

The Farningham Yew

In the churchyard at Farningham (Kent) there stands an old yew-tree, which has undergone the following extraordinary and self-wrought longitudinal disseverance of trunk, and closing in by the bark.

Seven years since, I observed that decay had formerly attacked one side of the yew, and that the healthy half of the trunk had taken alarm, and had separated itself, with its living top, from the perishing half of the trunk.

The bark had coiled round, and bent its edges, so as almost to cover in and encircle the separated living half-trunk: and the latter with its cortex, had nearly assumed the original cylindric form and appearance of the former perfect tree.

The living half of this yew tree completed the splitting and separating and to such an extent, that it now stands at a distance of two feet at least from the rotten half it once was attached to: and so complete is its attempt to form a new tree, for self-preservation, that a common observer would pronounce it to have been originally a separate one. But the contrary is very clearly shown by the structure: for, on minute inspection, the living half of the former tree will be found to be without a centre, and that its half concentric laminae of wood no longer form complete annuli encircling its girth, as in the case of perfect trees.

The dead half of this yew stands upright by the side of the living half, with its brown and withered limbs mocked, as it were, by the stately green and healthy appearance of the other portion of the tree, which but a century before, could have well vied with it in youth and beauty.

