



THE SYCAMORE FIG (*FICUS SYCOMORUS* S. P. I. Nos. 39827, 39857, AND 39858).

From the wood of this "sycamore" of Scripture, the "Tree of Life" of the Egyptians, the ancient coffins were made. It is a true fig tree and was introduced into Egypt, probably from Yemen on the east coast of the Red Sea, in very early times. It bears figs of inferior quality which are inhabited by the fig insect (*Sycophaga crassipes*). These figs are not fit to eat unless their tips are cut off to let the fig insects escape. From the time of Pliny even the Egyptian boys have operated on these sycamore figs, using a kind of thimble made of iron plate ending in an iron "finger nail." The figs are borne on small leafless fleshy branches arising directly from the trunk, and it is the practice to beat the trunk of the tree with a hammer to increase its fruitfulness. The illustration shows the scars thus induced. Photographed by S. C. Mason (P20231CP).