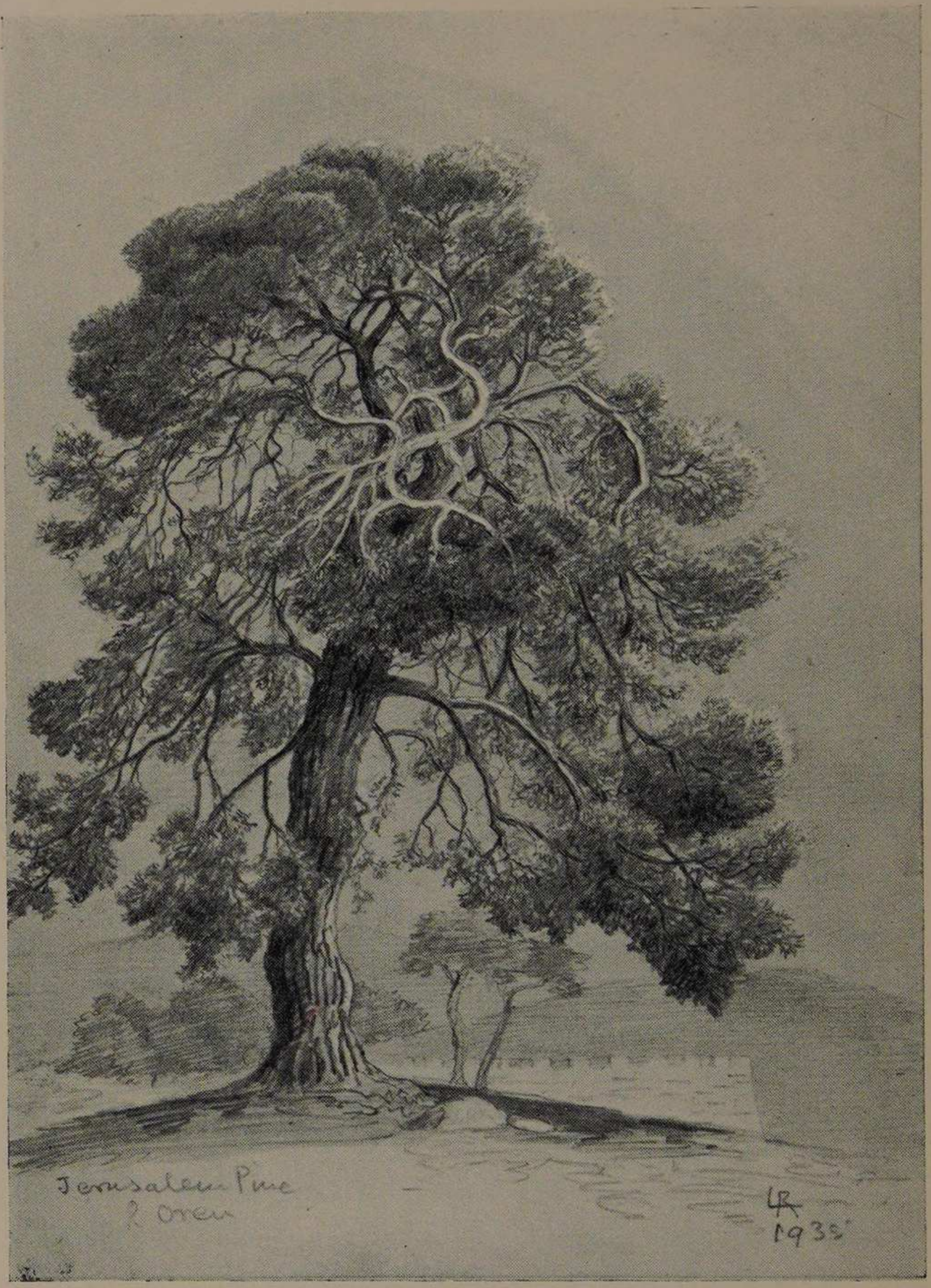
It is the last phrase in this description of a comprehensive scheme of planting that immediately concerns us; and one would fain believe that they embody a Solomonic tradition, though the Book in which the words occur is generally accounted pseudonymous and

comparatively late. The works are those of an affluent country gentleman distinguished for taste and initiative: but they include a suggestion at least of nursery work and afforestation.

The Book of Isaiah furnishes one more passage which bears on our subject (Isa. xliv. 14). Though incidental, as it stands, to a derisive description of idol-making, it is important to the student of tree lore, both for the species it names and also because of its allusion to the careful watching and manipulation of growing timber with a view to future use, and to the selection of species, soil and conditions in planting out. The passage (in the Revised Version) runs as follows, but not all the trees mentioned can be identified with certainty:

> "He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the holm tree and the oak, and strengtheneth for himself one among the trees of the forest: he planteth a fir tree (margin, 'or ash') and the rain doth nourish it."

The first tree named is our old friend Erez, about whom there can be no dispute; the second, Tirzah, has a euphonious title that seems, like Erez, to signify strength or hard-



JERUSALEM PINE (Oren ?).

Facing p. 37.

ness, but for secure identification we have no data—it might be an Ilex, or a Cypress, or it might be something else. The third is Allon, the Oak, of which there are some nine species indigenous to Palestine. The fourth tree is the one which has been most discussed, and one that offers more hope of identification than Tirzah. Oren is its name, and because of its similarity to the Latin *Ornus* it was long identified with the Ash. It is not an Ash, however, and probably not a Fir, but a Pine, most likely the Stone Pine (*Pinus pinea*), familiar as the "Umbrella Pine" to travellers in Mediterranean lands. This certainly answers to the conditions of the context: it is a tree that needs no artificial irrigation—can thrive in barren sand, with no moisture but "the rain of heaven"—and one whose timber is adapted alike for sculpture and for firing. Those are the twin purposes to which all this forethought and labour are directed: worship and domestic comfort.

> "Then shall it be for a man to burn; and he taketh thereof and warmeth himself; yea, he kindleth it and baketh bread; he maketh it a graven image and falleth down thereto" (Isa. xliv. 15).

When we come to the question of fruit-culture—the realm of the Vine, the Fig tree and the Olive—our data become more abundant, and are drawn both from the Old Testament and from the New.

Before leaving the subject of woodcraft a reference must be made to an incident in the life of Elisha (2 Kings vi. 1-5) which seems to suggest that in the ninth century B.C. anyone was at liberty to forage in the Jordan Valley for timber for house-building. The "sons of the Prophets"—were they a favoured class in this respect?—repair to the forests still standing in that favoured spot with their axes, and proceed without further ado to fell the trees and "take thence every man a beam" (2 Kings vi. 2), with a view to constructing new and larger quarters.

CHAPTER V

FRUIT TREES AND THEIR CULTIVATION

THE scientific culture of Forest Trees inevitably came late in history. To early civilizations the treasury of timber available for building and joinery, for tool-making and idol-making and for firewood, naturally appears inexhaustible. Everywhere man, as he begins to practise the arts of civilized life, lays, with a light heart, a heavy hand on the primeval forest, and finds that the by-products of his clearings made for agricultural purposes supply the means of shelter and of fuel by which his body can be warmed and his food cooked. He is doubtless further encouraged in his destructive work by the spectacle of the natural regeneration of the forest in many of his more neglected clearings. He does not worry himself as to the effect that his reckless felling or burning may have on the fourth or fifth—or the fiftieth—generation. Give his "civilization" long enough and scope enough, and he will produce, over an entire region like Pales-

tine, or a vast area like China, a condition of things in which the once fertile land is stripped bare and left defenceless against soil erosion, and so against flood, drought and famine.

All the more precious, therefore, in the face of this general policy of neglect, are the scanty references which we have previously noted (pp. 12, 35) to something like definite wood-craft.

Scientific Forestry comes late in history; but early among the arts emerges the planting and culture of Fruit Trees.

Certain fruits now common in Palestine are to be excluded from our list as introduced in later ages. Among these are the Citron and the famous Jaffa Orange. It is tempting to identify the latter, as some have done, with the "Apple" (*Tappuah*) of the Song of Songs. But the Orange was, as a matter of fact, introduced in the Middle Ages from the Iberian Peninsula, and still bears in its Arabic name, *Burdekan*, a reminiscence of its *provenance* from Portugal.

The Citron, too, though it figures in Rabbinical ceremonial at the Feast of Tabernacles, is probably not indigenous in Palestine.

Nor is Canon Tristram's identification of

the "Apple" with an Apricot generally accepted. The fruit belauded in the Song of Songs, used as a symbol in the Book of Proverbs (xxv. 11) and alluded to as precious by the Prophet Joel (i. 12), is almost certainly the small, sweet and fragrant yellow Apple valued, as we might think disproportionately, to-day by the natives of Palestine as by their forbears of many centuries ago. "Comfort me with apples," says the Lady in the Song (Cant. ii. 5), and her ecstatic lover compares her fragrance with that of the same fruit (vii. 8). We are told that a sick Arab child to-day will be comforted if allowed to hold an apple in his hands and smell it. And the tree itself, as well as its fruit, comes in for its meed of praise: "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons" (Cant. ii. 3).

Nuts (*Botnim*) and Almonds are early mentioned (Gen. xliii. 11) among the indigenous fruits of Palestine sent by Jacob as a gift to Pharaoh. This "Nut" is the Pistacio (*Pistacia vera*), akin to the Terebinth and the Mastic, and its fruit was evidently prized in the days of the Patriarchs. The only other mention of "Nuts" in the Bible is in the Song of Songs (Cant. vi. 11), where it probably

denotes the Walnut (*Juglans regía*), still to be found in the Holy Land.

The Almond (*Shâked—Amygdalus communis*) has more frequent mention—nine times in all—and its January burst of white blossom, anticipating the appearance of the leaves, has lent itself to a double symbolism, based in the one case on its precocity, and in the other on its colour. Jeremiah (i. 11) sees "a rod of an almond tree," and is told that it is an emblem of the Divine forwardness, signifying the speed with which the Lord will put His plan into action; while "The Preacher" (Eccles. xii. 5), in his sublimely poetical description of old age, declaring that "the almond tree shall blossom," shews us the "hoary head" of the septuagenarian. The budding of Aaron's almond rod (Num. xvii. 8) is among the traditional "signs" of early Hebrew history. Other references to the Almond in the Pentateuch (Exod. xxv. 33; xxxvii. 19) note the employment of representations of its flowers in metal-work design on the famous seven-branched Candlestick, of which the reproduction may still be seen upon the Arch of Titus in Rome.

Among other fruit trees evidently prized, and therefore, by implication, planted and

cultivated, are the Pomegranate (*Punica granatum*) and the Mulberry (*Morus nigra*). The Pomegranate is called "Rimmon" in Hebrew, and has left its mark on various place-names—Rimmon, Gath-Rimmon (Wine-press of the Pomegranate), En-Rimmon (Fountain of the Pomegranate)—like our own Oakwood, Oakridge, Oakenshaw, etc., in which some famous tree, or group of trees is recalled. The Pomegranate is prominent among the fruits of Canaan brought back by Joshua's spies, together with Grapes and Figs (Num. xiii. 23), and, like the Melons and Cucumbers of Egypt, is resentfully desired by the thirsty Israelites in the wilderness (Num. xx. 5). Its withering is counted as a disaster by the Prophets Joel and Haggai (Joel i. 12; Hag. ii. 19).

The Pomegranate is mentioned six times in that poetical treasury of botany, the Song of Songs: twice (vi. 11; vii. 12) for the beauty of its blossom, and once (iv. 3) for the comeliness of its fruit, which, like the Almond, is reproduced in design—embroidered round the hem of the High Priest's robe (Exod. xxxix. 24), and sculptured (as the Ancient Egyptians also sculptured it) round the capitals of pillars in Solomon's Temple—work that was still in

place when Nebuchadrezzar began his raid on the treasures of Jerusalem (1 Kings vii. 20; 2 Kings xxv. 17).

From the Song of Songs again comes the record of the juice of the Pomegranate mingled with wine as a beverage (Cant. viii. 2); but the reference in that Book most important for our purpose is the mention (iv. 13) of a whole orchard of Pomegranates, which we may take as definite evidence of the cultivation of the tree. It was evidently prized in Palestine of old as it is to-day, as is witnessed by the fact that it is named no less than thirty times in the Old Testament.

The Mulberry is not nearly so prominent in the Bible. In fact "Mulberry" is only a doubtful rendering of the Hebrew *Baca* in the famous passage in the story of David (2 Sam. v. 23, 24), to which reference was made in a former chapter in connection with the theory of tree-divination (Chapter II, p. 24). In Psalm lxxxiv. 6 the Authorized Version leaves the word *Baca* untranslated.

In 1 Maccabees (vi. 34), which speaks only for the first century B.C., we have a Greek and not a Hebrew word to deal with and are on surer ground: for the juice there mentioned as used with "the blood of grapes" to excite

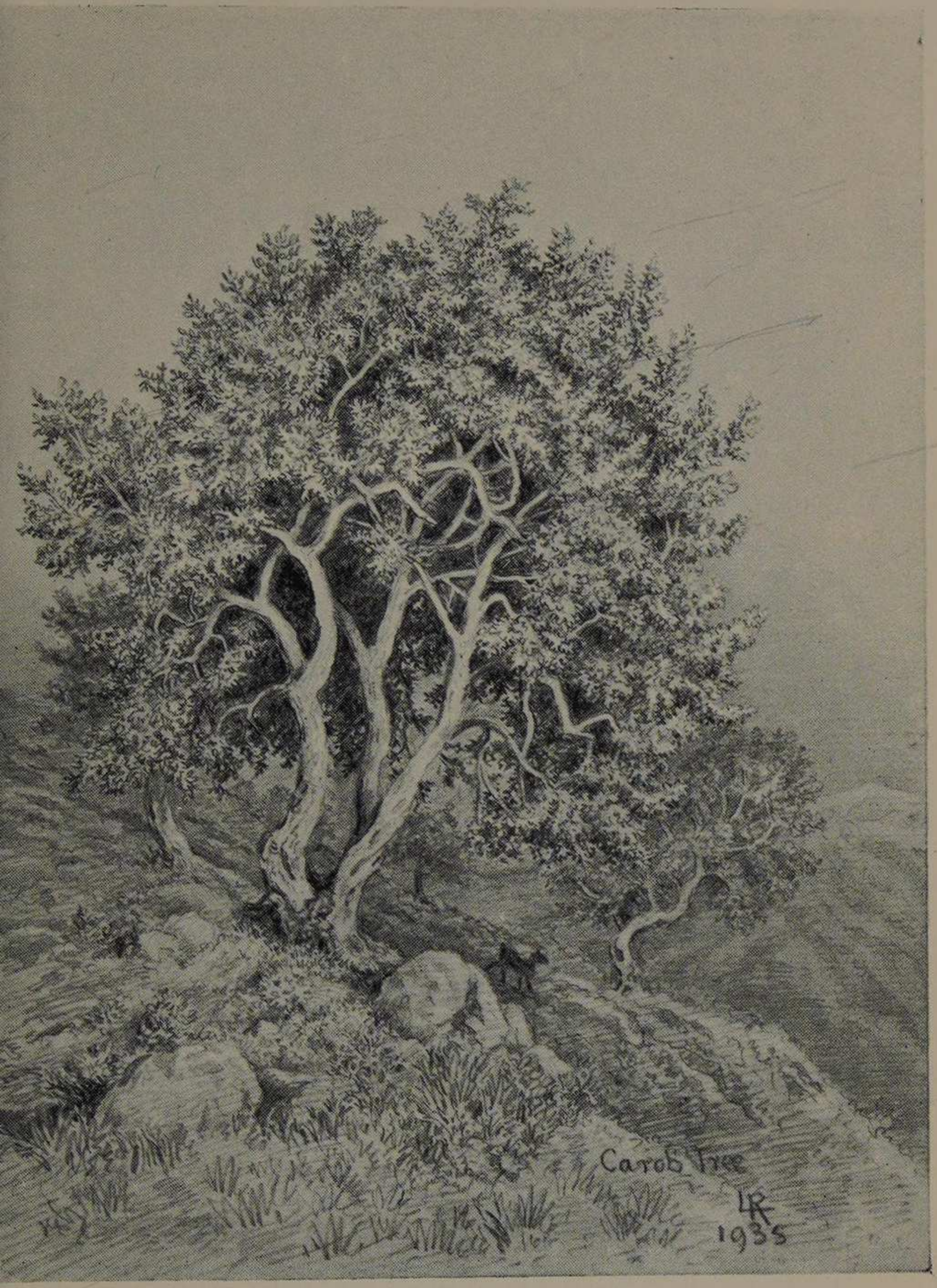
the elephants in battle is undoubtedly that of the Mulberry (*Morus nigra*), a tree identical with the "Sycamine" of St. Luke. The point of our Lord's mention of it in that Gospel (Luke xvii. 6), "ye should say to this sycamine tree, Be thou rooted up and be thou planted in the sea," is wanting unless it is a tree of some size, and not easily uprooted. As a matter of fact it grows to a height of thirty feet. The Sycomore is obviously distinguished from the Sycamine by St. Luke, who mentions both. The Fig-Mulberry (*Ficus sycomorus*) is of the Fig tribe, and must not be confused with the "False Plane" (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) which bears the name of "Sycamore" among us. Interesting, whether correct or not, is the suggestion that our tree acquired the name because it was so frequently employed to play the part of Zacchæus' tree in the religious plays of Mediæval England. Certainly it is the greatest claim to fame of the true Biblical Sycomore that it provided a stance and a post of vantage for the little tax-gatherer when he was so eager to catch the Master's eye (Luke xix. 4). And it is worthy of remark that *Ficus sycomorus* as it grows in Palestine to-day has a habit eminently suited to Zacchæus' purposes. It is a tree of broad umbrage,

branching horizontally over the road-side and forking low on the bole.

The Old Testament references to this tree make it clear that it was not only indigenous but plentiful. Solomon, we are told (1 Kings x. 27; 2 Chron. i. 15; ix. 27), made Cedars to be "as the sycomores that are in the vale for abundance." The tree was not only abundant but was deliberately cultivated. This transpires from two references. Under David's administration (1 Chron. xxvii. 28) Baalhanan the Gederite had charge of the Olives and the Sycomores "that were in the low plains"; and two centuries later Amos (vii. 14) describes himself—whether as a "gatherer of sycomore fruit" or as a "dresser of sycomore trees"—in terms that imply the tree's careful tendance, and that although its fruit is much less palatable than that of the true Fig (*Ficus carica*), treated in the next chapter.

Mention must be made of the Carob bean, whose graceful foliage contrasts delightfully with that of the Olive; for, though it is never mentioned by name in the Bible, its pods are the "husks" of Luke xv. 16. "When Israel is reduced to the Carob pod," says a Rabbinical proverb, "Israel will repent."

Finally, a word must be said about the Palm



CAROB BEAN.

Facing p. 46.

Tree; for though its actual cultivation is never mentioned, and half the sixty references to it in the Bible are symbolical (see especially 1 Kings vi. and Ezek. xl. and xli.) or figurative (see Ps. xcii. 12, Jer. x. 5, Rev. vii. 9), the tree, which still flourishes along the Palestinian coast, was prevalent of old in the Jordan Valley, giving to Jericho the name of "The City of Palm Trees" (Deut. xxxiv. 3, Judg. i. 16), as well as in the oases of that desert through which the Hebrew invaders are depicted as approaching the Promised Land. One such oasis, at Elim, is described both in Exodus (xv. 27) and in Numbers (xxxiii. 9) as enriched with seventy Palm trees. Here, as in the case of Deborah's Palm tree (Judg. iv. 5), the dominant thought is that of refreshing shade; but in Joel i. 12 the Palm is definitely coupled with the Apple for its fruit. And in Canticles vii. 8 we see the poet climbing up the tree to savour its lusciousness, while in Leviticus xxiii. 40, where its branches are among those selected for use on the Feast of Tabernacles—of which a revival is recorded in Nehemiah viii. 15—it is numbered among "goodly fruit trees." St. John tells us (xii. 13) that Palm branches were borne by the pilgrims on our Saviour's path on the occasion which Christendom still calls "Palm Sunday."

CHAPTER VI

THE FIG TREE

THE common Fig tree (*Ficus carica*), as its botanical name suggests, has its traditional home in Caria, Asia Minor; and dried figs still form the staple export of a depleted Smyrna.

It is not unnatural to suppose that, with its Biblical associates, the Vine and the Olive, the Fig is indigenous to the Mediterranean basin. If not, it must have been introduced in pre-historical days into the Hellenic world, where it plays an interesting and amusing rôle in Athenian literature. From the opprobrious title " fig-informer," given to those who made a fortune by delating to the customs authorities presumed defaulters to the fig tax, we derive our classic word " sycophant," and in that circle of ideas was generated the longest word in the Greek language—the delight of all youthful readers of Liddell and Scott—ὀρθροφοιτοσυκοφαντοδικοταλαίπωρος.

The tree's age-long existence in Palestine

is attested by numerous references in the Old Testament. Though figs are not expressly mentioned in the list of Jacob's presents to Pharaoh (Gen. xliii. 11), they are probably included under the phrase "the choice fruits of the land"; and they are actually named among the fruits brought back by the spies who explored the as yet unconquered land of Canaan (Num. xiii. 23).

Moreover, the Fig has the honour of being the first tree named in Holy Scripture (Gen. iii. 7), apart from the mystic trees of Paradise. And it is noticeable that, like the "Tree of Life," it figures in both the first and the last books of the Bible; for in Rev. vi. 13 we have a vision of stars falling from heaven "as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs when she is shaken of a great wind."

If we regard the traditional site of Eden as being in Mesopotamia, the *provenance* of our Fig tree is carried many degrees east of Caria. Farther eastward still our tree has cousins of prodigious size and somewhat uncanny features —the "Bo" tree or Banyan, the *Ficus religiosa* and *Ficus elastica* or India-rubber tree of India; the *Ficus macrophylla* of New Holland. It has also a more commonplace cousin in Palestine itself, the Fig-Mulberry or Sycomore,

of which we have already spoken in a previous chapter.

Though without the ponderous weirdness of its greater cousins, the common Fig tree has a curious and grotesque attractiveness, especially when bare in winter, or when young spring leaves fail to conceal its anatomy.

With what may almost be described as "physical jerks," it throws its branches hither and thither in wide sweeping curves and festoons: a feature to which it is tempting to see an allusion in Jotham's parable of the trees seeking a king (Judg. ix. 10, 11), though the phrase is applied also to Olive and Vine:

> "And the trees said to the fig tree, Come, thou, and reign over us.
>
> "But the fig tree said unto them, Should I leave my sweetness, and my good fruit, to go *to wave to and fro over the trees*?"

This joyous *abandon* of twisting branches is not so noticeable in our English examples, most of which are trained up a southern wall in the hope of occasionally ripening the fruit in our northern climate. A notable instance is to be found in the garden of the Regius Professor of Hebrew at Christ Church, Oxford,

FIG IN SPRING.

Facing p. 50.

reputed to be the first Fig imported from Palestine. Edward Pococke was Professor of Hebrew under Charles I. Cromwell ejected him in 1650 but had to reinstate him the following year. He brought this Fig from Aleppo in 1635, and a few years later planted a Lebanon Cedar in his country rectory.

Our naturalized examples rarely exhibit the attractive gyrations of the Fig that stands by itself. There are such examples here and there in Sussex, and four or five, about fifty years old, in St. James's Park. Our wall-trained figs have, at any rate, rendered familiar to us the very expansive leaves, to whose massive breadth many of the Scripture allusions owe their significance—a dense, heavy foliage which, on trees trained up a wall, form as it were shining coats of scale-armour.

The first reference (Gen. iii. 7) to the instinctive self-clothing of our fallen first parents finds in the Fig-leaf a solid mass of green suitable to cover nakedness; and the constant repetition of the formula "under his own vine and his own fig tree" as typical of peaceful and prosperous times, alludes to the value of these two fruit-bearers as shade-givers in virtue of the density of their foliage. For this reason

they are favourite and intimate neighbours of the homestead. Their welcome umbrage is familiar to all who on a hot day have found shelter on the outdoor bench of some wayside *trattoria* of the Mediterranean district.

It was when he was meditating under the Fig tree's shade (John i. 48) that Nathanael was marked off by his Lord for future discipleship.

The fruits of the Fig, Vine and Olive are staple products of Palestine and form a large element in the food supply of the population; hence the trio, and especially the Vine and the Fig, symbolize peace and prosperity, not only because they afford shade for the husbandman's leisure hours of relaxation and meditation (1 Kings iv. 25; 2 Kings xviii. 31; Mic. iv. 4); but because their fruits are among the most important products of his labour.

The destruction or failure of these fruits spells disaster—and that whether the damage be due to the devastating hand of a human foe (Jer. v. 17) or be an "act of God" (Ps. cv. 33; Hos. ii. 12), caused, for instance, by a plague of locusts (Joel i. 7, 12) or an unseasonable drought (Hag. ii. 19).

The general desolation of such a scene is graphically described by Habakkuk (iii. 17):

"Though the fig tree shall not blossom,
Neither shall fruit be in the vines;
The labour of the olive shall fail,
And the fields shall yield no meat. . . ."

The contrary picture is to be found in the Song of Songs—that botanist's treasury—in a hymn in praise of early summer (Cant. ii. 13), where the Fig tree, as in the Gospel (Luke xxi. 29), is a harbinger of the bright, sunny, happy days, and her fresh green leafage a token that "summer is now nigh at hand."

"The fig tree ripeneth her green figs,
And the vines are in blossom;
They give forth their fragrance. . . ."

Besides its food value this friend of man had in Old Testament times its recognized medical use; and Isaiah prescribes with success (Isa. xxxviii. 21) the application to Hezekiah's virulent boil of a poultice of figs.

In the New Testament the famous episode of the "blasted fig tree" (Mark xi. 14, 20 *seq*.) is one of two narratives (the other, that of the Gadarene swine, Matt. viii. 31 *seq*.) which seem somehow alien to the mind and temper of our Lord; and it would perhaps be not too venturesome to suggest that these

incidents may evince more intensely than the general run of the Gospel story the colouring of the minds through which they have been filtered. But it is very easy to exaggerate the difficulties presented—difficulties which tend to disappear if we bear in mind the proportionate value of animal or vegetable life when balanced against that of a human soul.

In the case of the Fig tree, its normal habits must be taken into account.

Towards the end of the early spring rains little green knobs appear at the ends of the thick twigs of its bare straggling branches. These young "first-ripe" fruits are followed by the fresh green leaves, which quickly overshadow them: the presage of advancing summer.

The famous Fig tree of the Gospel was one *whose leaves were precocious, and which should therefore normally have had correspondingly early matured fruit.* Instead, it had no trace of fruit at all. So it becomes an extraordinarily apt symbol of the hypocrisy that promises and never performs, and its sudden withering figures, with an impressive force that the disciples could never forget, the appropriate doom of such hypocrisy.

St. Luke, who omits this episode, gives us

instead the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (Luke xiii. 6-9), a little story of great significance, in which the details of fig culture are brought out as nowhere else in the Bible:

> "A certain man had a fig tree in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit thereon, and found none. And he said unto the vinedresser :
>
> "Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why doth it also cumber the ground ?
>
> "And he answering saith unto him: Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it: and if it bear fruit thenceforth, well; but if not, thou shalt cut it down."

Here we note first that this Fig tree is planted in a vineyard: the later reference (Luke xxi. 29) to "the fig tree and all the trees" suggests a mixed orchard.

In Mediterranean lands the culture of Fig trees alike in vineyards and in oliveyards is quite usual; and many will remember in Tuscany the conjunction of "corn, wine and oil" (*cf.* Ps. iv. 7) with figs.

Further, we notice from the parable that

it is considered necessary periodically to loosen and turn the soil about the Fig tree's roots, and that the application of manure is regarded as a suitable tonic and aid to fertility.

But perhaps the feature of the parable that most delights the heart of the tree-lover is the gardener's earnest pleading, and his evident affection for his recalcitrant charge.

It is paralleled by the grief of an Italian gardener who, when a cypress that he had raised was, for public reasons, condemned to be felled, came to his *padrona* (a friend of the writer) with tears in his eyes at the loss of *quell' albero che abbiamo rispettato tanto*—"that tree for which we had such an affectionate esteem"!

But the gardener's feeling in the parable has a deeper significance still, for he is pleading for mercy on the soul of sinful man.

CHAPTER VII

THE OLIVE

THE Olive takes a central place with the Fig and the Vine in the great triumvirate of staple Palestinian fruits. But even if we include the Oleaster or Wild Olive it has barely fifty mentions in the Bible: decidedly fewer than the Fig, and scarcely one-tenth of the Vine. Yet it must have bulked more largely than either of these in the landscape, as indeed it does to-day. In a denuded and desiccated Palestine there is still a grove of Olives near every considerable centre of population, and some of these, as at Gaza, Beirut and Nablus, are quite extensive.

It is good to know that on the historic Mount of Olives itself a well-thought-out re-planting campaign is being conducted under the auspices of The Men of the Trees.

The original home of the Olive is still a matter of dispute. On grounds of climate we may rule out the Homeric tradition (Od. xiii. 372) that it was brought by Hercules from the

Hyperborean lands of the extreme north, for the Olive is essentially a denizen of warm, temperate zones.

The tradition preserved by Herodotus (v. 28) would give it a very definite *provenance*. "Some say," he reports, that in early days "there were no Olives in any part of the earth save at Athens." And in another passage (viii. 55) he refers to the legend that the goddess Athene, in her contest with Poseidon, produced the first Olive tree, which grew within the temple of Erectheus at Athens, and miraculously threw up a shoot of a cubit's length immediately after a fire: a legend which shows, at any rate, familiarity with prominent characteristics of the tree.

If we turn to etymology, the root of the Hebrew name *Zayith* (which is thought to mean the "bright" or "silvery" tree) is found in the Aramaic, Ethiopian and Arabic languages; and this would fall in with the common-sense view that the Olive is indigenous to the Mediterranean basin, where it has flourished for ages and still flourishes, though a statement quoted from Strabo would expressly banish it from the Nabatæan territory east of Jordan.

Some hold that it had its origin in North

Africa and spread from thence; others that the conspicuous frequency of the wild variety in the south of Asia Minor would point to its home in that district; while a proposed derivation of the Hebrew name from the Armenian *Tzeth* would carry its origin still further eastward and bring us into proximity with the first mention of it in the Bible (Gen. viii. 11), where Noah's dove plucks an olive leaf in the vicinity of Mount Ararat. It is curious that in this Deluge story the Hebrew narrative employs the word generally applied not to the wild Olive but to the cultivated variety.

The Olive has thus a dramatic and honourable introduction into Holy Writ, symbolizing hope amid desolation, and the promise of new life. And, unlike the Vine, it does not lend itself to dark and sinister contexts.

Like the Vine, it is hardy and an austere liver. Given plenty of sunshine, it will mature and flourish in comparatively poor soils : and though, unlike the Vine, it is a very slow grower, its vitality is amazing.

"It was not arbitrarily," says Dr. G. Adam Smith in his fine book *Jerusalem* (ii. 299), "that the ancient Mediterranean peoples selected the Olive as the symbol of peace and the civic virtues; or that the Poets of the Old

Testament took it as a figure of the health both of the nation and of the individual Israelite."

And again:

"The harvest of the Olive comes only to a long patience. The young plant is carefully cultivated for seven or eight years before it bears fruit, but it is only after fifteen to twenty years that it reaches its full value. Watering is necessary in the earlier stages and frequent digging, as much as three and five times in the year," with repeated manurings and dressings of marl. "After this it may endure for centuries, for it 'possesses, with its very slow growth, so enormous a vitality that we may call it imperishable.' How this makes for increase of caution and foresight in a community, for habits of industry and love of peace, may easily be realized. 'The Olive Tree is one of the educators of mankind towards a higher civilization.'"

So when Habakkuk speaks (iii. 17) of "the labour of the olive" his phrase opens up vistas of historic significance, though Virgil, comparing this labour with that demanded by the Vine, seems to make light of it (Georg. iii. 420).

The Olive, with its companions the Fig and

the Vine, figures in Jotham's parable of The King of the Trees, and the terms in which he refuses the crown are most appropriate, in spite of a certain obscurity. "Should I leave my fatness, which God and man honour in me?" or "whereby they honour God and man and go to wave to and fro over the trees?"

This "fatness"—its extraordinarily nutritive oil—makes the Olive still an immense factor in the *cuisine* of Mediterranean peoples. And this richness, once the tree is well started on its career, springs out of poverty. Indeed, so long as it has a warm, porous soil and plenty of sunshine, it flourishes better on the stony hill-side—"on declivities that will produce no other fruit"—than in the fertile plains. These conditions are perfectly fulfilled round Jerusalem, and so only can we account for the prosperity of this preposterously placed little kingdom among the barren and hungry uplands of Judæa. In her overflowing oil-tanks Judah had not only a livelihood, but also riches for exportation and for barter.

The outward form of the Olive tree is appropriate to its nature and conditions. Huge, contorted and deeply wrinkled boles, frequently hollow with age, that surpass in

their grotesque quaintness our most ancient Oaks, great straggling limbs with thick, clumsy elbows, crowned often with straight young shoots, and a dazzle of silvery, almost ghostly, foliage, as elegant in its light festoons as the branches are grotesque, the Olive is a tree of outstanding character. Its form is only here and there reflected in the Scripture references. We have noted the name itself, which may well refer to the general effect of its foliage, in which the little oblong leaves, dark green and shiny above, tend to display their silvery under side.

There is another characteristic embedded in a famous Psalm-verse, where the children of a prosperous Israelite are compared with Olive plants (or "shoots") round about his table (Ps. cxxviii. 3).

The traveller in Mediterranean lands will recognize the picture. The gnarled, heavy bole, showing every sign of ripe age, and round it a circle of juvenile saplings springing from the ever young roots.

The "beauty" of the Olive is named by Hosea (xiv. 6), a reference, presumably, to the grace and sheen of its foliage, though the tree itself has a rugged comeliness and dignity of mien.

One other characteristic has picturesque mention in the Book of Job, that poetic treasure-house in which, at the outset of our studies, we found traces of a developed tree-sense. Here the author alludes to the conspicuous manner in which the Olive "casts her flower" (Job xv. 33).

In our "Authorized" and "Revised" versions alike there are two allusions to the Olive as "green" (Ps. lii. 8; Jer. xi. 16)—a misnomer if it were the correct translation of the Hebrew word; but "luxuriant" is probably the better rendering, so that Jeremiah's picture would be that of "a luxuriant olive, fair, with goodly fruit."

In St. Paul's writings we have a reference to the *grafting* of the Olive (Rom. xi. 17-24), a process which would be part of the "labour" mentioned by Habakkuk. All through history it has been customary to graft cultivated Olive branches on the stock of the wild plant: so the Apostle's allusion is to the point, although for the purposes of his argument he turns it upside down and pictures the wild Olive of the Gentile world "graffed in" to the cultivated stock of Israel.

Is it this grafting of which Virgil speaks in "truncis oleæ melius" (Georg. ii. 63)? Some

think he deprecates it when later (301) he says " neve oleæ silvestris insere truncos."

The Olive harvest falls in November, though the first berries drop two months earlier. The branches are beaten with a long pole to bring down the fruit, which is then carried away in baskets. This beating is referred to in the Deuteronomic Law, where, as in the case of the Vine, provision is made for the gleaner. " When thou beatest thine olive tree (Deut. xxiv. 20) thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless and the widow." And the gleaning is expressly mentioned by Isaiah (xxiv. 13) when he speaks of the desolation of his country " as the shaking of an olive tree, as the grape gleanings when the vintage is done "; or still more vividly in an earlier passage (xvii. 6): " yet there shall be left therein gleanings, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost branches of a fruitful tree."

After the in-gathering comes the pressing: and in both vineyard and olive-yard it was convenient to have the press and tank at hand. Gethsemane, that name of inexhaustibly sacred associations, simply means " olive-

OLIVES OF GETHSEMANE.

Facing p. 65.

press." In that grove just across the Kidron brook at the foot of the Mount of Olives there was evidently such a press. The olives were crushed, as now, by the impact of a revolving stone, from under which the oil streamed out by a spout or channel into a large vat dug out in the soil or rock. Joel (ii. 24, and iii. 13) speaks of vats "overflowing with oil."

The pressing was, however, sometimes done with the foot, like the treading of grapes. "Thou shalt tread the olives," says Micah (vi. 15), "but shalt not anoint thee with the oil." To this process also may perhaps refer the poetic phrase of Deut. xxxiii. 24, suggesting the prosperity of the tribe of Asher: "Let him dip his foot in oil."

Small quantities, for household purposes, would be "beaten" in a mortar, and in this way was prepared the oil for the temple lamps (Ex. xxvii. 20).

This leads us to the subject of the religious use and mystical symbolism of oil. For beyond its culinary, medical (Luke x. 34; Mark vi. 13; Jas. v. 14) and cosmetic use—the "oil that maketh man's face to shine" (Ps. civ. 15), or the habitual "anointing of the head" (Mat. vi. 17)—and its very significant

employment in lamps (Mat. xxv. 3), the product of this plant, which already for Homer (Od. xiii. 372) was "the sacred Olive," has figured from the dawn of history in man's religion. It has its place in sacrifice, and many are the references to it in the Books of Leviticus and Numbers in connection with that offering of cereals which the Authorized Version so unfortunately translated "Meat-offering," and the Revisers so neatly transformed into "Meal-offering."

It figures too in the solemn anointing of kings and priests, of which the Old Testament is full; it is the base of that elaborate unguent confected with sweet spices with which altar and holy vessels and priests were alike anointed (Ex. xxvii. 20); while the New Testament abounds in references to the mystic spiritual anointing of the Holy Ghost.

Thus the Olive, like the Corn and the Wine, is sacramental—caught up into the symbolism of heavenly things—and its splendid disciplinary work as an educator of man for the purposes of his earthly pilgrimage is crowned with the diadem of an eternal significance.

CHAPTER VIII

THE VINE

Of the Vine one can scarcely begin to write. Whole monographs have been written upon its culture, and upon the place it has held in human history and civilization. This humble plant has had a greater significance in the story of our race than any other, with the exception of wheat. And the beauty of its foliage and of its clusters of fruit, and the exhilarating influence of its main product, have given it a unique place in the affections of mankind.

It is a tribute to the supremacy of its position that the Vine and its products are named some five hundred times in the Bible —and in every Book of the Old Testament except two, Jonah and Ruth: while in the second of these it may be said to lurk in the background, for Boaz' "merry heart" after eating and drinking (Ruth iii. 7) surely suggests the wine-cup?

Of the place of the Vine in classical literature, and especially in the Greek and Latin

poets, volumes might be written. The word *vinum* has at least twenty-eight derivatives in the Latin language, and its Greek equivalent, οἶνος, thirty-eight. But we must confine ourselves to Holy Writ.

In Jotham's parable of "The Trees Choosing a King," which we have had occasion to quote more than once, the Vine boasts that his wine "cheereth God and man" (Judg. ix. 13), and in the great Psalm of Nature wine is praised as that which "maketh glad the heart of man" (Ps. civ. 15).

The danger and risk that the abuse of this good gift of God can bring are, of course, by no means ignored in Scripture. Indeed, from the very first mention of it in the story of Noah (Gen. ix. 21), a considerable proportion of the references are associated with its fatal misuse; and drunkenness is a vice condemned alike in the Old Testament and the New. (See, *e.g.*, Prov. xx. 1; xxvi. 9; Isa. v. 11, 22; xviii. 1; Joel i. 5; Rom. v. 11; vi. 10.)

In this connection we may notice the religious taboo of wine in certain cases. The Law of the Nazirite (Num. vi.) expressly forbids the use of wine or of any product of the vine-plant. And a similar inhibition of "wine or strong drink" is laid in the Old Testament on the

mother of Samson (Judg. xiii. 4, 5)—who was to be a life-long Nazirite—and in the Gospel (Luke i. 15) upon the as yet unborn John the Baptist.

As an offset to these inhibitions we may set the use of wine in sacrifice, of which frequent mention is made both in the Pentateuch and in the Prophets, though a proportion of the many references in Jeremiah refer to idolatrous practices.

Of the ritual of these "Drink Offerings" practically nothing is told us, but we can readily understand how man should wish to render back to his Creator one of the most valued of His gifts.

And, in spite of all adverse references, the place of the Vine in the Bible remains one of signal honour.

The marvellous grapes of Eshcol, which gave their name to a valley near Hebron, are selected as the topmost proof of the land's fertility brought back by the spies who accompanied Joshua (Num. xiii. 23). And after the entry into the Promised Land, to "sit under one's Vine and Fig tree" remained the typical image of peace and prosperity (1 Kings iv. 25; Mic. iv. 4); while the earlier mention of Judah as "tying his ass to the vine"

(Gen. xlix. 11) is clearly intended to have a like significance.

So naturally is this noble plant symbolical of the Holy Land and People that the Maccabæan Princes in the second century B.C. made it the emblem of a restored Israel on their coinage.

"The image of the Kingdom of God as a vine-stock or a vineyard," says Archbishop Trench, "runs through the whole of the Old Testament." Typical passages are to be found in Ps. lxxx. and the fifth chapter of Isaiah.

In the Psalm, Israel is described as a Vine transported from Egypt, transplanted by the hand of God, and flourishing in such truly vine-like exuberance that its branches "filled the land."

"Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt:
Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.
Thou madest room for it:
And when it had taken root it filled the land.
The hills were covered with the shadow of it. . . ."

The same image is found in Isaiah, in the passage which begins: "My well-beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill."

Our Lord Himself takes up the theme in His parables, making the vineyard the divinely appointed sphere of man's life-work, where in one case (Mat. xxi. 33-45) the lessees are the unfaithful and rebellious leaders of the Jews, and in another (Mat. xx. 1-16) the work is committed to day-labourers, hired at a *denarius* apiece.

But the supreme honour paid to the Vine is that of Christ's own self-identification in the Upper Room, alike in the institution of the Holy Sacrament, in which He makes the wine His blood, and in the allegory recorded in the Fourth Gospel, in which He declares: "I am the true Vine."

The significance of the Vine and its manifold symbolism give it a place by itself in literature. It is, to quote the Archbishop again, "the lowest and at the same time the noblest of plants . . . there was no property so valuable, nor any esteemed to yield returns so large, as a vineyard." And he quotes the Song of Songs (Cant. viii. 11):

"Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon;
He let out the vineyard to keepers.
Every one for the fruit thereof was to bring
a thousand pieces of silver."

So the Vine becomes the symbol of wealth and prosperity, richness and joy.

But almost more profound than the symbolism of its generous richness and its gift of happy elation is the significance of the other side—the endless labour that must be spent on it, year in, year out, and the discipline of constraint and suffering it must itself undergo as the condition and the price of its generosity.

The first of these thoughts is characteristically elaborated by Virgil in his second Georgic; the second perhaps nowhere more beautifully than in Mrs. Hamilton King's poem "The Disciples." (Kegan Paul.)

"On vine dressing," says the Roman poet (G. ii. 397 *seqq.*), "never can enough pains be spent. Thrice or four times each year must all your soil be split open, and the clods broken incessantly with hoe reversed, and all the grove lightened of its foliage. The husbandman's toil returns, moving in a circle as the year rolls back upon itself; and when her autumn leafage has been shed . . . he pursues the vine . . . lopping it with Saturn's crooked knife, and pruning it into shape. . . ."

The author of "The Disciples" takes up the theme of Virgil's last phrases in her canto "Ugo Bassi's Sermon in the Hospital."

She draws a picture of the year-long experiences of the noble plant whose

" Way is not of pleasure or of ease.
And as it grows it is not free to heaven,
But tied to a stake; and if its arms stretch out
It is but cross-wise, also forced and bound."

And while its grace

" Makes all the land
Lovely in spring-time,"

the husbandman

" Comes early with the pruning hook and shears
And strips it bare of all its innocent pride
. . . . . and cuts deep and sure.

And in its loss and pain it wasteth not
But yields itself with unabated life,
More perfect under the despoiling hand. . . ."

And at the vintage time

" The blood-red rivers of the wine
Run over; and the land is filled with joy;
But the Vine standeth stripped and desolate,
Having given all. . . .

And all the winter time the wine gives joy
To those who else were dismal in the cold:
But the Vine standeth out amid the frost,
And, after all, hath only this grace left:
That it endures in long, lone steadfastness
The winter through—and next year blooms
again . . .
And so fulfils itself in love once more."

We do not apologise for this long quotation, because the words bring out so wonderfully some of the implications of our Lord's self-identification with the Vine, which are aptly summed up in the lines that follow:

" For love's strength standeth in love's sacri-
fice,
And whoso suffers most hath most to give."

But the tree-lover searches for facts amid the treasures of scriptural symbolism—for facts about old-world viticulture; and his discoveries delight him.

Look at the care bestowed on a vineyard in the eighth century B.C., as reflected in the pages of Isaiah (v. 1, 2).

" He fenced it and gathered out the
stones thereof, and planted it with the

choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also hewed a winepress therein."

Even so the lord of the vineyard in Christ's parable of "The Wicked Husbandmen" (Mat. xxi. 33)

"planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower. . . ."

Each item in these two pictures is worth a moment's consideration.

First of all, the fencing and the tower. The vineyard must be fenced about and protected from human and other foes. Once the fence is broken down we may have the scene of desolation described by the Psalmist:

"All they that go by pluck off her grapes.
The wild boar out of the wood doth root it up
And the wild beasts of the field devour it."

So the Song of Songs speaks of "the little foxes" that "spoil the vineyards" when they are in fragrant blossom (Cant. ii. 15).

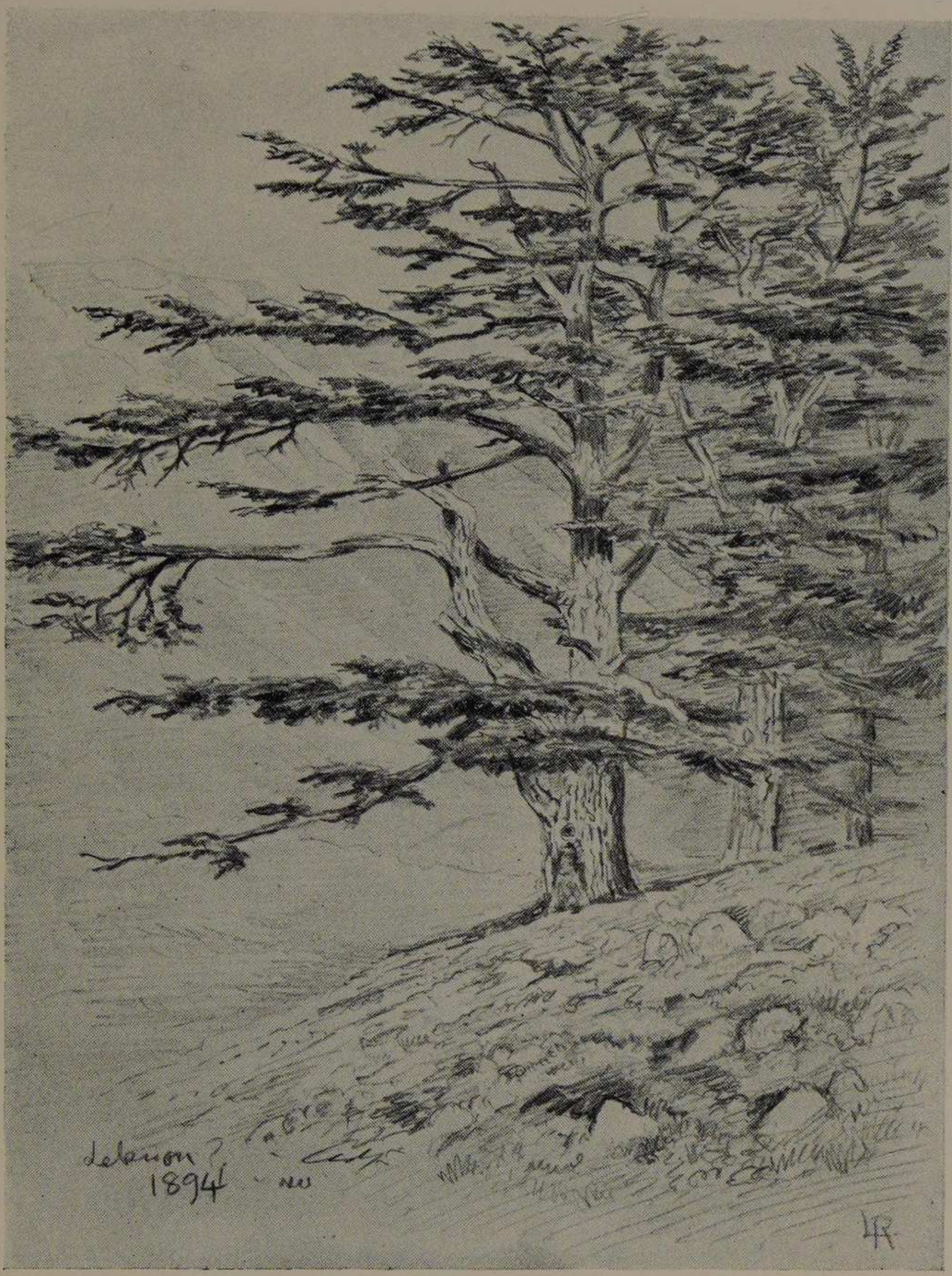
And the round stone towers that formed part of a Judean vineyard, where the owner could afford more than the leaf-and-branch shelter

which Isaiah calls the vineyard's "booth" or "cottage" (Isa. i. 8), is also a wellnigh indispensable protective measure; a watch tower, like those erected to-day at strategic points in the American forest for the detection and prevention of fires.

In the Biblical vineyard such towers had, incidentally, a like object, for the human enemies against whose ravages they were built were those whom the Psalmist had in mind when he laments of the precious plot, "It is burnt with fire and cut down . . ." (Ps. lxxx. 16).

After Isaiah's vine-grower had fenced his plot, he proceeded to "gather out the stones thereof." Even in those early days Palestine had undergone centuries of deforestation and of the soil-erosion that necessarily follows. Fortunately the Vine plant, at once luxuriant and austere, is at home in what Ezekiel calls "the wilderness—a dry and thirsty land," though he fancifully imagines it—as he imagined the Cedar of Lebanon (see Chapter III, p. 26)—battening in well-watered meadows, and yielding rods of straight timber for sceptres (Ezek. xix. 11).

On the dry, parched hill-side crumbled rock ever finds its way to the surface, and the farmer



CEDARS OF LEBANON.

Facing p. 76.

must clear his ground with great pains, and terrace it—using some of the stones he has "gathered out"—before it can be permanently fruitful. Also he must select his vine plants carefully if he would produce choice wine: and tend them well, lest they deteriorate and where he looks for grapes he find but "wild grapes" (Isa. v. 2), or find himself saddled with what Jeremiah (ii. 21) calls "the degenerate plant of a strange vine."

For this tending of the Vine, on which the author of the Georgics lays so much stress, we turn in Scripture to our Saviour's famous allegory, in which is described that ruthless cutting back by which alone is its annual yield ensured.

> "Every branch that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it that it may bear more fruit."

And the useless branches are cast forth, withered and burnt (John xv. 2, 6).

Even a hasty picture of the vineyard would be imperfect without a mention of the vintage and its festivities, which mark the most cheerful and exhilarating moment of the annual round in all vine-growing countries.

Perhaps the most glowing description is that of Isaiah (xvi. 10), who makes us hear the "singing and joyful noise" of the grape-gatherers, and the characteristic "shouts"—mentioned also by Jeremiah (xxv. 30)—of those who tread the winepress. A similar scene of festivity in a more lurid context is portrayed in the Book of Judges (ix. 27).

In contrast to these joyous associations is the almost inevitable simile by which the crushing out of the red streams of grape juice suggests the shedding of blood on a large scale.

This simile is prominent in a familiar passage of the Book of Isaiah (lxiii. 1-6), than which, surely, no more dramatic picture is to be found even in Hebrew poetry, and in the Apocalypse it becomes "the winepress, the great winepress of the wrath of God" (Rev. xiv. 19, 20).

The vintage was associated with the Feast of Tabernacles, the third great festival of the Hebrew year, when the whole population went on holiday, emerging from their houses to dwell for a time in leafy booths, a joyful reminiscence of those grim days in the past when, in the discipline of the wilderness, the nascent nation lived a nomad life in tents.

And the cheerful good-fellowship among

those principally concerned in the vintage was backed by a compassionate remembrance of the less fortunate. For, as with the Corn harvest and the Olive harvest, so with the ingathering of the fruit of the Vine, the law laid down strict injunctions (Deut. xxiv. 21) that gleanings should be left for the benefit of "the stranger, the fatherless and the widow."

CHAPTER IX

TREES AND THE MASTER

CHRIST'S love of the natural world is of a piece with His religion. We can picture Him as a boy, sitting on the hill-side near Nazareth, drinking in the beauty of the "lilies of the field," loving the little sparrows, so cheap in the market, watching with interest the processes of agriculture and discerning in the pageant of the vegetable world the eternal truths which it unfolds to those who have eyes to see.

Nor can He have failed to feel a child's natural thrill in the presence of tree-life, or to have recognized in the trees fellow-creatures linked to human life by very special bonds.

Lately the Italian foresters began to plant at Assisi, on the bare hill of Subasio, "in memory of the man who first dared to call the tree a brother." But St. Francis' fraternal intimacy with Nature and reverence for all created things was a part of the Saint's *Imitatio Christi*.

Two thousand years ago Palestine was

hardly the barren, treeless waste that it became after centuries of Turkish rule. Yet many centuries of expanding agriculture and of unscientific exploitation of timber must have robbed it of that refreshingly green and well-watered aspect so vividly described in Deuteronomy (viii. 7, 8) in the days when the lower Jordan Valley was "even as the garden of the Lord" (Gen. xiii. 10).

It is natural, therefore, that the comparative insignificance of tree-life in the landscape wherein He moved should be reflected in a rather scanty reference to trees in our Lord's recorded teaching.

These references have all been dealt with in our general consideration of Scriptural tree lore; but it may be well to gather them together and treat them from a different angle, as they cluster round His Person.

He seems to concentrate on fruit trees, and draws His lessons more especially from the domesticated Fig and Vine.

This being so, there follows a utilitarian discrimination in the vegetable world between those plants that lend support to the needs of human life and those that do not.

The tree is known by its fruits (Mat. vii. 16-19; Luke vi. 43, 44). A human life essen-

tially bad is, to mankind in general, no blessing but a curse, like the "thorns and thistles" (Gen. iii. 18) that hamper the agricultural activities of fallen man; while the good, beneficent life is compared to a fertile Vine or Fig tree (whose fruit, with that of the Olive formed so large a factor in the livelihood of the Palestinian population). The phrase is differently reported by the two evangelists, and may well have been repeated in different forms by the Lord Himself. The general theme—that the quality of the tree may be discerned from that of its fruit—is the same and would apply not only to different species—those useful or useless from man's point of view—but also (*cf.* Luke xiii. 6-9) to fertile or barren specimens of the same species.

A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, nor a bad tree good. Whether figs are denied to the thorn (Luke) or to the thistle (Mat.) and grapes to the bramble (Luke) or the thorn (Mat.) makes no difference to the argument, which is well summarized in the Third Gospel (Luke vi. 45):

> "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil

treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh."

In the background we may see the glory of a fruitful orchard, where Nature's alchemy has achieved a triumph, and the whole vitality of the trees, carefully nurtured and disciplined, has spent itself not in extravagant growth of wood or leafage but in bud and blossom and rich fruit.

That the illustration may have been repeatedly in the Lord's mouth is definitely suggested by the fact that St. Matthew (xii. 33) records how, later on, when speaking of His enemies' criticism of His own conduct, He posed to them a dilemma: "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt."

We have spoken of our Lord's utilitarian interpretation of the vegetable world. In one case it is combined with more than a hint of the æsthetic aspect. "The lilies of the field" (Mat. vi. 28-30) are made first to display to us the pageant of their loveliness, and then, as they become withered and dried, fall to the sickle, with their associate, the "grass of the field," to heat the peasant's oven. Their

glory, short-lived but royally impressive, is just the unearned, unmerited gift of a loving Creator. It is swiftly succeeded by their annihilation.

With the pathos of this thought we may compare the reference to the "reed shaken with the wind" as the figure of a life lacking that unbending resolution which characterizes St. John the Baptist (Mat. xi. 7; Luke vii. 24): a saying which somehow recalls—perhaps by contrast—the later legend of the aspen leaf as eternally trembling in sympathy with the Lord's passion.

The amazing growth of the "Mustard tree" (Mat. xiii. 32; Mark iv. 31, 32; Luke xiii. 18 *seqq.*) stands by itself, with that of the Wheat plant—"green blade, ear, and full corn"—by the earth's spontaneous action (Mark iv. 28), as representing the Lord's observation of the marvels of swift growth and expansion which mark vegetation, especially in tropical climes: a characteristic which makes the story of Jonah's "gourd" (Jonah iii. 6 *seqq.*) reaching maturity and dying off in so brief a space of time read like intelligible hyperbole if not literal fact.

These marvels never cease to be marvels, and are repeated, at different rates of progress,

in every tree: the tiny beginnings, the increment drawn from soil and water and air and transformed by Nature's organic chemistry into root and stem and branch, wood, bark, leaf, flower and fruit.

It is the contrast between this brave greenery and the stark desolation of an arid country that gives point to the mysterious question of the Crucified (Luke xxiii. 31): "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

There is no need to repeat here what has been said in a former chapter about the two Parables of the Vineyard (Mat. xx. and xxi.); but it may be useful to add a word or two on the place in Christ's teaching of the Olive, the Vine and the Fig tree.

The Olive He never mentions by name, though we know that the Mount of Olives was His nightly resort during the week of His Passion (Luke xxi. 37), and that He and His disciples were familiar with the great Olives of the Gethsemane enclosure (John xviii. 2), under whose shade He willed to pass the last strenuous moments before His arrest. But wheresoever He names "oil" or "anointing" (as in Mat. vi. 17; Luke x. 34) the Olive stands behind, with its gnarled and twisted

trunk, its fantastic branch-gestures and its lovely shimmering foliage.

Of the products of the Vine—grapes and wine—our Lord has no little to say. His enemies slandered Him as a "wine-bibber" (Luke vii. 34), and St. Luke (v. 39) records a saying which shews that He could appreciate wine that was mature.

His first miracle had wine as its subject-matter (John ii. 3 *seqq.*); and into the sacramental circle of the Eucharist He introduced wine with bread, as representative factors of our life's nourishment, promising, in mysterious phrase, to "drink it new" in the Kingdom that was to come (Luke xxii. 17, 18).

And the entire plant of the Vine, as we saw in a previous chapter, is adduced in the great allegory (John xv. 1-10) to symbolize His organic union with His disciples under the husbandry of the Father.

In the life-story of the Vine there sketched we see mirrored the discipline of stedfastness and sacrifice, of the judicial removal of dead shoots and the pruning of those that have promise; above all, the circulation of the Divine Life—the sap of the Holy Spirit—through all the worthy members, uniting them

to one another and to the main trunk, from which alone they draw their fruit-bearing vitality.

The Fig tree is perhaps the one from which most of the lessons are drawn, and is essentially the tree " known by its fruits."

Under its shade the peasant loves to rest after his toil in the sunshine (1 Kings iv. 25, etc.), and under its shade Nathaniel was engaged in prayer and meditation, we may conclude, when the Lord's heart first went out to that guileless soul. " Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee " (John i. 48). Here the Fig tree comes out into the open—from the realm of parable into that of fact, as it does in the difficult story of the blasting of the Barren Fig Tree, with which we dealt in Chapter VI.

In the realm of parable the Fig stands as harbinger of spring (Mat. xxiv. 32, 33; Mark xiii. 28, 29; Luke xxi. 29, 30), when the splashes of bright green formed by its quaint and rather clumsy-looking opening leaves, contrasting with the neutral grey of trunk and branches, stand out conspicuously amid the wealth of nascent greenery—" the fig-tree and all the trees " (Luke xxi. 29), recalling the

yearly miracle of which the Mustard plant has already spoken.

But it is in the parable of the Barren Fig Tree in the Vineyard (Luke xiii. 6-9), for which the gardener so earnestly pleads for a further reprieve, that we can gather the welcome truth that He whose recorded words have so little to say about arboreal life was not without that personal affection for individual trees which is a mark of the genuine tree-lover.

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