

as a tree of dense and verdant foliage: "The Saracens make their devotions at it, and hold it in great veneration, for it has remained thus green from the days of Abraham until now; and they tie scraps of cloth on its branches inscribed with some of their writing, and believe that if any one were to cut a piece off that tree he would die within the year." Indeed even before Maundevile's time Friar Burchard (1283) had noticed that though the famous old tree was dry, another had sprung from its roots. And it still has a representative.

As long ago as the time of Constantine a fair was held under the Terebinth of Mamre, which was the object of many superstitious rites and excesses. The Emperor ordered these to be put a stop to, and a church to be erected at the spot. In the time of Arculph (end of 7th century) the dry trunk still existed under the roof of this church; just as the immortal Banyan-tree of Prág exists to this day in a subterranean temple in the Fort of Allahabad.

It is evident that the story of the Dry Tree had got a great vogue in the 13th century. In the *Jus du Pelerin*, a French drama of Polo's age, the Pilgrim says:—

"S'ai puis en maint bon lieu et à maint saint esté,
S'ai esté au *Sec-Arbre* et dusc'à Duresté."

And in another play of slightly earlier date (*Le Jus de St. Nicolas*), the King of Africa, invaded by the Christians, summons all his allies and feudatories, among whom appear the Admirals of Coine (*Iconium*) and Orkenie (*Hyrkania*), and the *Amiral d'outre l'Arbre-Sec* (as it were of "the Back of Beyond") in whose country the only current coin is millstones! Friar Odoric tells us that he heard at Tabriz that the *Arbor Secco* existed in a mosque of that city; and Clavijo relates a confused story about it in the same locality. Of the *Dürre Baum* at Tauris there is also a somewhat pointless legend in a Cologne MS. of the 14th century, professing to give an account of the East. There are also some curious verses concerning a mystical *Dürre Bom* quoted by Fabricius from an old Low German Poem; and we may just allude to that other mystic *Arbor Secco* of Dante—

— "una pianta dispogliata
Di fiori e d'altra fronda in ciascun ramo,"

though the dark symbolism in the latter case seems to have a different bearing.

(*Maundevile*, p. 68; *Schiltberger*, p. 113; Anselm. in *Canisii Thesaurus*, IV. 781; *Pereg. Quat.* p. 81; *Niceph. Callist.* VIII. 30; *Théâtre Français au Moyen Age*, pp. 97, 173; *Cathay*, p. 48; *Clavijo*, p. 90; *Orient und Occident*, Göttingen, 1867, vol. i.; *Fabricii Vet. Test. Pseud.*, etc., I. 1133; *Dante, Purgat.* xxxii. 35.)

But why does Polo bring this *Arbre Sec* into connection with the Sun Tree of the Alexandrian Legend? I cannot answer this to my own entire satisfaction, but I can show that such a connection had been imagined in his time.

Paulin Paris, in a notice of MS. No. 6985 (*Fonds Ancien*) of the National Library, containing a version of the *Chansons de Geste d'Alexandre*, based upon the work of L. Le Court and Alex. de Bernay, but with additions of later date, notices amongst these latter the visit of Alexander to the Valley Perilous, where he sees a variety of wonders, among others the *Arbre des Pucelles*. Another tree at a great distance from the last is called the ARBRE SEC, and reveals to Alexander the secret of the fate which attends him in Babylon. (*Les MSS. Français de la Bibl. du Roi*, III. 105.)* Again the English version of *King Alisaundre*, published in Weber's Collection, shows clearly enough that in its French original the term *Arbre Sec* was applied to the Oracular Trees, though the word has been miswritten, and misunderstood by

* It is right to notice that there may be some error in the reference of Paulin Paris; at least I could not trace the *Arbre Sec* in the MS. which he cites, nor in the celebrated Bodleian Alexander, which appears to contain the same version of the story. [The fact is that Paulin Paris refers to the *Arbre*, but without the word *sec*, at the top of the first column of fol. 79 *recto* of the MS. No. *Fr.* 368 (late 6985).—H. C.]