

I SHAKE HANDS WITH H.H. THE EMIR ABDULLAH ON MY ARRIVAL IN AMMAN

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Barbara Board

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FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1937

Set and printed in Great Britain by William Brendon & Son, Ltd., at the Mayflower Press, Plymouth, in Baskerville type, twelve point, leaded, on a toned antique-wove paper made by John Dickinson, and bound by James Burn.

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PREFACE

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THIS BOOK IS A RECORD OF THINGS THAT I HAVE seen and heard as a newsgirl in the Holy Land. Apart from the people who come out to Palestine on duty, or business, most visitors make the journey for sacred or sentimental reasons, and their interest is in the past, rather than in the present.

But the present in Palestine is an intense and vivid reality. The Jews are making a new nation here. The Arabs are fighting to push the Jews out. Everywhere life is real, everywhere there is vigorous conflict and striving.

I came out to Palestine to see for myself how the women of the country live, what their manners and customs are, what they think about life. I found I could not get this from the multifarious books that have been written on the country and what I have set forth in these chapters is nearly all news in the sense that it has never been published before.

This book is therefore a record of enquiries among Moslems, Christians, Jews, and all the various religions in this Holy Land.

I have been in homes in all levels of society—from the poorest Christian and Jewish home to the harem of the Emir Abdullah, which I am the only woman reporter to have visited. I have slept in the black

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tents of the Bedouin and have shared their life with its joys and sorrows. I have walked through the Old City of Jerusalem at night by myself and have eaten strange Arab food in the homes of the veiled Moslem women. I have been taken to the Holy Places of the three great faiths and have worshipped in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and in the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem. I have visited the poorest convents of Jerusalem and the Government prison for women in Bethlehem. On the sunshine farms of the Jewish land-girls I have watched their work and shared their frugal meals.

No one can appreciate the fabric of Palestine by keeping to the tourist tracks, least of all by listening to the professional guides. One must go into the by-ways and talk to the people in their homes and at their daily tasks.

If this book, therefore, is different from other books on Palestine it will have served its purpose.

JERUSALEM,
1937.

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Chapter 1

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SUNSHINE CHEQUERS THE COBBLES OF KING DAVID Street in the Old City of Jerusalem when in the early morning the Arab shopkeepers open their shutters and display their vegetables and fruit. They know that soon the black-veiled Moslem women will come to buy their goods and they eagerly spread ripe golden oranges on their wooden benches—glossy red apples and snow-white cauliflowers. The slanting sun rays, striking between the corrugated zinc awnings, fall on their brown faces, as they busily sort and clean their wares.

In a few hours the air will be tainted with the smell of bad meat and rotting fruits, but now it is fresh and sweet, and the tiny narrow alley-way is free of traffic—free of heavily laden donkeys, of beggars, of loaded porters and screaming children.

There is something beautiful about King David Street in those few moments before the daily shopping rush. One can stand and see the broad flagged steps dropping, dropping down into the heart of the Old City and weave romantic tales of the men and women who have trod them, of the sorrow and suffering, the happiness and the joy they have known. It must have been a street such as this that the Apostles pictured when Christ said, "Straight is the gate and narrow is

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the way which leadeth unto life." It must have been at tiny booths such as these that women of the New Testament came to buy their daily food. For the Old City has scarcely changed since that time, save for the electric light which brightens the dark pathways at night and the gold-tipped machine-made cigarettes which each shopkeeper sits smoking as he squats, waiting for custom.

Soon the hot smell of frying pervades the fresh air. The sweetmeat vendors are busy cooking their cakes of olive-oil and nuts, flavouring them with apricot juice, and honey, or liquorice and saffron. They fry the food on large flat pans, fanning their fires of glowing charcoal, and sickly sweetness floats through the tiny *suq* and hangs in smoky clouds over the fruit and meat. A water-carrier passes slowly between the shops, his bulging goat-skin oozing liquid on the shining cobbles. A village woman walks after him, swaying a tray of beetroot, hoping to sell it in the bazaar. Gradually King David Street becomes alive. From tiny doorways, hidden in the side of the *suq*, fat black-veiled women emerge and bargain with the shopkeepers. The women are poor, their shoes and stockings in holes, but their faces are hidden behind brand-new silk marocain. Far more important, their husbands think, for new material to guard their wives' faces from the public gaze than for them to be well shod.

Gradually the Street becomes one struggling, chattering mass of men, women and animals, pushing, shouting, snorting, as they pick their way slowly along the well-worn route. A cat with mangy skin and scraggy body jumps on a piece of meat, falling from the slaughterer's hands. A vicious kick sends

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it flying across the alley-way, crashing into a stone drinking-trough. The Arab is cruel.

Amid the rush and scurry a British policeman strikes an incongruous note in his navy-blue uniform. After some difficulty, he persuades an Arab that this part of King David Street is not a sheep-market and that if he wishes to sell his sheep he must take it elsewhere, not leave it tied up in the *suq*. Reluctantly the Arab takes the animal away, cursing as he goes.

Farther down, the cloth-merchants begin to hang gaily coloured lengths of silk and cotton outside their shops. They buy it from Japan but to tourists it is "Damascus work? Oh, yes, sir."

. . . . .

It was on a morning such as this that I pushed my way down King David Street to visit the convent of the Sisters of Zion. I lost my way three times before I came upon the Via Dolorosa, and then I knew that somewhere in that long, narrow cobbled street I should find it. Arab schoolchildren passed me as I stood there, a brown-cowled monk, a black-haired Jewess. But I scarcely saw them for I stood looking at the shiny flag-stones worn by the feet of pilgrims and thinking of Him who had passed through the Old City on that dread morning. It is difficult to describe one's feelings when standing in the Via Dolorosa, and to realise that somewhere below one's feet—for the road levels have risen since the time of the New Testament—Our Lord walked bearing His Cross. How can these busy men and women bustle along on their every-day work over these sacred stones? How comes such sacrilege? But is it sacrilege? Many of them do not realise so vividly

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as we, who see that Street for the first time, what it all means.

The convent of the Sisters of Zion is built over the site of Pontius Pilate's palace where Jesus was tried and condemned. It is the first and second Stations of the Cross and so I walked back, past the fourth and the third, beneath high archways which threw curved shadows at my feet, to the door of the convent.

A short, brown-eyed sister answered my ring, and motioned me inside without speaking. She led me past an open court-yard into a large darkened room and pointed to a chair. I sat down and waited. On the walls were pictures of Roman Catholic Church dignitaries and a painting of the Virgin and Child. They hung in shadow and I could scarcely distinguish them. Beneath my feet the floor was chilly—it was stone and there were no carpets, for the Sisters of Zion are poor. On the table covered with baize stood a vase of false-pepper—soft green leaves and brick-red berries.

I was not looking at the door when Sister Marie Therese entered. I found her standing behind me quietly waiting for me to turn around.

"You are Engleesh?" she queried, her eyes smiling a welcome.

I nodded and rose to follow her as she led me out of the door past the court-yard towards a flight of stone steps. We passed a second nun on the stairs and she bowed her head to Sister Therese. When we reached the bottom of the steps she started to explain.

"Thees is the site of the palace of Pontius Pilate. Over these stones here Our Lord walked. You see." And she pointed to the roughly-hewn slabs of paving

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and an ancient Roman capital in an inner court-yard beyond.

"Thees way, please," she smiled at me, as I turned after her under a low dark archway. She halted for a moment and pressed an electric light switch. I had been standing on an iron grating and beneath my feet gigantic cisterns were illuminated. They stretched down and down, so far that I could not see the bottom although the modern flood-lighting was extraordinarily well done. She told me that the sisters still use a portion of these cisterns built in the time of Pontius Pilate for their own water supply.

The flood-lighting threw the huge boulders into relief and glistened on the dark surface of the water.

She switched off the light and I followed her beneath low white archways. Once she paused and lifting a mat from the ground said : "There you see a game the Roman soldiers used to play. Thees part here was the courtyard of the palace and these circles and tiny holes here are an ancient soldiers' game."

She replaced the mat to protect the relic and walked on between the arches.

"You stay here," she commanded and left me. I watched her white-robed figure disappearing into the darkness.

Then I heard her voice again : "Look here, please." I looked and saw a painting of Our Lord carrying His cross from the palace court-yard out on to the Via Dolorosa. She had flooded it with bright light.

"Where you are standing now," she went on, "is the actual Via Dolorosa of Our Lord. You see the ridges across it. All the streets were ridged like that in the Roman times, to help the horses. Thees here

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is very holy ground, the most holy ground in Jerusalem. If you like, stop and pray a moment."

Sister Therese sank on her knees, crossed herself and bowed her head in devotion. When she rose her eyes were moist and without speaking she led me back, up the stone stairs, into a room full of souvenirs and works of art made by the sisters and by the Arab and Jewish children in their little school. I looked at the mother-of-pearl crosses, the wooden crucifixes and amber rosaries, at the finely embroidered cloths and handkerchiefs and packets of picture postcards. I bought a few souvenirs and was turning to go when Sister Therese caught hold of my hand and said : "You have not seen all yet. Thees way, pleese."

She led me down a second flight of steps into a large high-roofed chapel.

"Thees is where we pray," she said, and beckoned me into one of the wooden pews. The air was heavy with the scent of flowers—chrysanthemums, lilies, and narcissi. I knelt down beside her and listened to her prayers, whispered softly to herself in Latin. In front of me two sisters were telling their rosaries. Behind a third was silent in contemplation.

After a few moments she stopped her prayers and pointing to the wall of the chapel on my left side said : "That wall is part of the original palace of Pontius Pilate. Behind the altar you will see another part." I looked at the walls, at their jagged surfaces. Above a stained-glass window shed a blue and red light on them. Two slender candles flickered on the altar-cloth.

Before I left the chapel Sister Therese took a flower from the altar and gave it to me. From the steps which led up into the convent I stood and looked once

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more at the kneeling sisters, at their white hoods, their heads bent in adoration, their lowered eyes and trembling lips. I looked at their hands, long slender blue-veined hands, clasped in the attitude of supplication.

Then I shut the heavy wooden door behind me and stepped into the passage-way through which I had first entered the convent.

I had spent about an hour there and as I stood on the convent steps bidding farewell to Sister Therese I wished for a moment that I could live in the peace and quietness behind that door, away from the noise and smells, the quarrels and unhappiness, where I could get a better understanding of life. I think Sister Therese must have known a little of what I felt and realised I was loth to go, for she asked me suddenly if I had seen yet the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and if I had walked the entire length of the Via Dolorosa. I had done neither, I said.

"Thees afternoon I and several sisters go to the church. There is a procession of Franciscan friars, and it is our duty to follow them and worship with them along the Via Dolorosa. I will be ready if you care to come with me. Come about three o'clock." I said I would.

. . . . .

She was waiting for me at three and with her were two sisters. All had draped their heads in black serge cloth and covered their white garments with black serge cloaks. Sister Therese and I walked in front. The two sisters followed close behind us.

The Via Dolorosa has fourteen Stations where Christ rested with His cross, two are in the Convent

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of the Sisters of Zion, seven are on the street itself, and five are in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

"We must go to the fourth Station," Sister Therese said. "We are late and the procession is there now." The fourth Station is the place at which Christ is supposed to have met His mother. As we twisted down the Via Dolorosa we saw that the procession had halted at this Station. On the ground in a large double semicircle knelt the brown-frocked monks, their bare feet resting on the chilly stones. Their beards were grizzled but their eyes were filled with a wonderful light. Most of them were tonsured, most of them had wooden staves which they held in their right hands.

I found that Sister Therese was kneeling too, and so I bent down and knelt with her. The stones were filthy, covered with an accumulation of dirt, mud and refuse. But the monks seemed oblivious.

An Arab with a laden donkey drove the beast between the worshippers as they knelt there. One or two of the monks shuffled aside for the animal to pass, but their devotion proceeded uninterrupted.

At length we rose and went to the fifth Station, which is at the turn of the Via Dolorosa. At this Station Simon of Cyrene is supposed to have taken the Cross from Jesus and to have borne it.

Here there was more room for the worshippers, for the street from the Damascus Gate cuts across the Via Dolorosa at this place. It was then that I saw in the tail of the procession a group of choir-boys and acolytes. They wore red cassocks with white, gorgeously embroidered silk surplices, and repeated the Latin prayers first delivered by a white-haired monk whose head was capped by a brown biretta.

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The Via Dolorosa is open to the sky, unlike the maze of alley-ways and *suqs* in the Old City, and one is able to look up from the squalor of the street and the tiny houses alongside to something that is clean and beautiful. Were it not for this the Via Dolorosa would have lost half its attraction for me, but the blue heavens above seemed to link it with the Bible story and distracted me from the sordid life of to-day.

I followed Sister Therese as she wound along in the procession, now kneeling and reciting prayers, now crossing herself, now praying in silence until the whole scene seemed too unreal to be taking place in a civilised world. We passed the sixth Station where St. Veronica is said to have wiped away the sweat from Jesus' brow with a handkerchief, crossed the Bab Khan ez-Zeit Street, passed the seventh Station and so through the *suq* to the tiny stone doorway which leads into the courtyard before the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

How many people have stepped beneath that doorway, no one knows, but I felt their spirits still hovered over the sacred spot.

We climbed down a shallow flight of steps across the large flagged courtyard, past the grave of Sir Philip D'Aubigny, the English Crusader, into the shadow of the church. Just inside the entrance arch there is a Moslem custodian in whose hands are the keys of the church and whose duty it is to keep the peace between the many Christian sects who worship there. It is the first jarring note and in a sense it prepares one for what follows. I stayed for a moment beside the Arab, warming my frozen fingers over his charcoal brazier. Then I heard the sound of singing, and he pointed me towards a flight of steep steps, handing me a

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lighted taper as he did so. The stairs were in complete darkness and I had great difficulty. I found Sister Therese at the top waiting for me behind a pillar. She took my hand and led me forward into a blaze of light, past kneeling monks and choir-boys, past a Christian Bedouin woman and a converted Jewess—so quickly I could not take in everything—on till we were but two or three yards from the altar. Then she stopped and made me kneel beside her. I did not know where we were, or on what sacred ground I might be resting. The air was thick with incense, swung in jewel-encrusted golden censers by the friars, and the chapel was lit with a million candles and tapers, all flickering and fluttering as a slight movement among the crowd caused a tiny breath of wind to blow the flames awry. As they flickered and fluttered they cast weird shadows on the marble floor and illuminated the exquisite silver and gilt tapestries around the altar.

"Thees," whispered Sister Therese after a moment, "thees is Calvary, the place where Our Lord was crucified. Under the altar, beneath that marble slab is the site where the Cross was erected. Where we are kneeling is Calvary."

I looked at the altar. On first entering the chapel my impression had been one of brilliant light and colour. Now I was able to examine the scene in detail. I had always imagined Calvary as something beautiful, restrained and lovely—"a green hill far away." I knew of course that succeeding generations had built and rebuilt churches on the sacred spot, but I did not know, nor in my wildest conjectures could I have imagined, that a thing which might have been kept so lovely would be allowed to be spoilt by cheap

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gaudiness and glitter. Behind the altar there are priceless tapestries, but no judgment has been used in their hanging. They are framed in cheap wood behind glass and hung one on top of the other, overlapping, shadowing and spoiling one another. There is no light on them, save the flickering of the candles, and it is only with a torch that one is able to examine their beauty. In front cheap gilt effigies of the Virgin with crudely painted faces—bright crimson lips and cheeks, incongruous blue eyes—look down at one with a revolting stare. Why should the Christian world allow such things as these? Why should a spot sacred to so many religions be dominated and spoilt by gifts from monarchs with no sense of restraint or dignity?

Above the altar there is a tiny row of lamps—little glass lamps half filled with water with a layer of oil on top. The wick is made from the garments of the priests who worship there. The lamps are coloured, red, green, blue, yellow—just like a Christmas tree—and they add a further incongruous touch. At the right of the altar there is a bust of the Virgin encased in gold. Around the neck, drooping over the forehead, on the fingers and arms, there is a heterogeneous collection of jewels and votive offerings—a small fortune if they were sold. There is a valuable diamond on one of her fingers and many ancient watches, their hands set at odd hours. One diamond ring, one golden necklace, would have accentuated the beauty of the statuette. One emerald tiara on the brow and one gold watch around the wrist would have shown the sacrifices worshippers were ready to make for their faith.

But all sense of sacrifice is missed. Try as one may

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it is impossible to readjust one's ideas of this holy place. It is better to turn away from the cheapness of it all to look at the faces of the worshippers. They seem to find solace here, the beauty is not marred for them. Their old wrinkled faces are alight with joy and happiness as they kneel over the place of crucifixion and mumble unintelligible prayers—perhaps unintelligible to them. The converts from Islam and Judaism do not comprehend what they are saying. They have been told the sense by their priests—that is all. The Christian Arab women, descendants of the Nazarenes, women from Bethlehem and Ramallah, do not understand either. I think perhaps it is this very ignorance that makes it real for them.

As the chanting rose to a crescendo and ended, Sister Therese took me through a tiny door at the side of the chapel.

"Thees way is quicker," she explained. "The procession goes back down the steep stairs to the Holy Sepulchre. We go thees way and get there before them."

I climbed down a flight of dank steps into a vaulted corridor beneath. It led into the Greek Church, and I wanted to linger and look at the paintings on the walls, and the draped altar hidden behind a screen of carved wood and ivory. But she took me on across the open space where the Greek congregation gathers. There are no pews in the Greek Church and the worshippers stand or kneel.

We stepped from the Greek Church into a high-domed circular basilica. In the centre was the sacred tomb, supported by twelve red-veined marble pillars. It was about ten feet high and hung with tapestries and lights. Before the entrance two huge candlesticks,

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painted with gold and red, stood like forbidding sentinels.

As Sister Therese drew me on one side the procession appeared in the main doorway on the right of the Greek Church. The white-haired friar was leading. Behind two acolytes swung censers, behind again a younger monk carried a gold crucifix, in the centre of which a tiny wooden cross had been inlaid, a section, Sister Therese told me, of the Cross of Calvary. We waited while the prayers and chants were repeated and the monks slowly filed into the tomb, one by one, for the entrance is narrow, and only three can kneel in the tomb at a time. The procession seemed endless, but at last the brown-coated figures re-formed and slowly moved away to another part of the church, the sisters following.

The tomb is the fourteenth Station of the Cross. There are two sections—an entrance chamber in which the Holy Fire is lit at Easter-time and given on flaming torches, through a hole on each side, to the fanatical crowds. A smaller door leads from this chamber into the tomb proper which is known as a niche-tomb—a combination of sunken tomb and bench-tomb in which a trough is hollowed out in the rock. The rock is covered by a slab of grey-veined marble. Above it hang chains of gilded lamps, belonging to the different churches, Roman Catholic, Greek, Coptic, Armenian. Behind the lights a painting—as crude and gaudy as the paintings in the altar on Calvary.

Sister Therese knelt beside the tomb and kissed it, her black robes touching the Franciscan friar who keeps vigil there. As I sank on my knees beside her and placed my elbows on the cold tomb, a little

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Bethlehem girl squeezed in and knelt on my right. She was young, about nine years old, but she closed her eyes firmly and screwed her little fists into them in an effort at concentration. She repeated aloud prayers her mother had taught her and then stood up and held out her hands toward the friar. He took a bowl of holy water from a niche in the wall and sprinkled the child's hands with it and made the sign of the cross on her forehead. I stayed and watched while the Bethlehem mother with her high white coif followed her child into the tomb and knelt praying there. The child waited for her mother and the friar picked two sprays of jasmine from a silver chalice on the tomb and gave one to her and one to me. I placed it with the flower Sister Therese had given me from her church in the convent, and left the tomb slowly, fascinated at the spellbound expression on the child's face and her joy at the present of the flower.

The two sisters followed the Bethlehem woman and child into the tomb and we waited till they emerged before we walked through the empty circular vault towards the chapel of St. Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great. This vault runs round the base of Calvary, and along its sides there are chapels dedicated to various saints. All of them are in a state of disrepair, but the friars and monks still worship at them.

Half-way round Sister Therese left the vault, and turned off to the left down a broad steep flight of steps which curved into a mud-floor chapel. It was a scene of utter desolation—an altar once glorious with tapestries and flowers now lay deserted, dusty, crumbling. She told me it had belonged to the Russian Church which under the Bolsheviks has

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neither status nor funds. A second flight of steps led down the side into the chapel of St. Helena where legend has it this devout woman ordered men to dig —she had been told in a vision she would find the Cross there. At this place she found the three Crosses and erected the first Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

There was no light below and no light down the broad staircase, but as we waited Sister Therese took me to the sides of the chapel and by our tapers we saw crosses chiselled by the Crusaders in the slabs of stone.

The sound of singing and the chink of censers told us that the monks were starting to descend into the chapel. And we walked back to watch them. Half-way down the steps the procession paused and the acolytes, each holding a taper, knelt, one on each step, as the monks formed in order to go down the steps between them. As they walked they repeated prayers, holding their burning tapers on high. They cast black shadows on the walls, lighting up the cobwebs and painting the grey stones in an eerie colour scheme.

Then the procession moved slowly down, past the place where we were standing, and disappeared into the tiny chapel of St. Helena. Sister Therese took me down and showed me the site where the Crosses had been found. We left the procession then, and retraced our steps to the wide arched staircase, past the derelict altars, back into the entrance of the church.

"I think before you go you must see the Greek Patriarch and his museum. Thees way." Sister Therese led me back.

I was cold and tired but I wanted to see the Greek

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Patriarch and so I followed her. She twisted around through tiny corridors, beneath ancient door lintels, up steps and down steps until I was lost in the maze. Then she opened a big heavy iron door, and ushered me in. It was the vestry of the Greek Patriarch. He sat there, his arms folded on a table, deep in contemplation. On his head was a black round cap, and black material was draped over his ears and the back of his head. Beneath he wore a black cassock. His beard was long and curly and his eyes a rich eloquent brown. He did not speak for a few minutes but stayed there, passively taking us in. Then he greeted Sister Therese in French, asked her how she was, enquired after the School of the Sisters of Zion, asked who I was, and invited us and the two sisters into his museum. It adjoined the vestry and contained a collection of relics ranging from the mummified hands of saints to gorgeous medieval tapestries, woven in gold thread. Descriptions were written in Greek, Arabic, and English—there were captions which read like this : " Hand of a Saint," " Toe of a Saint," or, more amusing, " Miscellaneous Relics of Saints." I suppressed a smile and turned to admire a silver filigree lamp which Sister Therese wished to describe to me.

" Thees lamp is very old—six hundred years old. It is very valuable. Look at the beautiful work. This represents birds, this fruit, this the tree of life. It is very beautiful." And she smiled at the Patriarch.

It was twilight when we left the church and Sister Therese took me back through the Via Dolorosa. In the gloaming everything was changed. The friendly sky had gone and the way looked dark, forbidding. I kept close to her as we picked our way over the

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cobbles. At the fifth Station, where the road turns and the street from the Damascus Gate crosses the Via Dolorosa, she bade me farewell.

"You go home thees way," she said, pointing up towards the Damascus Gate. I tried to thank her but could find no words. "I hope one day you will come back," she said, as she pressed my hand firmly in hers, raised her blue eyes to mine. I heard her black cloak rustle on the paving as she made her way up the Via Dolorosa to her convent, the two sisters beside her. Then I turned and walked swiftly beneath the gloomy arches up the broad flat steps beneath the Damascus Gate into the Suleiman Road. By then the night had come down, the sky was clear, and the stars shone like diamonds against velvet.

. . . . .

The next day I arranged to visit the two Russian convents on the Mount of Olives. The Russian women first became interested in the Holy Land after the Crimean War and since that time until the Revolution they made pilgrimages to Jerusalem, walking on foot the entire journey, bringing their food with them and all the money they had been able to collect for the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Now that the Bolsheviks have strangled religion in Russia, only the White Russians have made pilgrimages to Palestine and these have now practically stopped. During the pilgrimages many of the women decided to stay in Jerusalem and to establish convents there. The Grand Duke Sergei collected money in Russia and built several large houses in Jerusalem in what is now called the Russian Compound. All these buildings are rented by the Palestine Government and the sole

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income of the Russian nuns living on the Mount of Olives is derived from these rents and from the occasional patronage of visitors. The nuns are to-day desperately poor. The Russian hospice has become the Central Prison, the hospital taken over as a Government hospital.

On my walk up the Mount of Olives to visit the Russian Convent, I came to the Garden of Gethsemane—and I turned aside to visit this beautiful place. It is the one sacred spot in the Holy Land which one can truly believe to be authentic. The gate to the Garden stands open always, and I walked through it up a gravel path to a heavy church door. A Franciscan father in a black cassock came out to greet me and with a large key undid the iron palings which let visitors into the Garden. He left me alone and I stayed in the shadow of a gigantic olive tree and thought of Him who had sat there nearly two thousand years before. There are eight of these trees and their girth is tremendous. The branches are gnarled and knotted, the bark crumbling away. Botanists say that they are nearly three thousand years old.

Beneath their foliage Our Lord must have knelt praying to His Father that the cup of suffering might be taken from Him. On this ground Christ was betrayed and taken prisoner.

I looked at the spring flowers peeping their way through the earth, as they must have peeped their way so long ago. I looked at the trim borders of lavender, the narcissi and the tulips—and a tiny white butterfly that chased its way in and out and over the blossoms. A wagtail flashed past, its black and white wings catching the sunlight as it flew.

I plucked a piece of lavender and left the Garden.

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I had stayed there for an hour, dreaming amid the peace and beauty.

The Franciscan father waited for me and led me through the monastery into the Basilica of Gethsemane. As he went he told me how the name Gethsemane had arisen. The place in Hebrew is called *Gathshemanim* (Oil Press) as at the bottom of the Mount of Olives, where the Garden is situated, there were oil presses.

The Basilica was cool and restful. The ceiling was high and the lighting, which was necessary even in daylight to show off the full beauty of the building, was soft and lovely. The church is built on the site where Judas betrayed Jesus, and the stone floor where the betrayal occurred is surrounded by an iron railing. Behind this floor stands the altar with tiny red lights burning in braziers. Over the altar in a high alcove is a picture of Christ praying in the Garden. Fourteen times the scene has been painted, by different artists, but the Franciscan fathers are not satisfied yet. When they find the artist whose inspiration gives them the picture they want, it will be replaced faithfully by mosaic-work.

Before the iron railing a nun was kneeling, her white winged head-dress flying out like a Dutchwoman's bonnet. Her dress was bright blue, and the girls with her wore short blue frocks to match. They were orphans and she was a nun of the order of Saint Vincent de Paul. These nuns keep an orphanage near the Jaffa road. After a while the nun rose and led her orphans out of the church. The old monk lifted mats in the mosaic floor and showed me portions of the old mosaic floorings the design of which has been closely followed by the architect of the new church.

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Then I followed the nun out into the rugged pathway which leads to the top of the Mount of Olives. The first Russian Convent stands on a ridge of the mountain just above the Garden. It is approached by a long, very steep gravel drive and I climbed up slowly. The convent is built around the Church of St. Mary Magdalene whose gold-domed roof is one of the famous landmarks of Jerusalem. It was erected by Czar Alexander III and is kept in order by the Russian nuns.

There was no answer to my ring, and as the door stood open I stepped inside the entrance hall. It was wide and spacious. I heard footsteps approaching and presently a black-robed nun emerged from a side door and shook me by the hand. She started speaking in Russian and had talked for quite two minutes when I managed to get a word in and explain that I was English and did not understand Russian.

"I speek leetle Engleesh," she said, and walked away beckoning me to follow. She took me to the entrance of a quaint little chapel. I wondered why she did not step inside and after a moment's waiting I started to walk in by myself. I shall never forget the feverish haste with which she clutched my arm and pulled me back.

"Eet ees forbeeden," she said in a loud awe-inspiring voice. "You are not clean!"

I asked her to explain, and in hesitating words she told me that no woman to whom the years have not yet brought the age of purification is allowed to set foot in the holy place. I had to content myself with a distant view of a very valuable oil painting over the altar, that I had been told to look at. I could see the body of Christ and two disciples bending over Him, but I could not see the fine brushwork.

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I bought a Russian text as I was leaving. Around the letters were pressed flowers from the Mount of Olives.

"I zink you meet perhaps ze Mother-Zuperior," she volunteered as I walked out of the door. She was right. I met her climbing the steep pathway. She was old and wizened, her hands parchment coloured. Her mouth had grown thin and drooped at the corners and her cheeks sagged with age. She was a bent old lady, but she was dignified. Her cloak and hood were covered with Russian inscriptions and crosses in various imaginative designs. The embroidery was white and blue making a cheerful contrast with her black robes. As she passed I smiled and she smiled back at me. She had grey eyes and I think when she was young they must have been beautiful. Even then long sweeping lashes provided a frame for them although there were wrinkles beneath.

Long after she had passed me I heard her feet scrunching on the gravel.

There is a little Arab village on the top of the Mount of Olives and it wraps itself around the largest convent of the Russian nuns. I had to walk through it before I came to the convent door where I pulled a long iron chain and set a huge bell clanging through the building. Inside the door there is a wide gravel drive, and I found some of the sisters busy repairing it. They took me into a large white room where I was told to wait.

After a few moments a tall black-robed nun appeared, greeted me in perfect English and sat down beside me.

Without waiting for ceremonial she plunged into an account of her life. She had come from Yugo-

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Slavia where she had been in charge of a convent. Her name was Igoumeni, and she was Mother-Superior of this convent. Did I know what hard conditions the nuns were living under? She would tell me. They numbered from about 150 to 160—they were mostly old—the youngest was 33, the oldest 92—and they lived on 25 piastres a month each—five shillings a month in English money. On this five shillings they had to buy clothes, food, petroleum and every necessity of life. Each nun was provided with a room—that was all. As there is no water on the Mount of Olives their meagre allowance of water, which has to be carried up the hill, is one petrol tin (four gallons) a week. This has to suffice for everything.

"If a sister manages to grow anything in her little patch of ground," Mother Igoumeni exclaimed, "the other sisters quarrel with her and accuse her of taking more than her allowance of water. But we have an English benefactress—I cannot tell you her name—and she is giving us money to repair our water cistern. Then perhaps we shall be able to have three or four tins of water a week.

"Of course we are not allowed meat as that is against our religion. We eat milk and eggs, and occasionally fish. During Lent we are not allowed to cook our food in olive oil, but have to eat everything plain. The novices are given meat, but professed nuns are forbidden to eat it. I think that is why we all live to a great age. Meat I am sure is harmful," she concluded.

She told me that much against her will she had been forced to allow some of the younger nuns to go to Jerusalem for a few hours every day to work and supplement their meagre allowance. Up till a few

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years ago there was a great demand for the beautiful handiwork of the nuns, particularly their ecclesiastical tapestries—" but now, there is no demand," Mother Igoumeni said, her brown eyes filling with tears, " and we are very poor."

She took me into the little one-roomed dwellings of the nuns and showed me the conditions under which they lived, showed me the tiny straw mattresses on broken-down bedsteads, the carpetless floors and the cracked ceilings. Then she took me into the museum and showed me a mosaic floor 1200 years old they had found when digging the foundations of the convent. On the walls were hung tiles from the Mosque of Omar and a Crusader's chain armour.

" These are valuable," she said, " but we cannot sell them. They belong to the convent—not to us."

She led me towards a high tower outside the museum and invited me to climb it. " There is a glorious view from the top."

She did not accompany me but stood watching as I climbed half-way up the tower and reaching the second platform waved to her. It was a wonderful panorama. Before me lay Jerusalem, its myriad housetops glowing in the bright sunshine. On my right Mount Scopus with the Hebrew University gleaming white against the clear blue sky. Behind the Hills of Moab a pale pinkish-mauve, slipping down into the Dead Sea. I could have stayed there longer, but I knew Mother Igoumeni was waiting and I climbed down reluctantly.

" Now you can meet some of the sisters," she told me, as she introduced me to two delicate young girls, clothed in black garments. " These two nuns come from Roumania, but I shall have to send them back.

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They cannot stand the climate nor the food. It is too hard for them."

They were sad-looking creatures, their eyes had a haunted expression as if they had never known what happiness was.

She introduced me next to a tottering old woman who she called Sister Katherine. "She gets 30 piastres a month—she is the oldest here—92."

Sister Katherine's face was yellow, the skin dull and withered. She did not smile, but let her hand hang limply in mine when I pressed it. Then she turned and ambled away, leaning heavily on her stick.

"All the sisters pray for seven hours a day," Mother Igoumeni told me as I walked down the gravel path on my way home. "We are working for eternity, not for the present."

. . . . .

Outside the Old City of Jerusalem, near the New Gate, there is a convent which contains women of every nationality and creed—German, French, Spanish, Maltese, Italian, American—and converted Arabs, Bedouin, and Jewesses. Its main door opens on to the Suleiman Road and as I passed one day I decided to stop and visit them. There was a dust storm blowing and I was glad to stand in the shelter of their porch as I rang and waited. There was no reply, and I thought they could not have heard me. I rang again. Still no reply. Perhaps they are praying, I thought, and was turning to go when a tiny piping voice arrested my attention. I could not see where it came from, nor did I know if it was a sister

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who spoke, or some woman who had passed behind me in the street.

Then I heard the voice again, and looking up I saw a small iron grille behind which a white-veiled sister was gesticulating and calling to me in French.

I walked inside and told her I was English and wished to talk to an English sister.

"There is only one," she whispered, "but I will fetch her. Please go inside."

I opened a door which led into a reception-room, and sat down on a highly polished chair. The room was hung with paintings of nuns in various attitudes of adoration—in a far corner was a photograph of the Pope. A door burst open and a nun walked swiftly towards me.

"This is a cloistered convent," she told me hurriedly, "I cannot show you round. Why did you come here?"

I explained that I did not know it was a cloistered convent. I had been told only that the "Blue Sisters" lived there and that if she could spare a few minutes I should like to talk to her. She sat down readily and waited for me to begin. I asked her if she was happy, if she did not miss England, did not regret that she had vowed never to go home.

"I am very happy here," she told me. "I do not want to go home. Everything is so peaceful and lovely. I pray for eight hours a day—one hour of meditation, one hour of mass and thanksgiving, one hour of spiritual reading, and divine office three times a day. For two hours I examine my conscience. No, I do not tire of worship. We are the only order in Palestine which has the Blessed Sacrament exposed night and day, which means that always one sister has to pray before it."

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As she talked I looked at her robes. They were finely stitched in two colours—a lovely pale Prussian blue and a rich cream. The cingulum cord around her waist was blue, her flowing head-dress of the same colour. Beneath the head-dress a close-fitting frilled skull-cap was of cream serge. The front panel of her dress was embroidered in Prussian blue.

"When we have occasion to go out—to visit a doctor or to change convents we robe ourselves in black and veil our faces," she told me, "but it is very rare for a sister to leave the convent. Some of us have not been out of doors for ten years. But none of us regret our decision, for we were each given ample opportunity to recant. When a young girl enters a convent she has to impress her superiors sufficiently to make them believe in her vocation. After six months' postulance, when she is dressed in ordinary clothes, only black, if she is still resolute she takes the habit. She is not allowed to make any vows for two years. Although a priest sanctions the taking of the habit, officially the girl is still free—even the first vows are only temporary—for five years. So that seven years and six months at least are given each girl in which she can recant before she makes her perpetual vows.

"The living conditions are not exceptionally hard. They are bourgeois. On Fast Days we take a little bread in the morning with plain coffee—no milk—or plain tea. In the middle of the day we have soup or vegetables, at night more vegetables and bread with jam and plain tea. I don't think that's a bad menu for a convent. I think mortification of the body really does one good. All of the nuns here are extraordinarily healthy.

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"I am so sorry I cannot show you round," she said, as she ushered me towards the door. A bell had just clanged through the convent and I thought that perhaps it was her turn to pray in the chapel, for she had begun to fidget with her hands.

"But if you like," she went on, "you may go into our chapel and hear us singing. Of course you will only see our backs from behind an iron screen, but I should like it so much if you would come, now. The entrance is from the Suleiman Road."

I accepted her invitation gladly and walked out of the convent door, along the street and pushed open a heavy iron-studded gate. Pulling aside a red plush curtain I found myself standing in a tiny church, with pews stretching away each side of me. They were in darkness and I could but dimly make out the forms which knelt in them. Half-way up the church an iron grating screened off the kneeling sisters. As I stood, watching, the English nun who had talked to me entered. I could not see her face, for she had veiled it; but I knew it was she, for she paused for a moment before she went to her pew and I felt she was looking to see if I was there.

I sat down after a moment and knelt with the tiny congregation. By then my eyes had become accustomed to the gloom and I could see a brother was praying there, and beside him a Bethlehem woman. There were about twenty sisters kneeling in front of the screen and their voices as they sang the divine office were sweet and mellow. Two candles burnt on the altar, flickering on the golden chalice which held the Blessed Sacrament. Above them stained-glass windows shed patches of green and yellow light on the marble chancel.

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I did not stay there long.

As I walked out into the street I tried to convince myself that such seclusion was right, that Christ meant women to shut themselves away from the world in this manner. But I could not be sure.

Still unconvinced, I walked slowly home. It was evening, the dust storm had gone, and the air was soft like wine.

. . . . .

There is a little convent in the Old City called Dom Polski. It is the home of eight Polish nuns, and is an artist's paradise, for from its roof some of the finest panoramas of Jerusalem can be obtained. It is not a secluded order and the convent is maintained as a hospice. Originally it was a middle-class Arab house and it still has flat roofs and pointed ceilings. On any clear day you may see artists sketching from these roofs.

I chose a fine afternoon to visit the Dom Polski nuns. The easiest way lies through the New Gate down through the Christian quarter to the Moslem quarter, in which the convent lies. It is a surprisingly clean route—the Christian and Armenian quarters are noted for their cleanliness as compared with the Moslem and Orthodox Jewish quarters—and I did not have to pick my way between fruit peelings and mud. Instead the cobbles were bright in the sunshine and the air in the alley-ways fresh and sweet.

Just before you reach Dom Polski you turn left into a narrow high-walled lane, on the side of which there is a stone worn smooth by many kisses. I do not know what strange story is connected with that stone or to what faith it is sacred, for I have seen

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men and women of many creeds kissing it. Even the sisters of Dom Polski do not know, and no one whom you see kissing it will tell you.

A round red-faced nun answered my knock and led me into a tiny little courtyard, open to the sky. Green ferns and palms provided a pleasant shade and I would have sat down and rested there but she offered to take me to the roof and to show me the view. As I climbed up the stone stairs I passed the little rooms in which the nuns lived. They were tiny and sparsely furnished. A pet dog followed, barking at my heels, and the sister tried to quieten it but it would not cease until we reached the roof where I picked it up in my arms and it stopped.

"There you see the Mosque of Omar," she said, pointing her buxom arm in the direction of the huge dome. It was a glorious view of the Temple Area—with the Hills of Moab as a majestic background. At the side of the Mosque the Mount of Olives raised its tawny head into the heavens. On its crest I could pick out the tower of the Russian nuns up which I had climbed while Mother Igoumeni waited for me.

"And there you see the monastery of the Abyssinian fathers," she went on. "Eet is tiny, very tiny, but they do a good work." I looked down over the roof upon a maze of alley-ways and lanes, so thickly crowded upon one another that it was impossible to follow any one more than a few yards. After that it was swallowed up beneath the overhanging roofs and balconies of the Moslem houses. The Abyssinian monastery was built on a level with the convent. Beneath it were tiny Arab dwellings. As I watched a black curly-headed monk emerged wearing a khaki topee. The hat was so incongruous that I

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smiled. The sister saw, and said : " Ah, you smile. The hat, eet is funny. I smile at that, too."

She pointed out Damascus Gate with the orange-sellers squatted in its shadow, the dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the rounded roofs of the Jewish synagogues ; she told me to look at the sky, at the fleecy clouds pink in the setting sun, at the Mosque of Omar, glowing red, and the age-old cypress trees in the Temple Area. She let me drink in the beauty of the city, then took me below and sat me down in a little room where she served me with delicious tea, the best toast I had tasted since leaving England, and home-made cakes—flavoured with apricot and honey.

" Zee Polish Consul, he come here to lunch often," she informed me as I sat munching. " He like thees place much. He bring many friends here. You like thees place much, too ? "

I told her how much it had impressed me and her big blue eyes twinkled with delight. After tea she took me into what must be the smallest chapel in Jerusalem.

" Here we pray," she said. " And look," I heard her turning an electric light switch. Beneath the altar a model of the baby Jesus in a cradle was illuminated. It was a lovely picture, no gaudiness or glitter.

As I left she pressed something in my hand. I did not look at it till I was half-way home and then I found she had given me a tourist leaflet advertising the attractions of Polish winter resorts. It was an odd thing to have brought away with me from a convent, but I thought it showed a very shrewd understanding of human nature. I should remember her and the good work she was doing more easily through this than if she had given me half a dozen hand-painted texts.

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Chapter 2

★

THERE IS A PURPLE GLOW OVER THE HILLS OF MOAB when the black night melts softly into the day and from the Jordan Valley a white mist rises, rolls up the hills into the lightening sky—a mist which softens the clear-cut ridges and drapes the purple shadows with silver. There is something unreal, fantastic, about these hills. Where the night still lingers in the hollows dark forms can be distinguished—weird forms which change their contours even as one looks.

Down in the hollow the Dead Sea lies motionless, unruffled, glittering like quicksilver or a jewel in a bed of velvet; now changing its colour gradually, perceptibly, from purple into a shadowy blue.

For over the hills the first pale fingers of the dawn have come, irradiating the sky with yellow. At first it is a narrow strip lying along the topmost ridges of the hills, stretching from the hazy north away down into the south. Slowly the strip widens, painting the crests with glorious orange, and slowly the colour brightens. Flaming swords cleave the sky, vermilion and crimson, blazing a passage into the unborn day.

Above me, over the Mount of Olives, the sky is a heavenly blue. Behind, the sleeping city of Jerusalem is silent and still. To the west, beyond the city the night has not yet died, and a fading moon shines,

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illuminating the house-tops and gleaming on the cobbled streets. A few stars twinkle, sending their last quivering rays on to the city.

Then all is light.

The Hills of Moab burn red, reflecting a glory which has yet to burst on the landscape. For everything still sleeps, will sleep, until the sun has risen. Even the birds are motionless. There is no sound, no sign of life.

Over the hills a slice of crimson mounts steadily, majestically, filling the wilderness of Abraham with a rosy light, spreading across the glittering Dead Sea a diaphanous sheet of scarlet.

Gradually the city wakens and the sleeping birds and beasts open their eyes to a new day. The blue sky, but a moment ago serenely quiet, is filled with fluttering wings. A brown hawk swoops across the heavens, and tiny crested larks fly uncertainly into the morning—silhouetted against a canvas of fire—now darkening—now paling—until the scarlet blaze has melted quietly into the day, and the yellow sun shines high.

. . . . .

Out there in the hills and in the valley lie the Bedouin tents. Out there, beneath the sky the tribal women are busy preparing the morning meal while their menfolk make coffee and go about their camels and horses. They may be breaking camp and presently the whole tribe—the camels and the sheep, the women and the household chattels—will move across the desert to the new grazing grounds. Or they may be preparing for just another day in the same pasture when the boys will lead the livestock across

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the stony hills to browse on the scanty herbage, and the women in the evening will peel brinjals and brew bitter coffee over charcoal braziers.

An Arab milkman brushes against me as I stand looking across the hills. His rattling petrol tins jerk me into consciousness and I follow him reluctantly along the rough pathway down the Mount of Olives. He leaves me far behind for his feet are bare and do not slip on the shiny stones.

As I walk back slowly into Jerusalem I pass a caravan—six meagre-looking camels strung together swaying their loads of brushwood as they lurch unevenly from side to side. Behind them walks a Bedouin family, coming from the western side of the city, making for the Bedouin encampments in the hills between the city and Jericho.

I stay looking after them and decide that I, too, will join a caravan and ride out into the wilderness —live under the burning sky, eat, drink and sleep with the tribal women.

. . . . .

That same morning I saw an Arab friend in Jerusalem and arranged with him for a visit to the Bedouin. He decided I should join some tents of the Beni Sakr tribe, leaving Bethany that afternoon, and so I gathered together a pair of slacks, some cool blouses, sun-glasses—a heavy coat, for the nights are cold—and set off in a taxi to pick up my caravan at the village of Martha and Mary—just three miles from Jerusalem. I had an Arab guide who was to accompany me to my host, explain who I was, and leave me with him.

My first sight of a Bedouin encampment was not

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particularly enchanting. But my guide comforted me by explaining that this was only a small section of the big tribe with which I was to live. They were camped in a small wadi just outside Bethany. From the roadway I could not see the black tents but only blue spirals of smoke twisting up and up into the sky. When we climbed out and stood on the crest of the hill I saw six squalid dwellings—surrounded by innumerable sheep, goats, camels, donkeys and pariah dogs. As I watched, the scene became animated. Bedouin men in flowing kafias and long striped garments appeared, and prepared to break camp. But my guide would not let me stay and watch from the hill-top, although I intimated firmly that I wished to do so.

"Yes, please," was his only reply and he led me grinning down the slope. As we approached, two men came forward to greet us. One was old, with grizzled beard and black flashing eyes. On his belt he carried a dagger in a sheath of beaten brass. The hilt was wooden, inlaid with mother-of-pearl and turquoise. Apart from this object of beauty, he seemed to be a poor man. His clothing was practically threadbare, save for the spotlessly white kafia on his head and a rather new-looking thick, black agal to keep it in place. Accompanying him was a man, perhaps his son. His face was smoother, his teeth gleamed against his thin brown lips.

When we had drawn reasonably near to each other the two Bedouin halted, and waited for us to come up to them. The pariah dogs started barking. It was a signal for the whole camp to stop work and watch the strangers arrive.

Across the bleached hill-side the words "Salaam

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Aleikum " rang out clear and resonant. My guide countered with " Aleikum es Salaam," and as everyone seemed quite happy we drew nearer and eventually shook hands. By this time the camels were practically loaded, save for the riding beasts. The goat's-hair tents were being folded laboriously by the womenfolk who spread them out on the dusty ground and made innumerable journeys to and fro as they packed them. Each tent, when folded, was placed on a long-suffering donkey or camel.

Having explained the situation to the sheikh of the encampment, and told him that I was quite harmless and merely wanted to live in his tents for a few days and meet the chief sheikh of the tribe, my guide left me. The two men who had come forward on my arrival motioned me towards a seated camel and indicated that I should hoist myself on to its back. I realised this was a special privilege as the tribal women were forced to mount the animal when it was already laden with goods and standing up. It was a feat which I tried often afterwards but have never succeeded in doing with any conspicuous success. The Bedouin women are trained to do it from childhood, and this agility is no more to them than carrying a three-year-old child on their shoulders at the age of eight—which is a common sight even in Jerusalem.

At last the entire encampment had been piled on to the backs of the various beasts ; the camels were tied head to tail, and with the old sheikh leading we set off for the Wadi Kelt which is a favourite resort of the Bedouin in eastern Palestine. This Wadi, savage and wild in the extreme, is famous for the monastery of St. George, built into the side of the gorge, in which monks who have transgressed against

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the laws of this order are placed as a form of punishment. Through this Wadi, too, runs the long, narrow aqueduct taking water down to Jericho from the hills around Jerusalem. The aqueduct has been as great a blessing to the desert tribes as to Jericho for the Bedouin can replenish their petrol tins at any given moment in the Wadi. For this reason we did not set off with an enormous quantity of water.

For the first half-hour the novelty was delicious. Riding through the Holy Land on a camel ! Doing just what Joseph and his brethren did in the Old Testament—feeling the same as the apostles must have felt on their constant journeys " down to Jericho." I learned how to crook one knee round the wooden pommel and then crook the ankle under the other knee.

It was some time before we turned off the road and followed the ancient Roman way into the Wadi Kelt, but by then the novelty had worn off. There are no words adequate to describe the sensation of camel riding. One feels like a schoolboy who wishes he hadn't eaten quite so many jam tarts, or like crossing the Channel on a stormy night. I learned why the camel is called the Ship of the Desert.

The sun was setting when I was awakened from a nauseating stupor by exciting shouts from the women riding ahead of me and the men walking behind. We had come up with the main body of the tribe, and the friendly greetings were being exchanged as we drew up with them. My camel lurched down clumsily on to its knees and then its haunches, and the friendly sheikh helped me to my feet. My knees were weak with the cramped position and I hoped that I should not be too unsteady on my feet when I

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was introduced to the great sheikh. As I waited for his approach I had time to take in my surroundings. So far as I could see, on either side of me stretched tents—black tents with blazing fires silhouetting the figures of the women at their work and the resting men. It was dusk. There is no twilight in the desert and the night comes down swiftly after sunset. The women were preparing a meal and the hot tasty smell of meat rose over the tents and filled me with an intense longing for food. I had travelled four hours without eating.

A sudden hush in the voices around told me the chief sheikh was approaching. I looked across the tents and saw a stately benign old man walking towards me. His hands were gnarled and withered. His face wrinkled with the dust and sun of many years. But his eyes were kind and his mouth twitched humorously. He welcomed me with enthusiasm, with many salaams and much manifestation of pleasure. I thanked him as best I could and he led me to the centre of the encampment and seated me on a crude yellow cushion resting on the tribe's ceremonial rug, placed there specially for me. In front a large fire of brushwood and dried dung burned cheerfully. Behind me the black tent of the chief sheikh obscured the rest of the camp, but provided a shelter from the cold wind that was beginning to sweep across the slopes of the wadi. Presently more cushions were produced, more carpets spread on the ground, and the old sheikh and his lesser chieftains sat around the fire. To my great delight I found that one of them could talk a little English and through him I managed to negotiate all the difficulties which I met with in the next few days. But we did not talk much for the

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chieftains sat silently around the fire and I felt it out of place to speak while they were silent.

Suddenly on the desert air there broke the sound of rhythmic "tom-toms," beating sinisterly in the camp around me. For a moment I thought I was in Africa. Then I realised the women were simply grinding coffee for the feast. Bedouin coffee is ground in a teak mortar with a teak pestle quite two feet long. The mortar is somewhat the shape of a large vase and the coffee-grinder varies the rhythm of the beating just as a native drummer does.

With this sound there came the hot smell of frying. I could see in the distance black shapes bending over charcoal fires, cooking food in big scooped frying-pans.

I wondered anxiously how long the meal would take to prepare, but my thoughts were interrupted by Mohammed, the English "scholar," who said: "We make wedding feast, please, the sheikh's daughter marry prince to-night."

What marvellous luck, I thought. Presently the sheikh rose and after a short while returned with his son-in-law to-be. He introduced us and the bride-groom sat down beside him. He was dressed in a black and white silk striped undergarment with a heavy dark camel-hair coat outside. At the back of the collar and running down each side of the coat in front were intricate strips of silver brocade. On his head he wore a white silk embroidered kafia with a gold thread and black silk agal. He was surprisingly composed and smoked a gold-tipped cigarette non-chalantly. In an hour's time he would see his bride for the first time. Before the dawn they would be married. But a Moslem is allowed four wives—so he could afford the gamble. Apparently there had

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been a hitch in the wedding negotiations. My interpreter told me the bridegroom wished to pay twenty-eight camels for the girl. The old sheikh had held out for thirty. After lengthy discussion the difference was settled. The price was twenty-nine camels.

Then the bride was sent for.

I watched her coming from behind the tents, walking slowly, rather shyly. She wore a new frock, black silk decorated around the hem with wide stripes of blue. This custom is peculiar to the Beni Sakr and is supposed to be as potent as turquoise in diverting the Evil Eye. Her frock had long sleeves and a voluminous skirt—so voluminous that it had to be looped up twice in front to keep it from sweeping the ground. She had naughty eyes, chocolate brown with drooping lashes, and they smiled wickedly at her husband-to-be as she came nearer. He did not reciprocate but looked at her entranced. Her name was Fayah ; her slim body swayed gently, seductively, in the firelight. On her head was a black silk kafia wound round in a broad band, leaving her hair on top exposed. It glistened with a silver thread, matching the rings on her fingers and the silver coins which dangled from her ears and throat, and hung on numerous amulets from her neck. Altogether she must have carried some three or four pounds weight of jewellery including the heavy bangles on her arms and ankles. But she did not seem to feel it.

Her hair was greasy with sheep-fat, wound round and round in the nape of her neck, and her eyes heavily painted with kohl, the desert form of mascara, made in this fashion :

A black stone—found only in the Dead Sea region—

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is placed in a white cotton bag and beaten by seven virgins for seven days. At the end of this period it is reduced to a fine powder. This is mixed with scented water and placed in a metal kohl case—a kind of vanity box. It is applied with a thick metal skewer to the eye-lashes and painted in a heavy line around the upper and lower lids. No Bedouin maiden is considered beautiful unless her eyes are painted thus, nor do the tribal men think much of her if her face lacks tattoo marks or her hands the dye of henna.

Fayah's face was covered with a curious tattoo pattern. Each tribe has its own designs—like the Sudanese who gash their menfolks' faces with daggers and rub salt into the wounds to make them permanent. Both the Bedouin and the Sudanese are thus able to tell at a glance the tribe to which the woman or man belongs—as the case may be. Fayah's pattern consisted of a triangle of purplish-blue spots in the centre of her forehead, a row of spots on her upper lip and a small circle of spots, something the shape of a pear, on each cheek-bone. They were extraordinarily repulsive and I gazed fascinated at them, then shifted my attention to her hands. They were tiny and brown, the nails carefully manicured and painted with bright henna—giving them a not unattractive orange colour. The palms of her hands were dyed with henna too, and the soles of her feet had been treated in the same way. The henna lasts for about two months, after which the nails and skin have to be re-treated.

At Fayah's side dangled a velvet covered box, slung from her neck by a silver chain. It was oblong and decorated with large turquoise stones. It was part of her dowry—a " compact " for kohl.

As her face caught the reflection of the fire she

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smiled, her cheeks shone and she swept her hand across her brow, perhaps in an attempt at sophistication. Then she sat down gracefully on a special carpet spread for her, and leant back amid a bed of cushions. She was separated from the bridegroom by her father.

The bride's arrival was a sign for the feast to begin. There was a tremendous hurry and scurry in one corner of the encampment and six men came into sight carrying an enormous iron dish, circular in shape. Over the sides of the dish hung a fringe of flat Arab bread. The centre was filled with cooked rice and on top of the rice a whole roast camel. The dish was placed on the fire around which we were squatting and the little circle drew in closer and began to dig their right hands into the squelchy but very tasteful food. To Moslems the left hand is unclean and in order that I should not forget I sat on my left hand throughout the meal.

There are just as many "table manners" in the desert as at home and it is an art learning the correct way in which to manage roast camel and boiled rice and be polite. One is supposed to tear off a small piece of meat—gather a handful of rice—and then, without the assistance of a second hand, work the meat and the rice into a hard ball in the palm of the right hand. After this operation the ball of food has to be tossed into the mouth. At my first attempt the ball shot past me, narrowly missing my neighbour's kafia. After that I was more careful and watched how Fayah did it.

I discovered that the dish consisted of more than just a simple roast camel. Inside the camel was a whole roast sheep, inside the sheep several roast chickens, inside them fried fish, and inside the fish,

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eggs fried in date oil. It was a delicious meal and I hiccoughed and spluttered as much as possible. If you do not make a noise at such a meal the host is hurt and offended.

After we had eaten as hard and as fast as possible for about half an hour the dish was taken away and Bedouin boys appeared with silver lavers and jugs of tepid water to wash our hands. Then a succession of sweetmeats, rich oily cakes soaked in honey and sheep fat, tasting of almonds, of apricot and liquorice. I swallowed them as best I could and was thankful when the trays were taken away.

Coffee was doubly welcome after this, particularly the bitter Bedouin brew. It is served in a brass coffee jug with a long narrow spout, at the base of which a bunch of camel hair is placed to keep back the dregs. It is a very ingenious idea as the hair can be renewed daily and the spout cleaned easily. The coffee cup is the size of an ordinary egg-cup without a base and only a small amount of coffee is poured into it at a time. The boy stands by waiting and repeatedly fills it as it is emptied. Three helpings are the normal quantity taken by any guest and as you hand the cup back for the third time you are supposed to turn it to and fro to signify that you have had sufficient. Cinnamon and cardamom are added while the coffee is brewed to give the bitter flavour.

Bitter coffee was followed by sweet coffee—the Turkish variety. Then sweet Bedouin tea in tiny glasses, without milk.

Then the great sensation of the evening—a dance. Some preparation was necessary for this and while we waited, the sheikh and his guests were supplied with hubbul-bubbuls—the bride and myself with cigarettes.

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The band consisted of one drummer and two "strings" —literally two "strings"—for the Bedouin violin is a square parchment covered box with one strip of gut stretched lengthways on it. Before the violins were used the parchment was dried over the fire—it had sagged and loosened in the damp air. To the accompaniment of queer sounds from these three instruments the dancers started. A girl led them, her brown arms gleaming in the firelight. She held a sword and dancing backwards drew after her six men partners. Their scanty clothes displayed the thinness of their bodies, the distended stomachs, and the hollow chests. For the Bedouin is not strong although his physique withstands the trying conditions of the desert. Round and round, now bending, now stretching, now whirling, now stooping, the girl danced, enticing the six men nearer and nearer to her. I learnt that the dance had a special sexual significance symbolic of the coy bride and the eager bridegroom. As the musicians became more excited the frenzy of the dancers quickened. At first slow and languorous the pace was now terrific. Sweat streamed from their faces, their mouths hung open. But the dance went on. The girl brandished the sword high, cleaving the darkness with flashes of silver, pirouetting and circling on her toes. As the cluster of men drew inwards and the dance worked towards its climax the old sheikh clapped his hands to announce that he had seen enough. Slowly the frenzy of the dancers grew less. Their steps were slower, they breathed deeply to recover their wind.

When the dance had ended the bride and bridegroom rose. Fayah waited for her husband and he walked to her with his two arms extended. "Fayah,

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my beloved," he whispered, and stayed looking into her eyes for a breathless second. Then the old sheikh spoke to them and Fayah and her husband retired to the bridal tent.

I thought this was the end of the wedding, but the departure of the two principal people is merely a signal for more festivities. This time large chunks of gazelle, roast and boiled, were brought in, surrounded by roast stuffed chicken, and the whole ceremony was started again. The Bedouin boys appeared with the silver lavers and the sweetmeats and coffee.

By this time it was well after midnight and a brilliant moon shone on the encampment, drenching it in a cold pale light. Around the fire the faces of the guests glowed red, but in the outer circle the white moonlight cast an eerie look over them. But the old sheikh still sat erect sipping his coffee, as if no session, however long, could tire him of ceremonial.

But the long sitting in a cramped position, and the enormously heavy meal, was too much for me. The next thing I remember was the aromatic smell of boiling coffee and a gnarled, brown-veined hand smoothing my forehead, soothing me in Arabic. I was lying in the women's quarter of the chief sheikh's tent on a mattress composed of a series of wooden boxes covered with rugs and camel hair blankets. Under my head I could feel a hard flock pillow. It smelt of garlic and I sat up quickly. It was morning, and through the tent opening I could see the camels grazing and the brown tawny hill-spurs stretching away down into the wadi.

Along the banks clusters of rosy oleanders spread their brilliant blossoms and rich green leaves. Apart

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from them there was no colour in the landscape. Only stones—brown stones and cream stones, small and large.

They had put me to bed in my clothes and so I just rolled out on to the tent floor ready for the new day. I found there were five other women in the compartment—four of them wives of the sheikh—and they were busy peeling vegetables, cooking bread and boiling coffee. I sat watching them, interested in the expert way they set about their work. One woman, older than the rest, seemed to be ordering the others about. She was the first wife and as such had her privileges. She herself chose to fry brinjal, and she sat over an old enamelled bowl, washing the chopped pieces in filthy water. Her hands were even filthier than the water, her nails choked with the accumulation of years of drudgery. She looked fifty but could only have been just over thirty—women wear badly in the desert. After the washing operation she placed the food in an old brass tray, black with repeated cookings, then poured some brown fat into the tray and put it over the fire. A hot sizzling smell pervaded the air. Then the delicious smell of brinjal frying. I looked at her squatting beside the fire, like a big padded cushion, her lips a peculiar purplish-red colour, and I thought how soon it would be when Fayah would look like that. I tried to breathe—the air was thick with smoke and fumes. Behind me a tiny coughing and spluttering roused one of the women into action. She got up, strode over to a small bed beside mine and extracted a bundle of dirty rags. It was a young baby and the mother pulled open her frock and started to feed it. The coughing which would soon have been crying, was silenced.

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As the child fed myriads of flies clustered around its face, swarmed on its eyes and on the mother's breast. She made no attempt to knock them off, and the crawling mass became thicker and thicker. Then the mother placed the bundle back on its "bed," the child cooed happily and the mother returned to her cooking.

I noticed as the five women worked that the youngest, a mere child, was pregnant, and nearing her time. It seemed to make no difference to her and she fetched and carried the same as the others, emptying her petrol tins of water, refilling them at the stream.

. . . . .

Later that day as I lay outside the tent, in the glorious sunshine, gazing at the blue of the sky, Mohammed, who had interpreted for me the night before, came and sat down.

"You like living desert?" he queried.

"Yes, I like living desert."

"You like see baby camel?"

"Very much," I replied, and followed him through the encampment to the shadow of a large tent behind which a mother camel was about to give birth to a youngster. The labour did not last long and after a short time a wriggling mass of awkwardness—a furry bundle, all arms and legs—was deposited on the sun-baked ground—and a proud mother changed her lugubrious superior expression for a brief second into a maternal one. The baby camel shivered like jelly, and the mother wrapped her long legs around it and placed it between her and the tent, where it started to suck. Soon the shivering stopped and the youngster fell asleep.

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In the afternoon Fayah and her husband packed their belongings and left the encampment for the bridegroom's tribe. As a general rule a Bedouin maiden does not marry outside her tribe, but in Fayah's case the price must have been a very tempting one or the sheikhs of the two tribes the greatest of friends. Although some of the bigger tribes such as the Ruwallah and the Shammar number thousands the Bedouin girl is more likely to marry a cousin who by right has the first claim on her than a man from a strange stock, unless—as happens sometimes—she is given in marriage to a man from another tribe to settle some blood feud. One would imagine that the children from such unions would deteriorate through inbreeding, but this is not the case. Bedouin stock is healthy although the maternal mortality rate is high.

I was told afterwards that the old sheikh was a blood-brother of the sheikh of the neighbouring tribe to which Fayah was being taken. As she and her husband left the camp he stood watching. Their figures grew smaller and smaller as they rode into the desert on chestnut coloured horses. Long after they had disappeared he still watched, his sharp eyes piercing the landscape, his furrowed forehead puckered, thinking deeply. Then he turned and went back into his tent.

That evening there was no merriment. The food was taken in silence. There was no sumptuous repast —just a simple meal of fried gazelle, the remnants of the last night's banquet, and various vegetables. Then the old sheikh retired for the night.

His wives and I went to our tent and turned in, but I did not sleep for some time and stayed listening to the sounds in the camp—the occasional howl of a

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pariah dog out in the hills or the fluttering of a bat or an owl past the tent opening. The air was frosty clear and crisp and I was thankful I had brought a heavy coat to wrap myself in. The other women slept heavily, snoring regularly. To begin with it was nerve-wracking. Then it became monotonous, soporific, and it lulled me to sleep.

During the next two days I wondered if the youngest wife would be delivered while I was there. On the third day I was not left in doubt, for we were woken in the morning by loud cries from her bedside.

I was interested to see what kind of preparation would be made for her and so I followed the eldest wife when she left the tent to fetch the tribal dayah—or midwife. We found the dayah sound asleep, but succeeded in waking her and taking her back to our tent—with her apparatus—which consisted of a length of filthy string, a small metal bowl filled with olive oil and a sharp stone. By this time the cries had grown louder and the tent was surrounded with a crowd of women and children, all waiting for the great event. The woman was sitting on the edge of her bed, and remained until the child had been born. The dayah, the four wives, and myself sat down on the floor and waited. As the pains came on the spectators grew more numerous and the air inside the tent became so stifling that we were forced to order them back. It was the dayah who shouted at them and it was for her sake that the crowd retired a few yards. Had the mother been dying for lack of breath the crowd would have been most unwilling to withdraw, but when a delivery is in process the mother becomes a mere cipher; the dayah is the only woman who counts.

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The labour did not last long, the child was born within three hours. It was a girl, much to the disappointment of the old sheikh. The dayah severed the baby from the mother with the sharp stone she had selected for the purpose.

The mother still sat on the edge of the bed and the dayah at her feet. They were waiting for the after-birth and I watched with amazement the old dayah attaching one end of her string to the mother's big right toe, bending up the mother's knee and fixing the opposite end of the string into her womb. The mother was made to cough by eating dried spices. Something was bound to give. The dayah shouted, the mother screamed, and the after-birth came away. The operation was crude but successful.

In the evening I was astonished to see the mother going about her work in the normal way, helping to cook and wash and prepare the big meal of the day. Bedouin women are surprisingly strong and the birth of a child seems to make no difference to their daily routine; except that at the first sign of discontent on the part of the child, they snatch it up in their arms and commence to feed it. The baby suffers from indigestion, over-feeding, and general dirt, in addition to mosquitoes, flies and lice. It is a case of the survival of the fittest, and it is surprising how many do survive.

The next day the women suggested I should go with them to the feeding grounds, but made it clear that it would be better if I wore one of their frocks— I knew it was an honour, but I grinned weakly and made some unconvincing excuse. It was full of insects and possibly of infection and I was not particularly anxious to try it on. But they insisted, and in the

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end I reluctantly shed my blouse and trousers and stepped into a long black cotton garment which reeked of dirt and dust. Around my head I wound a black kafia and in this costume walked with three of the tribal women out of the encampment to the grazing grounds. It was a hot day and the sun beat down fiercely. We climbed the hill-side slowly, picking our way between the stones and gravel. Every two or three yards a fleshy onion plant—one of the few signs of vegetation one finds—provided a morsel of food for our flock. The swollen root is too deep for the sheep to get at, but the juicy green leaves on the surface are a rare and tasty titbit. It was for this scanty herbage that we had driven the sheep up the long stony slope from our encampment.

While they browsed we sat down and rested. Below we could see the black tents half-way down the hill-side—beyond the bottom of the wadi with the tiny stream trickling through it. It was noon and everything was without shadow. We moistened our mouths with water from our leather water pouches and half-lying, half-sitting on the hard ground, I fell asleep.

I woke an hour later when the sun was slanting across the wadi. My face was dry and burnt and my back aching. The sheep still browsed, but they had wandered far away, their dusty black bodies chequering the tawny hill-side with splashes of dark. Above them carrion crows swooped and soared, and the hot air shimmered and danced broken by the dark, glossy wings of the birds. A few fleecy clouds hung listless in the sky, throwing soft shadows on the burning ground, while beside me the chirruping of the crickets vied with the flashing of the lizards to distract my attention.

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The tribal women had woken before me and were walking slowly across the hills to catch up with their flocks.

I got up lazily and followed them.

I had been walking for a few minutes, steadily climbing, when through a gap in the hills I saw Jericho. It was the most beautiful sight I had ever seen, its green loveliness enhanced by the suddenness with which I stumbled on it. Not all the town was visible, but between the hill-spurs I could see the gleaming white-roofed houses, the verdant banana groves—the gardens green with cypress and pine-trees. It looked like a toy village, a Lilliputian town set down in the middle of the desert.

It must have lain some fifteen miles from where I stood, but every feature was distinguishable, even the tracks on the Hills of Moab, some thirty miles away —the air was so clear.

I was still standing, gazing at the panorama, when I heard excited calls from the women on the hill-side below me. I looked down and found they had driven their flocks together and were taking them down to the tents. They were gesticulating and pointing far away over the hills and beckoning me to follow them. I looked where they pointed and could see nothing save a small cloud of yellow dust on the horizon. But I turned and followed them. As I drew near I saw a look of anxiety on their faces and I wondered why they were half-running, half-walking back to the encampment. A few minutes from the tents one of the women left us and ran swiftly to the old sheikh's tent. Suddenly the scene was electrified. The men dozing in the afternoon heat rushed out of their tents and gathered around the old sheikh. He issued orders

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and they separated to different parts of the encampment. The cloud of dust on the sky-line was gradually coming nearer. I watched the men swiftly loading their rifles, gathering their livestock nearer to the tents, making a sort of barricade with mattresses and boxes.

I searched for Mohammed in vain. He had disappeared and I could not ask what was happening. But the old sheikh took me firmly by the hand and led me back to the stifling atmosphere of the women's tent, and motioned me to stay there. By now the cloud of dust had separated into half a hundred smaller clouds—half a hundred Bedouin raiders, white garments billowing as they rode, yelling and brandishing their rifles. I crept nearer to the little charcoal fire. My hands had gone cold although the sun outside was shining brilliantly. But the women went on preparing the next meal unperturbed.

I saw the defenders concentrating on one side of the encampment and I waited tensely for the first shots. After a moment the air was echoing with rifle shots. Two of the raiders appeared to stagger, dropped their rifles and fell. The raiding party turned and galloped swiftly back. The encampment took breath, and the old sheikh issued orders in sharp, excited tones, in preparation for the next attack. This time our men were going out to meet the raiders, and the women and I left the tent and stood in the big clearing exhorting and shouting at the men. The inspiration given by the Bedouin women to their men-folk in battle is necessary for successful fighting. There is nothing a Bedouin hates more than to be despised by the women of the tribe, especially by his sister. Often a desert battle has been won through the exhortation of the women alone.

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If the men dare to return and acknowledge that they have lost, the women send them back. It is far better for a Bedouin to die fighting than to return defeated and suffer the scorn of the tribal women.

As the horses' hoofs thundered across the sun-bleached ground I held my breath. The raiding party was approaching swiftly and I waited for the clash. The women stood at the edge of the encampment, eyes dilated, clapping and shouting. Our men numbered some hundred odd and we were confident of victory. The battle was fought too far away for us to distinguish the fighters. All we could see were flowing kafias, the metal rifle-butts flashing. All we could hear were the shots and the hoof-beats. Then, as the fighting moved farther off, we saw three bodies on the ground, one horse lying dead, two horses galloping riderless. We did not know who the men were and we did not dare to approach. All we could do was to wait, hoping that a rider would detach himself from the defending party and ride back to give us news. But the fighting was too fierce for anyone to be spared and we stood there waiting and hoping. The battle continued till dusk when the raiding party, who had lost some men, wheeled around and tore away across the desert. Our men gave chase for several miles, then decided the game was not worth the candle and, turning around, galloped back to the encampment. The old sheikh had been wounded slightly, two men killed, and there were about a dozen casualties among the ranks.

We dressed their wounds with sheep-fat, melted over the camp-fires. The pain as the hot grease dropped on the open cuts must have been excruciating, but the hardy warriors did not flinch and there is

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no doubt that this somewhat primitive form of doctoring sterilises as well as heals the wound.

We did not know whether the raiders would return that night and the men were detailed into parties of ten for sentry duty around the tents. The old sheikh himself, in spite of his wound, sat up by the camp fire throughout the night. The women and I retired to our tent. I think we must all have dozed slightly beside our fire, but no one went to bed and we were all ready should the attackers come. Nothing happened and by morning the old sheikh was confident the attack would not be repeated. He sent out a party of men to reconnoitre and there was great rejoicing when they came back with five riding dromedaries—left behind by the raiders when they retreated hurriedly. It was an occasion for rejoicing, for the Beni Sakr tribe is a poor one, and five dromedaries represent considerable wealth.

I was due to leave the next day and I suggested through Mohammed that they send me back to the Jerusalem–Jericho road, where I could easily pick up a passing car or board one of the rattling little Arab or Jewish buses which run on that route. They seemed to think that was a good idea and early in the morning the entire camp gathered around to wish me God-speed. The old sheikh was deeply affected and clasped my hand many times. "May Allah be merciful to you, my daughter," he repeated to me as I climbed on to my camel. From my perch I took a last long look at the encampment, at the black tent which had sheltered me from the cold and the sun. I thought of the hospitality I had received there. The Bedouin have so little to give, but even that little under the desert code must be offered to strangers.

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It was not only food and lodging that the old sheikh had given me. In my trouser-pocket I carried a valuable Bedouin bracelet—wrought in silver, which he had taken from his first wife's wrist and handed to me the night before. I had tried to refuse it but I was afraid of hurting his feelings and was forced to accept the gift. It hurt me and pleased me at the same time. I hated to think that his wife had been robbed of some tiny part of her wealth for my sake, but I was overjoyed to have some tangible souvenir of my week with the Beni Sakr.

As I rode back along the wadi to the main roadway I marvelled at the things that had happened just in one week—a wedding, a birth, a raid, not to mention the minor excitements. No one can call the Bedouin life monotonous. The sun and sky and the tawny desert may pall, but the life is packed with thrills.

There was a warm breeze blowing from the south when I bade farewell to my guide and watched him ride away. Overhead a brown-winged kite flapped his way into the blue. Beyond, the brown hills glistened in the shimmering heat, and the black roadway wound like a ribbon of lead between the spurs.

The camel and its rider disappeared over the crests. I turned and sat down on a rock by the wayside and munched the bundle of dates and the sour cheese I had stuffed into my pocket as I left the encampment. A woman passed me on a donkey, then a shepherd, a rifle slung across his back.

Then no one—just silence with the bleached earth beneath me and the blazing heavens above.

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Chapter 3

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IN JERUSALEM, ALTHOUGH MOST OF THE UPPER-CLASS Moslem women are still veiled in the street, their clothes, habits, and topics of conversation indoors are European. They speak several languages, listen to foreign radio and read foreign books. It is only among the ruling princely classes that one finds women who act and live in the same manner as Moslem high-class women have acted and lived for the past thousand years, and even the younger generation in these households is becoming educated and emancipated.

The Emira Umm Tallal, first wife of the Emir Abdullah, is a princess of the old school.

I am the only woman reporter to whom she has granted an audience. She is a sherifian from the Hedjaz and Abdullah married her some thirty years ago.

The first time I went down to Amman from Jerusalem was during the Moslem fast of Ramadhan. It lasts for a month and during that time no Moslem is allowed to eat after the dawn has broken till the sun sets. I was wakened an hour before the dawn by insistent drum beats. I went to the window and saw a half-naked negro with long sinewy legs striding

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through the streets, followed by a watchman with a lighted lantern. He was beating his parchment drum to call the people to their last meal. As soon as a white thread can be distinguished from a black, dawn has officially come and guns are let off as a signal. Then no food nor water may pass the lips of a Moslem till a white thread can no longer be distinguished from a black and dusk has come.

I had to approach the Emira through the Emir Abdullah and I met him on the parade-ground of the Arab Legion where I was watching Major E. W. Northfield showing the paces of his grey Arab mare. The Emir swept up to us in a blood-red limousine, and stepped out with a bodyguard of three. He was dressed in desert costume, a spotlessly white kafia floating from his head, a cream silk and gold agal, such as only Emirs are qualified to wear, and a white abba flowing from his shoulders, covering his arms. Around his waist a leather girdle with a gold-hilted dagger stuck through it. I was told that the dagger was worth quite two hundred pounds. It is encrusted with jewels and has been handed down from father to son for many generations.

As the Emir shook hands with me he asked Major Northfield a question. I learnt afterwards that he had been anxious to know whose wife I was, assuming that a girl of my age was bound to be married.

His expression is a cross between benignity and subtlety. He has rich brown eyes which carry a wealth of feeling ; and although short of stature he has a dignity and a regal bearing such as many a European monarch might envy ; but the Emir is a man of the desert and would not be happy with town life.

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He did not wish me to visit his harem during Ramadan because " his women would not be looking their best." Fasting is a terrible strain for them, particularly as their years begin to tell. I had hoped he might waive this custom for me, but apologetic as he was he would not give in. He was too proud for me to see his harem at its worst, but begged me to come again to Amman after Ramadan, when he would welcome me at the palace.

He shook hands and walked back to his car. I watched it droning away over the desert road to his home on the hilltop, a cloud of dust lost in the distance.

. . . .

It was late January when I visited Amman again. The air was still chilly and I was glad to clutch a hot-water bottle and wrap several rugs around me in the car. The journey from Jerusalem to Trans-jordan is disconcerting. The sudden drop from nearly 3000 feet to about 1280 feet below sea-level as one rides through Jericho past the Dead Sea makes your head spin and ears ache with the pressure. It is not till you have crossed the Jordan Valley and gone some distance up into the Hills of Moab that the buzzing disappears and then you feel suddenly tired and listless and wish the journey was at an end.

But there is plenty to look at in the early spring. Tiny patches of red anemones brighten the hills. In shallow troughs along the roadside, far away through a break in the spurs, the desert comes up green. There are white sweet-scented narcissi in the crevices, and—rarer still, but more beautiful because of that rarity—scarlet and white tulips. In

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the early spring-time the young kingfishers flash along the wadis. Their brilliant blue plumage seems totally out of place amongst the tawniness and dust of the bleak hillsides, but they seem to enjoy life as they perch on oleander boughs, gazing at their reflection in the little streams or streaking across the sky leaving a trail of colour behind them, so quickly do they move.

I arrived in Amman just before dark and the streets were filled with late shoppers and Arabs on their way to the cafés. I had a meal and wandered round the *suq*. After two hours wrangling I bought a coffee-pot, a sheikh's leather waist-belt, a white silk-embroidered kafia and a black and gold silk agal—souvenirs which I shall always treasure, memories of that outpost of British influence. Amman is infinitely more attractive than Jerusalem, which is only pseudo-Eastern. It seems to have retained all the glamour and romance which a desert town is supposed to possess. One does not see a Britisher walking in the *suq* at night. Amman is purely Arab when the moon rises.

But there is no hostility. You feel that friendly eyes follow your footsteps through the broad streets. Argue as you may about the price of this and that you know that they realise it is the customary bargaining, whereas in the *suqs* of the Old City of Jerusalem you are treated to glares and sometimes curses if you attempt the age-old system of buying in the East.

Once, after I had looked at some brass-ware in King David Street in Jerusalem and had not bought any I heard the shop-keepers shouting what I thought was "kafia" at me. They were standing on their counters and I wondered why they got so excited. I did not want a kafia, so shouted back: "Mafisch

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kafia " (No kafia). When I got home I was told they had been calling me " Kafir," which is a curse—meaning " Unbeliever." Maybe it is the tourists who have spoilt Jerusalem. I hope they will never spoil Amman in that way.

I stood outside the mosque for a few minutes, watching the men pray. I could not understand why they did not enter. Most of them were standing on tip-toe as they looked into the sacred building through the windows. Others knelt on the stone steps which led within. Whether there was no room inside or whether they felt themselves unworthy to enter I do not know.

I walked back through the streets. Bundles of rags beneath the closed shop awnings stirred and stretched as my footsteps wakened them. They were men from the desert, spending the night in the peace and quietness of the town of Amman.

The next morning I walked out of the one European hotel of which Amman can boast, the Philadelphia—Amman is the ancient Roman town of Philadelphia—and into the offices of the Emir Abdullah, next door. A bodyguard of Circassian policemen greeted me as I walked up the pathway. Their costume is only less attractive than that of the Arab Legion. Tall kalpaks of black astrakhan, rows of cartridges across their chests, flowing black coats waisted with tight leather belts and high Russian boots. They are romantic figures.

Sheikh Fuad Pasha received me inside. He is the Emir's private secretary. He sat me down in a reception-room with an old desert sheikh who " could speak no English, and was proud of it." An Arab boy brought us bitter Bedouin coffee and poured it

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from a gleaming brass coffee-pot. I had to wait for His Highness to arrive from the Palace.

As we sat there warming our hands over an olive-wood fire the old sheikh's black eyes twinkled and laughed at me. I should have liked to have chatted with him, asked him about the desert life, but he was perfectly content to be mute, and I did not like to ask for an interpreter. I was told afterwards that he was a sheikh of the Howeitat who had known Lawrence.

It was a relief when I was called in to see the Emir. He was dressed in black this time, although a white kafia still flowed from his head. He looked tired and worried—the Palestine Arabs had just lifted their boycott of the Royal Commission—and he must have been feeling the strain of the work he had done to bring that about.

He ordered more coffee, and we sat sipping it slowly, making a great noise as we did so to show our appreciation of its fine aroma and taste. Sheikh Fuad acted as interpreter and arranged for me to see the Emira that morning. We chatted about Fauzi Kawatchi, the political situation in Palestine, what the Emir hoped to do in Transjordan. Then I left him to visit the Palace.

. . . . .

My first big surprise came when my driver took me around to the side door of the Palace. I tried to make him understand that I was a visitor and he should drive me up to the front.

"You wish visit harem," he leant over the front seat, and asked me.

I told him, "Yes."

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"Then you must go to side door. Women only allowed side door not front door."

As we drove round the rather grand-looking building, I saw two of the Emir's new cars. They were primrose colour, his latest craze. The Emir has a fleet of some twenty cars in Amman. Beside one a palace-guard was standing. He was a real Bedouin, with long tight black plaits dropping down over his chest. All Bedouin from the desert wear these plaits and consider it a great disgrace if by an accident they get cut off or shortened.

A Sudanese serving-girl opened the "side-door" to me. She was a happy-looking creature, her head tied up in a large white kerchief, knotted over her forehead. Down the side of her cheek-bones long gashes had been cut and rubbed with salt when a child—to brand her with her tribe's "trade-mark." She led me up a steep flight of steps into a lounge where I sat down and waited for ten minutes—everything moves slowly in the East.

On the walls were hung pictures of the Emir, as a young man, and as he is now. Beneath them two pictures of a charming young girl in smart European frocks attracted my curiosity.

The room was furnished in a somewhat old-fashioned English style. The carpets on the floor were good although not so fine as I expected to find. From the window there was a splendid view of Amman, of the houses clinging to the side of the hills and the creamy roadways between them.

I thought that the Emira would receive me in this lounge, but the Sudanese girl came and beckoned me along a narrow passage, suddenly opened a door and ushered me inside. For a moment I was at a loss,

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I had not expected to see the Emira at such close quarters so suddenly. She was reclining on a velvet mattress, wearing a white robe and her traditional white sherifian headgear. Only sherifian women are allowed to wear this special kind of kafia wound round the head, under the chin and over the head again, giving them an almost nun-like appearance. Over her robe she had thrown a silk-padded cloak of purple. It matched the mattress on which she was sitting and a divan at the side of the room to which she motioned me. I waited for her to speak and after a moment she started to greet me in Arabic. I told her in English that I knew no Arabic but she did not understand for a few minutes. Then she queried, her big black eyes wide with amazement.

"Mafisch Araby?"

I nodded and repeated "Mafisch Araby" and asked her "Mafisch Anglisie?"

She nodded too, and we both smiled helplessly. I had thought that an interpreter had been arranged for, but if not that she would be able to summon someone in the palace who could speak English. But there was no one. Instead she clapped her hands for her Sudanese maid and gave her an order. The girl lifted a white embroidered cloth which was hiding a telephone just by my side and talked at length into it. I gathered she was sending for someone, and we both smiled again and waited.

The Emira is about forty years old. Her skin is smooth, much smoother than a European woman's at that age, and I could not understand why it should be so for a woman who has lived in the desert all her life. Then I remembered that she must have spent more hours in the shelter of her harem than out under

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the burning sun, and even then she would wear a threefold veil, as is the custom in that old-fashioned part of the Moslem world, the Hedjaz. In this way she has managed to preserve her complexion.

On her dressing-table there was a collection of scents and lotions but no face-creams. In one corner a jewelled kohl-case, the most beautiful one I have ever seen, shone and sparkled as I looked at it. But she used very little kohl round her eyes. She did not need it, they were lovely enough unadorned.

We went on smiling at each other. It was then that I noticed how long and white her hands are and how the thin blue veins stand out in ridges. In every way she is a princess, even though she can neither read nor write.

For the second time she clapped her hands.

The Sudanese girl appeared in the doorway, disappeared for a moment, and reappeared with a tiny silver box. I wondered what it could contain. She opened it at once and I saw it was full of the tiniest thinnest cigarettes imaginable. She did not offer me one—I think it was out of politeness, for her taste in cigarettes must have been very different to the English taste. I learnt afterwards she had them made specially for her by the Sudanese girl.

From the pocket of her purple cloak she brought out a finely worked filigree silver holder and fixed one of the tiny cigarettes into it. Her maid lit it for her and she sat there with a Madonna-like expression, silently puffing blue clouds of smoke up to the ceiling. After a moment I knew they were scented cigarettes and the sweet and subtle aroma had a strangely soporific effect.

In ten minutes she had finished smoking it and she

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clapped her hands again. The Sudanese girl lifted the embroidered cloth off the telephone once more, and spoke for a few minutes. I could tell she was cross and I wondered if the interpreter was late.

As I sat there, looking at the newspaper cuttings of the Emir's visit to England, framed on the walls, I remembered that Sheikh Fuad's wife spoke English.

So I said slowly to the Emira, with a query in my voice, "Madame Sheikh Fuad?" She nodded her head and I understood that she had been sent for. I had to content myself with a further survey of the room. In one corner I saw two more photographs of the young girl I had noticed in the pictures in the lounge. These were coloured and I could see that she had luxuriant curly brown hair, a peach complexion and sparkling eyes. For a moment I thought she must be European; then I decided she must be a Moslem, although her beauty was something I had never hoped to meet in the Moslem world.

As I sat dreaming, the Emira lit a second cigarette and the smoke-haze above her grew thicker. She clapped her hands again—I was so used to it by then I scarcely noticed—and her maid brought in a tray of sweetmeats, preserved fruits covered with chocolate. I knew they had been bought in Damascus, and I could have eaten many more than she offered me—for they melted tantalisingly in my mouth.

Just as I had taken a particularly big one the door opened and a woman entered. She wore black silk clothes and had thrown her veil back, over her bobbed brown hair. She was short of breath and gasped as she walked towards the Emira, bent and kissed her hand, and pressed it in quick succession first on her forehead, then on her lips, then on her heart. As she

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sat down opposite me she smiled and said : " I'm Madame Sheikh Fuad. The Emira sent for me. If I had known you were coming here I would have been here when you arrived."

I thanked her and told her how awkward it had been, but that we had an excellent understanding between us and had managed to get along with my two words of Arabic and smiles.

Madame Sheikh Fuad was an untiring interpreter.

I learnt that the Emira did not like having to wear a veil but wanted to be free like European women. Who was her favourite film star ? Oh yes, of course she went to films, once a week in Jerusalem, and she liked best—Clark Gable. Of the women she liked two—Marlene Dietrich and Norma Shearer. What type of film ? Chiefly romantic, love stories. She did not like thrillers or historical pictures, except with a strong love interest. Why did she not use lipstick and rouge ? First of all she didn't like it, secondly the Emir didn't like it, and thirdly she thought it bad for the skin.

No she hadn't travelled beyond the Arab countries —the Hedjaz, her home—Transjordan, Palestine, Syria, although the Emir travelled a great deal. In the summer the Emir and his harem move into a summer residence a short distance outside Amman, just off the Jericho road. The Emira preferred that house to their winter palace.

I asked Madame Sheikh Fuad between the questions, to tell me the name of the beautiful girl whose picture I had admired.

" That is the Emira's daughter, Hayah," she smiled at me. " The Emira is very sad about her. There is no one for her to marry. In 1933, before her cousin

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King Ghazi married his other cousin Aliyah, daughter of the late King Ali, the Emir tried to arrange a marriage between her and Ghazi. But the negotiations came to nought and now Hayah must remain single."

For a few minutes the two women chatted to each other and I saw that the Emira's eyes were moist. Madame Sheikh Fuad told me that the Emira was very upset—her daughter-in-law, the Emir Tallal's wife, had just given birth to a baby girl who had died. She already had a son, now two years old, little Hussain—one of the youngest descendants of the Prophet Mohammed, claiming this distinction through his grandfather, the Emir Abdullah, son of the Sherif of Mecca and also through his mother who comes of sherifian stock. The Emira had hoped her son's wife would have a second son. When Hussain was born twenty prisoners in Amman Central Prison were released. Up till the time of the birth of the second baby the prisoners—three hundred and fifty of them—had been praying feverishly that this child might be a boy also. If the baby had been a boy the Emir had vowed to release ten prisoners.

When the little girl was born, the serving-maids filled a large shallow bath with hot water. Several pounds of fine salt were mixed in it, and the baby plunged into the salt bath, and then into a bath of hot fresh water. This is a custom among the high-class Moslems, and it is believed that it ensures that the child will grow up strong and healthy. The baby's eyelids were also painted with kohl, to ensure that it would grow up with beautiful eyes. But she was too weak to live long.

Her mother was restless after the birth and her

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serving-maids had to send her into dreamland with a sort of modified hypnotism which is supposed to be infallible. It is a kind of massage, done with the tips of the fingers over the face and body.

Talking of this family tragedy depressed the Emira and Madame Sheikh Fuad suggested that it would be better for us to go. She got up as we left and shook hands with me. Madame Sheikh Fuad kissed her hand again, and we walked out into the passage and down the flight of stone stairs. Outside, my Arab driver was waiting, but Madame Sheikh Fuad's car was not there. As we had stepped into the open she dropped her veil over her face. It was thin and I could see her features through it. I offered her a lift and could not understand why she refused. Then she explained, rather shyly, that she had rushed out of her house to come to the palace and in her hurry had only snatched up one veil. If she came in my car I would want to go back to the Hotel Philadelphia and she would have to pass the Government building next door, where her husband's office is.

" If he should see me like this it would be terrible," she said.

I explained that there was no need for me to go round by the " Philadelphia," but that I could take her home first.

" I'm afraid it's a long way," she said, as she climbed in, " thank you very much." As we drove along she told me of the Emir's second wife whom I had not seen, as she was ill. She is the Emira Umm Naif—the mother of Naif, the second son—and she is younger than the Emira Umm Tallal. She has a room next door to the Emira Umm Tallal, farther along the passage.

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THE ARAB MIDWIFE AT WORK

(*Top left*) Expectant mother drinking water from her husband's boot. (*Top right*) Mother tossed in blanket to hasten labour. (*Bottom left*) Child strapped into cradle. (*Bottom right*) The midwife enjoys a smoke, with her paraphernalia around her.

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"Each wife of the Emir has separate apartments, of course," Madame Sheikh Fuad laughed, "or else I expect they would quarrel. The Emir always breakfasts with whichever wife he has spent the night with, but his other meals he takes in his gorgeously furnished rooms in front of the palace—usually with a number of male guests."

Madame Sheikh Fuad broke off to tell the driver to stop. We had slowed down beside a nurse and a white perambulator—a strange sight in Amman.

"This is the little Prince Hussain," she told me, "and this," she said, introducing us, "is Hussain's German nurse. She speaks a little English."

Hussain was a dear little fellow, his questioning brown eyes framed in a crop of curly brown hair. We shook hands, then blew him a kiss and drove away.

. . . . .

I left Amman in the afternoon and passed through Jericho an hour before sunset. As we wound up through the narrow gorge into the hills the sky glowed pink and yellow. Nearer Jerusalem the towers of the convents and monasteries were silhouetted against the sunset, motionless sentinels guarding a city which would soon be sleeping. As the car sped homewards the colours changed, the sky became diffused with brilliant vermilion. We passed six camels laden with household furniture. Their cynical eyes caught the glint of the setting sun and shone red. Farther on the sky deepened into blood-red and a ball of fire slipped gently down over the hills. The glow did not pale till we had reached the outskirts of the city, but as we drove over the Kedron

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valley, past the walls of the Old City, the light faded, and " at one stride came the dark."

. . . . .

Mrs. Khalidi, the wife of the present Mayor of Jerusalem, is one of those charmingly clever Moslem women who have managed to acquire fluent French and English without stirring out of Jerusalem.

She invited me to her house one afternoon, where I met her cousin and Mrs. Ajami, the wife of a Jerusalem advocate. They served tea in the European way with delicious home-made cakes tasting of nuts and honey. Mrs. Khalidi is a perfect hostess, polished, and gracious. We talked of politics, clothes, films, books, and radio.

Out of doors these three women are veiled. They cannot see the blue sky or the sunshine or the shop-windows—everything is one black blur. Indoors they are educated and cultured. I wonder how long it will be before Palestine Moslem women are emancipated in the same way as their Turkish and Egyptian sisters. Even now they are chafing under the restrictions which convention insists on imposing on them. Will they make the first move for freedom, or will they sit back and wait till some modern-minded male raises the question for them?

Not only is the Palestine Moslem woman cultured. She is chic. She has learnt how to wear clothes, how to keep her figure, dress her hair, and improve her looks with cosmetics.

They asked me about England, what London was like? They told me they listen-in to London on their radio. They asked me about Paris. We talked of Hollywood and Denham—of Robert Donat and

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Merle Oberon, of Connie Bennett and Franchot Tone.

At the time that I met these women the English and Arabic newspapers were full of the abdication of King Edward VIII, and were publishing pictures and columns of news on Mrs. Simpson. The poignant human side of this tragedy struck these women as it struck everybody and they were more interested in the man and woman aspect than in the political or constitutional crisis. What did I think of it all? They were curious to know an English woman's reaction to it.

They had heard of course the English point of view —that a king should not lay down his charge for such a reason. This point of view they could not understand even looked at from the English angle, for they had always believed that Englishmen would sacrifice much for their womenfolk. But from a Moslem angle it was incredible that a man should give up such a glamorous job for a woman—a thing which no Moslem would do. It was just beyond their comprehension.

They were surprised after the first week of acute excitement that the English took things so calmly—in their opinion it was only the English people who could have carried this thing through without shipwreck.

As I sat chatting to them I could have imagined myself in an English home. Everything was so English, the furniture, the carpets, the coal fire, the cigarettes. Only a picture of a venerable old man in a turban on the wall opposite reminded me that I was talking to Moslems.

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In spite of the progress made in various directions since the British administration after the war, Moslem marriages are made as they have been for the past one thousand three hundred years. Negotiations to provide an eligible husband whose family can pay well for the bride are started at birth or soon after. The boy is not betrothed till he reaches the age of fifteen or so. The parents manage the entire affair and the two persons who should have the chief say in the matter know nothing about it till everything is settled. A cousin has the first claim to the hand of a maiden, but he is allowed to marry outside his family as well, while the girl is restricted to her own cousins and second cousins. The chief reason for such marriages is the wish to keep property within the family. This in-breeding practised consistently over a number of years has had a deteriorating effect on the constitutions of Moslem men and women.

Once the parents have decided upon a suitable match the emissaries of the two families meet. These emissaries are usually elderly women, as a rule grandmothers. The negotiations between the two families may last for anything from a week to a month, while each party is extolling the merits or beauty of the pair. Often the match falls through—chiefly on the question of dowry. If, however, the primary negotiations are successful, the male parents get together to settle the financial arrangements. The bridegroom has to provide a trousseau for his bride, in addition to articles of furniture for the home (whether it is to be a new one, or merely part of the parents' home) and a cash payment. The trousseau consists of frocks numbering from two or three to a dozen. According to the wealth of the bridegroom

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they are made of velvet and brocade, silks, and satins, and gold and silver embroideries or of printed cotton, striped cheap artificial silk or poplin. A wedding frock shown me by a wealthy Moslem woman in Jerusalem consisted of a rich purple velvet dress with gold satin-stitch brocaded leaves and flowers. Over this gorgeous dress was a long coat of the same material and covered with the same beautiful design. The bride's shoes were wooden, with one leather strap across the bridge of the foot—but the heels were quite twelve inches high. On each shoe there were two heels or supports—one under the toes and one under the heels—the whole inlaid with ivory, mother-of-pearl, and tortoise-shell.

She told me when I asked her why a bride wore shoes of such tremendous height : " Moslem women have so little chance of being dignified. They might as well do what they can to be top-dogs on their wedding-day."

The " bottom-drawer " goods which the bride brings with her to her new home remain her property. If she is divorced she is entitled to take them away with her. Any furniture which it has been agreed in the negotiations she should bring with her also remains her property. The marriage settlement made by the husband is forced up as high as possible by the girl's parents as this lessens the chance of divorce, this sum having to be paid back when the marriage is severed. If on the other hand a wife divorces her husband she has to give up any right to the marriage settlement and to the household goods she brought to her new home.

Up to this point the prospective bride and bride-groom have not seen each other, except on official

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occasions, when they have been kept at a distance. Soon after the financial negotiations are concluded the groom's women relatives go to the girl's house for the final acceptance. After this arrangements are made for the Mullah to perform the ceremony. Before he does so he has to record the terms of the settlement, which thus becomes legally binding.

The betrothal ceremony, which is irrevocable, takes place in a curious way. The Mullah stands behind a door or a curtain and reads over the terms of the contract and asks the girl if she accepts. In the case of poor Moslems the girl is often lured into accepting by the promise of fine clothes. Often these promises are not fulfilled. While the girl is saying "Yes," she sucks a sweetmeat. A servant or slave, or her wet-nurse if she had one, takes this sweetmeat and places it in a glass of sherbet which is sent to the bridegroom. This is a superstition and it is believed that when he has drunk this and given backsheesh to the servant the betrothal is finally settled.

It is a signal for general rejoicing, and a feast is usually served. In poorer houses syrups and sherbets and sweet cakes are passed round.

Although no official engagement ring is given on the betrothal, if the engagement is to be a long one, the bridegroom makes a present of jewellery.

In some parts of Palestine it is wrong for a bride to have any hair on any part of her body except her head. It is taken off in a crude way. The hair is not shaved but an endless piece of string is tied in loops around separate bunches of hair and the female barber takes the string in her teeth and with a sharp pull wrenches the hair away by the root. Hair

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removed in such a manner takes a long time to grow. With the spread of modern civilisation in Palestine, up-to-date depilatories are used in some of the richer households, but the poorer families often smear the parts with arsenical paste. This not only removes the hair but often removes the skin with it.

Two days before the Moslem holy day, Friday, the palms of the bride's hands and the soles of her feet are dipped in henna. The finger-tips of the relatives and guests who are to attend the wedding feast are also dipped in henna. There are special women whose duty it is to apply this dye.

On the same day in his house the bridegroom goes through a similar ceremony, but in his case only the little finger of the right hand is dipped in the henna.

On the Thursday the man goes through a similar shaving ceremony as his bride. A barber from the *suq* is usually engaged for the job and he shaves every part of the man except the head. As sunset approaches the time comes for the bride to be taken to the harem of the bridegroom's house. There is a feast and music and dancing. When the sunset prayers are due all the bride's women leave the harem except one chosen to remain with the bride, either the dayah who was present at her birth, an elder married sister, grandmother or aunt.

On this evening the bridegroom is not allowed to dine in his house, but goes to a friend's house, after which he attends evening prayers in the mosque and his father or other male relative leads him to the harem. His mother takes the hands of the newly wedded couple and joins them. He is then allowed to unveil his bride's face and to give her the first kiss ! The bridegroom then returns downstairs, bids his

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men friends and relatives farewell and retires upstairs where he recites a verse of the Koran and then consummates his marriage.

The next morning, the one female relative who has remained in the harem for the purpose takes from the bridal-chamber proof of the bride's virginity. She puts the sheet in an embroidered bag, takes it to the father's house and shows it to all the relatives. It is thrown away after the birth of the first baby.

The wedding presents then begin to arrive, usually on flat round trays with sweetmeats surrounding the gifts. This goes on for seven days after which there are fresh rejoicings and festivities.

Then the family sits round and waits for news of the first baby. If this should be a long time coming, the bride has to subject herself to a slight operation. This is in the form of an incision made at the bottom of the vagina. It is usually done by a circumcised Sudanese girl or Negress and is thought to be infallible.

In Palestine mothers-in-law are eager to get hold of, and " break in " the infant daughters-in-law. One family is much the same as another and this custom would not be so wicked if, in the majority of cases, the consummation of marriage did not immediately follow. Often the child is little more than eight or nine years old. Divorce is comparatively easy among the poorer families, and upon the smallest offence, more frequently against the mothers-in-law than the husband, the child-wife is sent home. After this her position is a tragic one.

If on the other hand a wife really loses her husband's love she exercises various customs to bring him back to the fold. One is to take a partridge or chicken, and to kill it with a golden knife. She gets two girl friends

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to take the dead bird to a cemetery and prepare a fire. They put the bird on the fire and do not look at it while it cooks. Then they take certain bones to the Mullah who wraps them in Koranic texts. This they give to the wife, who suspends it on a cord and wears it as an amulet between her breasts until her husband's love returns.

. . . . .

There lives in the Old City of Jerusalem a retired dancing dervish (pronounced *dar-weesh*) one Nuri Effendi Saleh. He has three wives and is rich.

I was invited one day to dine at his house and I looked forward with pleasure to the prospect of meeting these Moslem women. His son answered my knock and ushered me across an open courtyard with a small fountain playing in the centre. He showed me into a room and asked me to sit down and wait. The walls were plastered with hundreds of photographs of the dervish—in his dancing robes—as a Turkish officer in the war—as an ordinary civilian—with his fellow-dervishes. Amid these pictures were photographs of Arab ministers—Syrians, Egyptians, Iraqis, and one of the late King George and the Duke of Windsor. In a corner of the room an expensive wireless set attracted my attention. In another corner what I imagined was a champagne bucket was equally alluring.

Then my host entered. He was a tall impressive man, dressed in a heavy long cream coat. On his head he wore a red tarboosh wound around the base with a thick folded white cloth. He shook hands slowly, bowed his head, and begged me to be seated. His son entered from a second doorway, bearing a

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silver tray on which two shallow china cups rested. He handed one to me. It was tea. I took two lumps of sugar, stirred it with the spoon he gave me and took a mouthful.

Luckily my host did not see the grimace I made. I had never tasted such a repulsive drink before. The tea was scented—very strongly scented—with rose-water. After the tea the son brought in a tray of coffee. It was not scented, luckily, and I enjoyed it. The dervish started to talk about Damascus and asked me if I had seen dervishes performing. Learning that I knew nothing about dervishes he jumped up, walked towards the champagne bucket, brought it into the middle of the room, took off a lid which I had not seen it possessed and drew out a very tall cream tarboosh with a thick cream cloth wound around the base.

"This," he said, "is my dervish hat. I dance with this on. I cannot show you all the steps here, for there is not room and I must have my other dervishes to support me—but I will show you a little."

He stepped into the centre of the room, kicked off his shoes, took a deep breath, looked at me solemnly, then closed his eyes and began. First he raised one arm over his head and crooked it. Then with tiny smooth steps he began to waltz round and round, never moving more than a few inches from where he stood.

"All the other dervishes had to waltz around me," he told me. "I was the chief dervish and so I danced in the middle of the circle. Where did I dance? At the Selim Mosque in Damascus, where there are many dervishes."

He stopped talking and concentrated on his steps

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which were gradually becoming a little quicker and a little more intricate. I hoped he would work himself into a frenzy, but after five minutes he stopped.

"I am out of practice," he said. "I am tired and must rest."

By then I began to wonder where he kept his women-folk but I did not like to ask him. And so we sat through another session of tea and coffee, and again tea and again coffee. By that time he decided we should feed and getting up led me into a larger adjoining room, where I saw a big round table laden with an amazing collection of eatables. I could recognise nothing and wondered if I should survive the meal.

He sat down at the table—his son on his left—me on his right. Still no women. Then he proffered a knife and fork, a plate, and intimated that I should start. It was a crazy meal. Altogether there were some thirty-odd dishes ("odd" in both senses of the word), spread over the white tablecloth. One was piled with chopped beetroot mixed with sour milk, a second with what I thought was balls of forcemeat but discovered was badly-cooked liver strongly flavoured with green pepper—which was simply unbearable. A third dish had desiccated coco-nut flavoured with cinnamon, and the others a heterogeneous assortment of revolting oily food which I was convinced would make me sick at the first mouthful.

I took tiny pieces from each dish and made the best effort I could to eat. Nuri Effendi half-filled my glass with what I imagined was water; then he poured a second dose of water on top. It turned milky white, and I knew I had to drink arak—which has a strong aniseed flavour.

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We did not talk during the meal but concentrated on eating. A mosquito kept pinging round my head. It landed on the back of my left hand and I finished it off with a slap with my right hand.

My host jumped up in excitement.

"You have killed a spirit," he exclaimed. "Ill-luck will come to you."

It was an embarrassing moment, but it passed.

When the meal at last was over he asked me, smiling: "Would you like to meet my wives?" He did not take me into his harem himself but pointed to a door through which I passed and found myself in a small well-furnished room in which one woman was sitting. She did not speak English and I just smiled at her and she at me. She offered me a cigarette and took me into a large kitchen at the back of the house where the two other wives were.

All three wives were young, although the dervish must have been nearing sixty. He told me proudly that he had six children and hoped to have more.

It seemed so incongruous for the women to have to wait for their meal till their husband had had his fill, and after that to have to wash up the china and then start preparing for the next one.

I wonder how long it will be before the status of Moslem women in Palestine alters.

. . . . .

It had been raining, but the sky was clear when I passed under the Jaffa Gate, down King David Street on my way to the Moslem homes of the Old City. I wanted to see the poverty-stricken Moslem woman, to know how she ate, slept and had her babies. I wanted to see her face unveiled.

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I had arranged with Jane Rogers, that good angel of the Old City, for a nurse to take me with her on her morning round. The Infant Welfare Centre of which Jane Rogers is the head, lies in the Street of the Chain. It is really a continuation of King David Street, but one has to double round a corner of the cloth bazaar to reach it. The tiny corner of the cloth bazaar through which I passed is quite the noisiest and smelliest part of the Old City. It has no opening to the sky. The roof is stone, blackened with smoke and age, and the dank air beneath has little chance of being freshened. Donkeys covered with sores, Arabs carrying chesterfields on their backs, children with trays of evil-looking food—these are but a few of the things one has to push out of one's way to get through that congested part of the cloth bazaar.

The Street of the Chain, which leads to the Mosque of Omar, is wider and a little cleaner than King David Street. The Infant Welfare Centre is marked by a large blue and white sign over the doorway. As I walked inside and started to climb a flight of cream stone steps a Moslem woman brushed past me. In her arms she held a tiny baby, its face purplish-red with crying.

At the top of the stairs a chattering throng of black-robed women greeted me. They had thrown back their veils and I could see the brown eyes beneath, the brown skins, the greasy black hair. They were having a great joke about something and their laughter was shrill.

I was shown the ante-natal clinic, the labour room, and the nursery. A group of expectant mothers were being taught by patient English women to prepare layettes. It was amusing to watch them trying to

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manipulate the needles and to make tiny patch-work quilts out of odd pieces of material.

In a few moments I had set off to visit the Moslem homes with an Armenian nurse who spoke English well. She led me up and down alley-ways, between a maze of tiny dwellings till I lost all sense of direction. Then she opened a door in one of the muddy lanes and took me across a squelchy backyard into a little white-walled room. There were eight people in it, an old hag of a grandmother, smoking a hubbul-bubbul, three younger women, a woman kneeling on the floor, and three children. But more collected as we arrived, for the woman kneeling on the floor was just to have her baby. They came through the doorway behind us and emerged from the darkness of the backyard. Children and women with nothing to do but watch for the arrival of the nurse and follow her ministrations with keen and curious interest. The woman kneeling on the floor could only have been sixteen years of age, but she looked older. She seemed desperately ill but the family and friends took little notice. As she rocked in pain she leaned her bare brown arms on the edge of a brazier, apparently unconscious of being burnt. The nurse dashed forward and dragged the brazier away, shouting to the grandmother as she did so. I went and sat down beside the woman and held her hand for a few moments. She tried to smile. I wondered why they had not sent for a midwife but the nurse told me that the woman's sister had sent for a midwife for herself a week earlier and her child had died. The family were therefore afraid and were going to manage for themselves this time.

After a little while we left her and tried to enter an

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adjoining house and were almost driven back by clouds of smoke. A meal was being cooked and the fire had been lit indoors. There was no ventilation, no windows, let alone a chimney. There was an aroma of fried meat. No one was ill in the house so we left after a few minutes' chat and walked into the tiny lane. As we plodded along, picking our way over the slippery stones, the Armenian nurse told me some of the queer customs which the Moslem women practise.

"They consider that their wombs are sacred," she said, "and it is therefore wrong to drink much water when sick, as this floods out the sacred house! But that's only a minor difficulty for us. Most of the women breast-feed their children until they are four or five, many until they are eight or nine. It happens often that a woman is breast-feeding three or four children at the same time."

We twisted round a sharp bend in the lane and struck left along an even tinier, muddier alley-way than the last one.

"Some of the homes have only mud floors," she went on, "and even in the winter when the rain floods in at the door the women often lie on the floors in the mud to have their children. I was at a case the other day like that, and the only thing I could find to put the new-born baby in was an open umbrella. Of course the native dayah or midwife is to blame for the high rate of infant mortality among the Moslems. The trade descends from mother to daughter and is regarded as the most honourable calling. The dayah goes to the betrothal. She is present at the wedding and on the bridal night to take proof of the bride's virginity. She also has the

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duty of naming the first child. At a feast the best of everything is given to the dayah.

"I don't know why this should be so, because the dayah really does nothing but harm. Her equipment consists of a bowl of oil and a length of string. If the husband is a barber I have seen the midwife use his shears to cut the baby from the mother. In other cases a sharpened stone is used. The dayah also brings with her an old stool, on which she seats the patient. But she does not allow her to remain there for long. She usually discovers something wrong, fancies the woman is delayed in labour. Then she uses all kinds of peculiar customs to make her better again.

"One way is this. The dayah tells the woman the delay is due to her having disobeyed her husband during pregnancy. The family fetches him from the coffee-house, takes the boot from his foot, fills it with water, swills it round and makes the woman drink it. Then he forgives her. After that the baby is supposed to arrive normally.

"Some of the dayahs believe that the trouser cord of a good man has a wonderful effect if it is tied around the woman.

"Of course they all think that the quicker a baby is born the better—women are torn to pieces by the midwives for this reason.

"Another custom is to go to a mullah at the mosque and get him to write a verse of the Koran on a plate. Water is then poured into the plate, swilled round, and the mother drinks the holy words.

"During the birth the midwife eats—she is the most important person. No preparation is made for the mother—maybe a strip of sacking on the floor. That's

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all. Nor anything for the baby—but the midwife is looked after very well—and she smokes her hubbul-bubbul as she waits.

"Often she makes the mother stand over a brazier in order to hasten the birth. Another horrible custom is to toss the mother in a blanket if the dayah thinks the child is lying the wrong way inside the mother. It is not surprising that children are often still-born, or that the mothers are terribly ill, even if they don't die.

"During the delivery the dayah talks and talks. By signs she announces whether the child is a boy or a girl. If the after-birth is a long time coming away the midwife gets the woman into a certain position, puts her head on the woman's stomach and, lifting her into the air, shakes her about on her head, walking about the room as she does it.

"This is quite sufficient to kill the poor mother," she added—unsurprisingly.

The Armenian nurse stopped talking for a little as we walked beneath dark archways and brushed past two blind beggars. Then she went on again.

"Of course it is a great disgrace to have no children, particularly no boys. An Arab man has to have at least one son to close his eyes in death and to ensure his passage to Paradise. If a woman, after a number of miscarriages or still-births, suddenly produces a live child, boy or girl, the family gets a white cockerel and sacrifices it between her legs, so that the blood of the child mingles with the blood of the cockerel. This is supposed to ensure that she produces more children.

"These homes that we are visiting to-day are the poorest type. But the nature of the Arab doesn't alter. The poorer people can usually afford only one wife,

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but where there is more than one wife the husband as a rule spends twenty-four hours with each. When the husband has to go to work the wives get together and discuss his protestations of love. They discover that to the oldest wife he says : ' Darling, I love you more than these younger women who don't understand anything. You are older and wiser.' To the second he says : ' Darling, you're not old like my first wife nor young and silly like my third. I love you best.' And to the third he says : ' Those two old hags are no good to me. It's you I love, darling.'

" That's why Moslem women call their husbands lentils—because they are two-faced ! " she concluded with a laugh.

We stooped to enter a tiny hovel at the side of an alley-way. Inside we found a sick child. The mother had left it while she went shopping. It was lying on the floor, on some dirty rags laid there to protect it from the mud beneath. The room was dark and stuffy, the door was the only means of light and ventilation. It was difficult to breathe there and I had to stand beside the door while I watched the nurse examining the child and taking her temperature.

" I am afraid it's typhoid," she said, as she covered the child with a flimsy piece of cloth which she had found in a dark corner of the room. By then my eyes had become accustomed to the gloom and I could see how tiny the place was. There was no furniture in it. Only a few rags and a brazier and a little brass coffee-pot—the necessities of the Arab's life.

As we stood there, talking, the mother returned. She was a misshapen but gentle-looking creature with little or no intelligence and no comprehension whatsoever of the seriousness of typhoid.

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"Give her an injection," was all the nurse could get her to say. To the Moslems an injection is the panacea for all ills, be it eye trouble, fever, or internal complaints. The nurse told me that during an epidemic the Arabs after inoculation will run round and join on the end of the queue again so as to get another, and so on. It is their one specific.

We left the mother with instructions about feeding which I am sure she would never dream of following, and crept out of the hovel, glad to breathe the fresher air outside.

My nurse proceeded to tell me how the Moslem girls get married.

"Fourteen or fifteen is supposed to be the age of marriage, but many Moslem men evade this law by taking an older woman before the mukhtar and then substituting a young child at the actual ceremony. In Palestine a man has to pay anything from £30 to £60 for a moderately good-looking wife. Beyond the age of twenty the price begins to drop, but Moslem men who find the Palestine price too expensive work their passages across to Cyprus where they can buy one for only £6 or so. They make the wife work her passage back. It is a very cheap way.

"I expect you have noticed that an Arab always looks at a woman's face first. It is the part which he never sees, whereas a European looks at a woman's ankles or chest.

"Do you know who Lilith is? She was Adam's first wife, and when he divorced her and married Eve, Lilith was so terribly jealous that she married Satan and became the mother of all evil spirits. Their duty in life, according to the Moslems, is to do harm to newly-delivered mothers and to newly-born babies.

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Moslem women believe implicitly in this. I have seen a mother who has just been delivered taking her baby up in her arms and tearing out of the room with it across the threshold, so that she crosses it before Lilith has time to enter.

"Quite a lot of women admit that the Moslem men are more polite to them in the streets now, get out of their way if they see them coming. It is the English influence, of course, but I haven't seen very much of it myself. Most of the veiled women in the Old City are treated disgracefully, pushed out of the way and ordered about.

"Of course the women are still very superstitious. They tie all sorts of charms around their babies' necks to keep off the Evil Eye. They think that the dirtier they keep the baby the less likely is the Evil Eye to take any notice of the child and harm it. The Evil Eye is supposed to have a grudge against beauty. A dog's jaw is one of the most potent charms for keeping off the Evil Eye. It is usually wrapped in a piece of silk and pinned on the baby's clothes. A bird's beak, wrapped in cloth, and pinned on a child's head, is supposed to have the same good effect, and even more valuable is a collection of these charms, prayed over by a mullah, and then pinned on the child. Often verses of the Koran are written on parchment and sewn up in a tiny cloth bag and hung round a child's neck, and I have seen slips of garlic worn as a necklace to guard against smallpox.

"We have to go in here," the nurse continued as we climbed down a flight of narrow steps and turned into a tiny courtyard.

"This house is less poor than those we have been visiting. The woman we are going to see is the wife

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of a journalist on one of the Arabic newspapers published in Jerusalem."

It was a two-roomed house. We met the wife's mother first. She was washing in the courtyard, and smiled up at us between wisps of henna'd hair as we entered. She got up, dried her hands, and took us in to see her daughter. On the way she informed us that she had been very ill that morning, did not seem to have recovered from her last child.

We found the mother squatting on a hard mattress on the floor. It was a clean little room, and a large double bed taking up quite one-third of it was covered with a spotless counterpane and hand-embroidered pillow-cases. A few rush mats were spread on the stone floor and a closely-woven coloured round mat had been placed beneath the tiny brazier to prevent the ashes from falling on the ground. The mother got up slowly as we entered, although the nurse told her not to, and insisted on making us coffee. From a little cupboard in the wall she took out an enamelled coffee-boiler with a long handle, filled it with water, shook in two large spoonfuls of black coffee from a glass jar, and sat stirring it patiently as she buried it deep among the glowing embers and waited for it to boil. When the bubbles began to break on the surface she added a large quantity of sugar. In a few minutes we were sipping scalding but delicious coffee in thin china cups. As I sat there a small child ran in and sat beside her mother. Her name was Selma and she had large green-grey eyes. She was a pretty child and looked surprisingly happy and healthy.

As I entered the room I had passed the latest baby, lying in a wooden cradle by the door. I had not seen it, and the mother picked it out of the cradle and

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brought it to me so that I could have a good look at it. It was a tiny wizened creature only two or three days old, but it had the same beautiful eyes as Selma.

"I have only two babies," the mother told me, laughing loudly, "but there's a woman in this paper who had five all at once."

She picked up an Arabic magazine, printed in Cairo, and showed me a picture of the Dionne quins. "I should love to have five at a time," she said.

As we left the journalist's home, my nurse began again.

"You know that all Moslem women are considered unclean when they are menstruating. The Old Testament, I believe, has similar laws. For this reason, when a menstruating woman enters the Temple Area, which is sacred ground, she has to plug the vagina in order that no spot may fall on the ground and desecrate it."

After a few twists and turns I found we were walking up the Street of the Chain on our way back to the Welfare Centre.

"I've just time to tell you about the circumcision customs," she said. "Moslem boys are usually circumcised between the ages of three and nine, and the ceremony is regarded as a kind of sacrifice, and it is kept for a feast—such as Nebi Musa or Nebi Rubin. The boy is taken to the shrine of the saint by the father and all the relatives and friends follow, singing and shouting and getting very excited. If the maternal grandmother has never produced a son she is made to eat the foreskin. The knife used for the operation is never sterilised and the boy is often made terribly ill through it.

"Do you know, a number of Moslem boys are born

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without the necessity of being circumcised. It is Nature's way."

. . . . .

The Moslem women were still sewing their layettes when we returned to the Centre. I sat down with them and drank hot tea. It was warming after my long tramp and I think I could have fallen asleep, but Jane Rogers called me to look at the "Mothers' School Room" and I couldn't miss that. It was a little room, something like a child's nursery, with big pictures showing how things should and should not be done. In one corner a cradle made of sack-cloth had been slung on hooks. It was a typical cradle as used in the poorest Moslem homes. In another corner a wooden rocking cradle hung on an iron stand. I was shown how it worked. The baby is strapped down with cords into the cradle, in which a hole has been made, with a little bucket attached beneath, so that the baby can relieve itself without wetting the bed. In this way women can leave their babies for two or three days without any attention! Girls are left for longer periods as the mothers do not take so much trouble with them. Only the boys are valuable. One of the Arab complaints against the British rule in Palestine is: "If it were not for the British, we should not have all this mass of girls. We should throw the majority of girl babies off the house-tops."

. . . . .

As I wandered slowly back through King David Street out into the Jaffa Road I wished that more British women in Jerusalem would interest themselves in the plight of the Moslem women. If they could

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spare a few moments from their round of social activities to do their share I feel sure conditions would improve in the Old City.

. . . . .

The next day I went with Dr. Helen Kagan to the Infant Welfare Centre of the American Colony Aid Association. The clinic stands on a hill inside the Damascus Gate, and one winds up broad flights of steps to reach it. I was taken inside and allowed to watch Dr. Kagan examining a rapid succession of babies. The women waited in an ante-room where they undressed and weighed the children and came into our room one at a time. They looked extremely healthy but their babies were ailing from all manner of complaints. The first woman who entered the room was tall, fair-haired and blue-eyed. Was she a descendant of the Crusaders? It seemed strange to see blonde hair wisping out from beneath her tight black skull-cap and the black veil thrown back over it. Her baby was covered with sores, and Dr. Kagan scolded her for neglecting it. She smiled back inanely, smiled across at me, said she would remember next time and left the room.

The next woman was covered in jewellery, mostly turquoise, but her chocolate eyes shone out from between her heavily-painted lids and she was attractive in her way. Directly she had sat down she undid her frock and started to feed her baby, staring intensely at me as she did so. Dr. Kagan told her to stop, but she refused to and went on feeding it, still staring. At length, after much talk, she confessed that she had only just fed it in the room outside but she wished to feed it again in front of me because she believed the

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child would grow up to be as beautiful as I if she did this !

As the procession of black-robed women came in and out of the door in a continuous stream Dr. Kagan told me some of the difficulties of the nurses.

" The other day one nurse found a mother with five children perched on a wooden divan as the floor of their room was flooded. She had to help them to a relative's house, where they were left, packed like sardines. Generally, the whole family sleeps, cooks, eats, and washes in one room, and half a dozen of these rooms surround an open court where the children play. In this court stand open rubbish pails, and dirty water hangs about in puddles during the rainy season. This court is the only place for drying clothes and the common lavatory is placed there too, with a bit of ragged cloth hung up for privacy. Sometimes the nurses find drinking water cisterns near these lavatories. It is really wonderful how many families do survive these conditions.

" Nurse Vera in one report says : ' I have been visiting poor homes all day, and am depressed. I scold and preach—scold the women for letting their children go around so dirty—but I am sorry for them. Their one-room home is uncomfortable and cheerless, with the children screaming, and the tired wife harassed by hours of work. No wonder the men spend their free time at the coffee shops, and spend their earnings on themselves. The playground conducted by the Aid Association is a boon to these weary mothers and happy-go-lucky children. At least they get out into the fresh air for a few hours.'

" Some of the histories of our mothers are astounding. One mother was married at the age of seven,

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She lived with her husband for seven years, and when at fourteen she had not borne him any children he divorced her. A drug in the matrimonial market at fourteen ! Because she was not a ' girl ' she had to be married off to a blind man. Just two years ago, when a little stunted woman, with a wistful face, brought her baby to me, we learned her story."

As I sat watching Dr. Kagan I thought of the tales I had heard of her bravery, how during the riots she walked down through the Old City at night to attend sick children. The story is told that in Turkish days, when women were not supposed to practise medicine, the son of a Moslem family in the Old City was taken very ill with pneumonia. Dr. Kagan is a Jewess and all Jews had been told to stay indoors. The Moslem father sent for her, begging her to come to his house ; it is strange but all Moslems adore Dr. Kagan. She realised it would be against police orders and refused, referring the father to various Arab doctors in the Old City. But he insisted that she should come, and offered to guarantee her safety. When she arrived at the gates of the Old City she found the streets lined with Moslems who clapped her as she went along ! Dr. Kagan is the only woman in Jerusalem who can claim such an honour.

. . . . .

I did not know when I visited the American Colony Centre how and why it had been started but I was told the story by the foundress herself—Mrs. F. Vester, one of the kindest and most understanding of women I have met.

About ten years ago she was walking down the broad steps that twist round and down into the

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Damascus Gate when she met a very poor Arab leading a wretched-looking donkey. On the donkey a woman was sitting. She was terribly ill. Mrs. Vester stopped and asked what the matter was. The man told her his wife had been taken ill and he had brought her into Jerusalem to be attended at the hospital but there was no room. Neither was there any room in the city where they could spend the night. All they could do was to walk round, trying to fine some place they could hire. A woman was standing beside the donkey with a bundle of rags in her arms.

"What is that?" said Mrs. Vester.

"My son," said the man.

Mrs. Vester was so overcome with this scene—it had such a vivid resemblance to the Flight of the Holy Family—that she decided to found a baby home. She had the mother taken to the Government Hospital, but the wretched woman died in a few days. The father brought the little baby boy to Mrs. Vester and said: "You have begun the good work. There is no one to look after this little mite. Will you carry on?"

This little boy was the first child with which the baby home was started.

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Chapter 4

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" GLORIA IN EXCELSIS, IN TERRA PAX."

" If you don't damn well shut up I'll knock your block off."

These two sentences floated across to me as I sat in the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem on Christmas Eve. One was the intoned voice of a priest celebrating the Pontifical High Mass. The other was that of a British policeman endeavouring to keep order amid the rugger scrum in the body of the church.

Bethlehem on Christmas Eve is full of surprises. One expects to find a great manifestation of religious feeling, of reverence and prayer. One expects to see a congregation moved by the sacred festival which they are celebrating, waiting silently for the twelfth hour. But there is nothing of the kind. The Church is one struggling, pushing mass of sightseers scrambling on and over the pews, balancing themselves on their neighbours, clinging to pillars to get a better view. Beneath the altar dignified priests swing incense-burners and chant the service. At the side of the chancel His Beatitude, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, waits with a benign expression for the climax of the service. But these people are apart from the congregation and seem oblivious of the clatter which at times drowns their devotions.

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I don't think anything is so calculated to shatter one's belief in Christianity as this mockery of a service. The Christmas message should be a message of peace—but there is an armed guard sitting in the aisle of the church.

I wonder how many people see this picture when they listen to the Bells of Bethlehem over the radio. Very few, I know, for to them, Bethlehem on Christmas Eve is a little village set on a hill-top where the greatest event in Christian history is duly commemorated. They think of the bells ringing from a small white tower, they see in imagination rows of devout worshippers, now silent, now kneeling as they watch the priests chanting.

For myself I was lucky to get a seat. It was a good seat in the third row from the front, and I was able to follow the details of the service and by turning round to see the rows of excited faces behind and around me. I had waited for some time at the edge of the mob, having found it impossible to push my way through a sea of dark faces and red tarbooshes. Then a friendly policeman had reached out his hand and sawed a way through the crowd. Behind me I dragged an army officer, who had also been waiting for a considerable time outside. Eventually, having lost my gloves, a brooch, and dishevelled my hair beyond all hope, we reached the front, and I was able to creep between a pulpit and a pillar and so into the third row. It was an extraordinary thing to have done in the middle of a service, but somehow it did not seem strange in such an atmosphere.

Beside me sat a Bethlehem woman, a Christian Arab. She was old, and her browned skin was like silk crumpled and withered. Her eyes were weaken-

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ing, and I am sure she could not have seen the altar. But her face was happy. I think she must have sat there for at least six hours before I arrived. For a seat in the front rows is not won lightly, and I have heard stories of many pilgrims fainting through these long periods of waiting. She wore a beautiful frock, rich green velvet, with a short-sleeved coat to match. Both were embroidered in fine coloured cross-stitch in scarlet and orange, purple and blue. On her head she wore the traditional Bethlehem women's coif, which, for want of a better simile, is like an inverted flower-pot. It has come down from the time of the Crusaders and was originally twice the length it is to-day. Medieval ladies wore a flowing veil over this species of " dunce's cap," and the Bethlehem woman still wears a veil over her hat. It is always white, and completely covers it. No one is allowed to see the cap except privileged people, such as her husband if she has one, or her near female relations. The veil only reaches to her eye-brows in front, but it floats down her back, sometimes nearly to the hem of the frock. It is said that the coifs are worth a small fortune, being covered with costly embroidery and rows of old Turkish gold coins. They are a family heritage and descend from mother to daughter. According to the number of coins, which are continually being added to, so the coif is light or heavy, and many of the women are forced to wear their headdress day and night, for if they did not do this they would be unable to stand the sudden strain of putting it on again in the morning.

In front of me was a sprinkling of British women and more police. At my side a group of armed British Tommies. It was for them their first Christ-

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mas in the Holy Land, and they were watching the service with eyes which never wavered, gazing (no doubt, with mixed feelings) at the gaudiness of the altar, trying to reconcile their ideal of Bethlehem with the spectacle which was unfolding itself before them.

As the night grew older the crowd became larger and more reckless. An argument would start in one corner of the church and gradually spread until a quarter of the congregation was shouting and pushing, not knowing quite why, but doing it because others were. I was glad to be sitting away from these squabbles although the heavy incense-laden air was overpowering added to the scent of many flowers.

The congregation did not join in any hymn or prayer. So far as the priests were concerned, they might just as well have been absent. His Beatitude changed his biretta many times—from magenta to white, and back again. His first robes were magenta and purple with a gorgeous ermine cape. He had a white pointed beard, and his eyes were grey and full of dignity. As midnight approached he changed from magenta and purple into a rich cream, embroidered with vivid silks in elaborate designs. Six priests swung censers towards the altar and towards the congregation. Their copes were cream too, but in the centre of the back there were hand-painted pictures of the Holy Babe, framed in a border of intricate and lovely pattern. Beneath their feet a carpet seemed somewhat incongruous, but the whole effect was mellowed by the blue haze from the many burning candles and the incense smoke. Above the altar six crude imitation flowers—quite four feet long—detracted from two imposing statues of the Virgin and the Christ. Between them floated the voices of

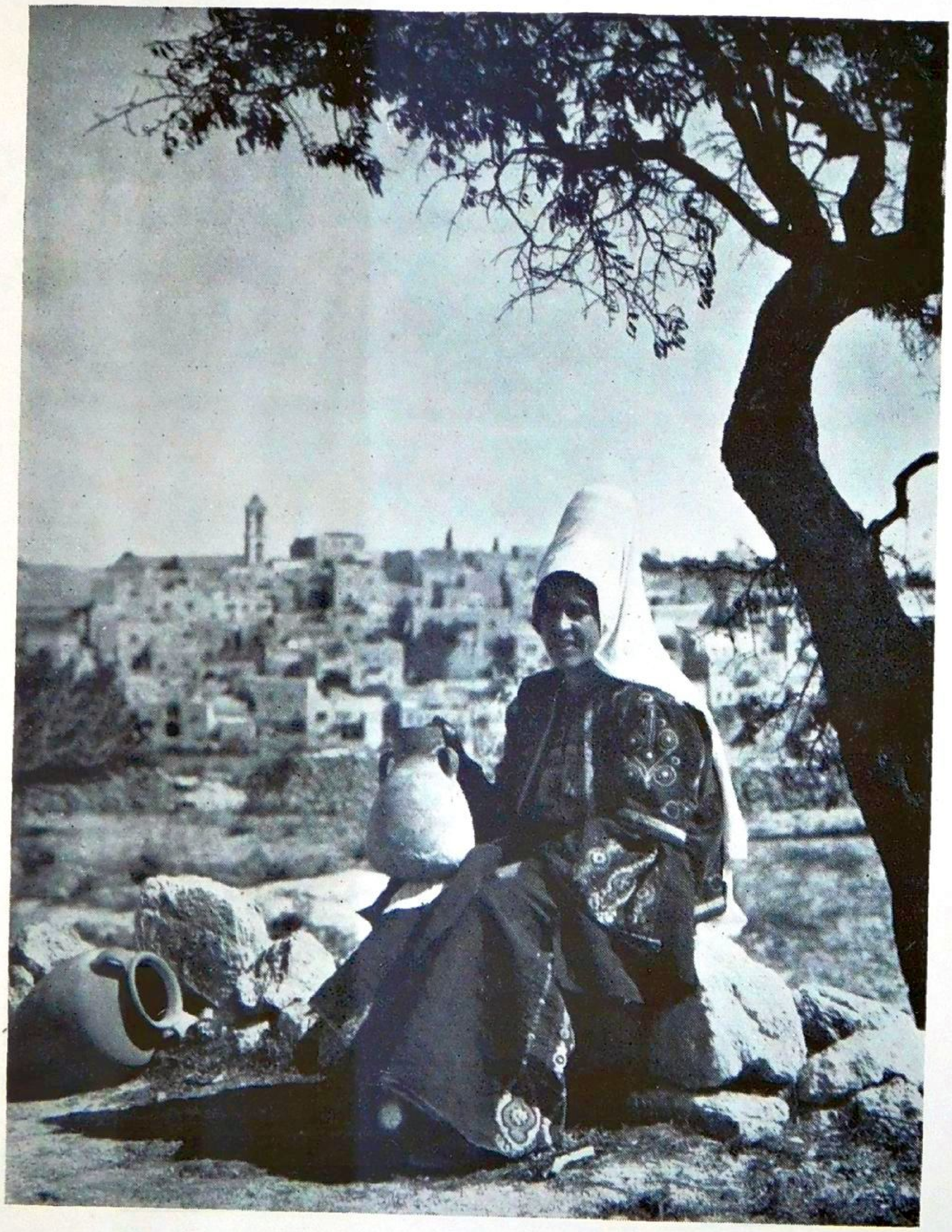
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a hidden choir, intoning and chanting the service. Behind again an organ rose to the roof where the Star of Bethlehem hung, waiting for the hour of midnight, when its million facets would blaze with light.

For a moment I looked at the congregation. I had not realised when I first entered the church that the women and the men had been separated, but I saw after a closer study that the police had tried to keep some semblance of order in this way. But the two sections had inevitably merged once inside the church, for there were few policemen down the nave to keep them apart. As it happened, I was sitting in the side reserved for the men, but in front of me there was an Armenian woman and a few chairs away two nuns. These three, and my Bethlehem woman, were the only ones I could see who were taking their devotions seriously. They were sitting with bowed heads. The Armenian woman, who wore a travesty of a European outfit—quite ten years out of fashion—sat with her eyes on a prayer-book following the service. She was young, but she wore a wedding-ring. The two nuns, whose white frilled caps were covered with heavy black crêpe and whose ugly black boots peeped from beneath serge robes, held their hands over their faces in an attitude of prayer. At certain places in the service they would uncover their faces and cross themselves. Then I saw that their eyes were filled with wonder. Perhaps it was the first time they had come to Bethlehem. Perhaps they were nuns from Europe who had travelled here on pilgrimage.

I glanced at my watch. It was fifteen minutes to midnight.

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CHRISTIAN ARAB WOMAN OF BETHLEHEM
WEARING HER WHITE HEAD-DRESS

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A man collapsed near me and was carried out over the heads of the crowd. He was an Arab.

Then nothing. Only the swaying and scraping of the priests before the altar, and the changing of His Beatitude's biretta and robes.

At five minutes to twelve there was loud commotion at the end of the church and I saw the congregation being pushed back by the body of police.

What had happened? Everyone turned their backs on the altar and stared. With a clatter of staves on the stone floor a dozen Moslem kawasses, with scimitars by their side, marched down the church and spread as a bodyguard along the nave. Who was coming? I thought it must be the High Commissioner, but Sir Arthur Wauchope did not arrive. It was the Consular Body, for whom apparently seats had been reserved, and who came along to see this after-dinner spectacle.

This vulgar noise and clatter completed the disillusion. I sat and waited.

The altar was now blazing with candles, many having been lit in the last few minutes by a priest. I thought some of the lights would be subdued to show the Star of Bethlehem in its full glory. But no such theatrical effect had been contemplated. Instead, the blaze grew steadily brighter, until in a burst of singing and religious fervour the Star was suddenly illuminated as midnight came.

For the first time since I had entered the church there was silence. But not out of reverence. It was an awestruck silence. It lasted for a few minutes, and with the opening of the first Christmas morning chant of praise the babble started again.

As the Star was illumined a priest had taken the

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pink satin coverlet off the cradle above the altar and revealed the Bambino.

The chanting had changed its tone and I could tell it was full of rejoicing now. I do not know how long I sat there, for the swaying and bowing of the priests had a hypnotic effect on me. After some time the Patriarch rose and with great ceremony took the Bambino in his arms. A procession formed. The chancel was small and it took some time to arrange the priests and acolytes. They were placed in order by a young priest whom I had noticed mumbling directions throughout the celebration of the Mass. I was told afterwards he always stage-managed this Christmas service. He was most efficient. But there was something comic about the way in which, out of the side of his mouth, he would order the deacons and acolytes about. Once, as the Scriptures were placed in front of the Patriarch, he pointed to the place whence His Beatitude must read.

The crowd swarmed towards the altar as the procession tried to start. Those near were carried along towards the priests and the Patriarch, and for a moment I thought there was going to be another free fight. But the police managed to hold back the throng a little and His Beatitude with great dignity walked slowly down the nave bearing the Bambino. As he went, women, carried away with fanatical frenzy, rushed forward and kissed the Child. With difficulty they were pushed back into their places.

The procession turned left at the bottom of the nave and wheeled round into the long flight of stone stairs which leads down into the Grotto of the Nativity.

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I had left the church when the procession was halfway there, and doubling across the Greek Church, had entered the Grotto from the other side. I had passed beneath a heavy blue canopy, embroidered with gold, which hangs at the entrance. The sides of the Grotto leading down from the Greek Church are padded with embroidered satin. It is many years old and has been rubbed and worn by hundreds of pilgrims. The steps are stone and curve before they reach the Grotto. There is no ventilation there and the air was stifling, for people were kneeling or standing on every available inch of space. In the back a Palestinian policeman hovered, his khaki uniform contrasting with the black and white robes of the nuns and the coloured dresses of the Bethlehem women. He was a Moslem, always on duty in the Grotto to keep the peace between the different Christian sects who have the right to worship there. Immediately in front of him I saw a group of Ramallah and Nazarene women—Christian Arabs. The Ramallah women were dressed in their traditional cream clothes with long white veils hanging down over their shoulders. The frocks were embroidered with rich blood-red thread in cross-stitch design. A square panel decorated the yoke and front of the frocks, and a narrow panel adorned the back. It started from the waist and ran down the centre, spreading out along the hem on either side. But this is not due to any whim of the designers. No Ramallah woman is allowed out of doors by her husband unless she has this decoration. It is supposed to have the power of drawing men's attention away from her ankles to her dress. Personally I think it has the opposite effect. On their heads these

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women wore rings of Turkish coins, strung on cords and run round and round their hair. The whole was held in place by a metal strap under the chin. Falling from it were further coins which dangled over the embroidery on the frock. Tiny gold ear-rings—perhaps of Birmingham make bought in the Jerusalem *suqs*—flashed attractively.

I crept down into the main part of the Grotto and stood looking into the manger. The place of the birth is marked by a silver star with the Latin inscription :

Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est.

Three steps lead down into this innermost sanctuary. The manger was empty, ready for the Bambino to be placed in it. His forehead touching the edge of the manger, knelt a brown-garbed brother. Now and again a worshipper would break from the little group, pass down the three steps and kiss the manger.

As I waited there the sound of chanting and the chink of incense burners came floating down. The procession was coming, and the policeman cleared the worshippers to the sides of the Grotto. Two acolytes came first, holding lighted tapers, then a deacon bearing a golden cross. Behind him the Patriarch carrying the Bambino. He paused at the threshold and prayers were recited in a monotone by a priest. Then he advanced a few steps and paused again while the nuns and brothers and the Christian Arab women kissed the Child.

Then he walked with a halting gait towards the manger, descended the steps slowly, murmured a prayer, and laid the Bambino in the manger. All

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present crossed themselves, repeated another prayer, and the service had reached its climax.

. . . . .

I left the Grotto and walked back through the gloomy Greek Church between the marble columns, under the covered lamps. It was silent there, for everyone was clamouring around the Grotto. I went out into the fresh air through the tiny doorway which was built specially to prevent Moslem princes from riding into the church on horseback and so desecrating it. Above the stars were shining, and the moon was amber against a velvet sky, lighting up the white tower of the church with its iron bells ringing out their message. As I drove away from Bethlehem the sound of the bells followed me. Past Rachel's tomb and the fields of Boaz I could still hear them pealing, sending a message to the four corners of the earth—the happiest message the world can hear.

. . . . .

Christian Arab women such as those from Bethlehem and Ramallah have a greater chance of becoming emancipated than their Moslem sisters, for they have not the handicap of the veil. During the past fifty years or so many of these families have moved across to America where the fathers and husbands have made fortunes, the daughters have been educated, and the whole family has gained a civilised outlook on life.

To-day in Jerusalem there is a colony of some fifty Christian families—Roman Catholic and Church of England—who can compare with many European families for culture and education. Such a family is

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that of Mr. and Mrs. Mogannam, both of whom are brilliant in their spheres. Mr. Mogannam is an eminent lawyer, Mrs. Mogannam an energetic and clever political leader.

I called to see her shortly after the Arabs had announced their decision to boycott the Palestine Royal Commission and she told me then of her determination to refuse to give evidence should she be called. Mrs. Mogannam is an attractive woman, with short dark bobbed hair, powdered complexion, and Paris clothes. Her English has a delightful American accent. She can talk intelligently on politics, social work, the lot of the destitute Moslem women, house-keeping, and dress—in fact everything that a modern English woman should be able to talk about. But she has an extreme anti-Jewish complex like most Arabs. I happened to arrive on her doorstep in the company of a Jewish journalist who showed me the way.

Scarcely two minutes after she had taken me into her beautifully furnished house and sat me down on a carpeted divan opposite her she leant forward and asked me seriously : " You are a Jewess ? "

I smiled and said : " No, I'm afraid not."

I shall never forget the look of relief which passed across her face. She explained that as I had arrived in the company of a Jew she naturally surmised I was a Jewess ! There is no comment.

Then she plunged into a defence of the Arab case for Palestine.

" Our Strike in the summer of 1936 was not a rebellion against the British authority—nor a movement subsidised by foreign agencies—it was the mere struggle of a nation to obtain its natural rights. It

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was a spontaneous strike—an outcome of the state of despondency which has gained ground in the hearts of all Arabs. We are asking our guardian the British Government to move, or at least to diminish the effects of immigration which is undermining our very existence."

Her eyes were aflame as she got deeper into her subject.

"For eighteen years the Arabs have been deprived of their constitutional rights which they enjoyed under the Turkish Government. You see that the result has been the loss of life and property—even innocent Arab women have been killed. But we, the Arab women of Palestine, still wish to believe that British justice will prevail, and I appeal to you—to the British women—to use your influence to end a situation the consequence of which will be regrettable to us all."

She clapped her hands and an Arab maid entered carrying two glasses of orange-juice sweetened with sherbet. It was a delicious drink and I sipped it slowly. She offered me a cigarette then—a Palestine cigarette—tipped with gold. I discovered since that Palestine is the only country in which scarlet-tipped cigarettes are made—this specially for modern women, so that lipstick does not show. It is an excellent idea and I'm sure if some enterprising tobacco manufacturer would take it up in England he would make a fortune.

"I think maybe the Arab Committee has been a little hasty in deciding to boycott the Royal Commission," said Mrs. Mogannam reverting to her favourite topic, "but the decision has been made, and we, the Arab Women's Committee, will stand

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by it." Later, as many people expected, the Arab Committee recanted, the Arab leaders gave evidence, and Mrs. Mogannam attended the sessions of the Royal Commission.

I finished my cigarette and she clapped her hands again.

This time the servant entered with cups of sweet coffee.

Mrs. Mogannam discussed her book with me. She has written an interesting book on the Arab woman, tracing her history and gradual emancipation, although I'm afraid Mrs. Mogannam imagines the average Moslem and Christian Arab woman is a little more emancipated than she really is.

After our chat she took me out into her garden. As I walked through the room I noticed the valuable daggers hung on her walls. Her garden was lovely—full of vivid bougainvillea and fragrant roses. Soft false pepper hung in brick-red clusters over the walls.

She begged me to visit her again—full of the traditional hospitality of the East—and as I left she picked for me a bunch of English jasmine.

. . . .

There is a large Armenian quarter in Jerusalem. The Armenians are similar to the Christian Arabs in their manner of living and a little in their dress. They are, of course, Christians, and the majority came to Jerusalem as a result of the Turkish massacres before and during the Great War. They spread southwards from their homeland, many of them staying in Syria, a few penetrating as far as Palestine.

Armenian women are good servants, nurses, and "craftsmen." One finds them, too, in positions of

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authority in Jerusalem. But their special trade is pottery making and painting.

The casual tourist rarely visits the little pottery factory in the Via Dolorosa. I did not see it the first time I walked down that narrow street, nor the second, but I caught sight of a blue and white tile above a doorway on the third visit. I read the words, "Jerusalem Pottery."

An Arab guide who was passing, hopefully, assured me they welcome visitors ; so I walked inside, up a rock-hewn stairway, over planks across passage-ways into a little round room, where I found three women working. In a corner the proprietor sat, adding up accounts. They were all Armenians, and he told me in halting English that two of them were his daughters, that he had learnt the secrets of the trade from his father, and had passed them on to the girls.

They were pretty women with brown curly hair and round eyes. They were dressed in modern clothes, one of them wore lipstick. They did not stop their work to look at me when I entered but went on industriously dipping their long brushes into tins of brightly coloured paint, and making careful strokes on their clay vases or bowls.

The proprietor stopped them to let me see the pottery in the process. They were plain baked vessels on which the girls had traced with pencil beautiful designs of leaves and flowers and birds. On another I saw a border of ostriches—on another a motif of grapes and oranges. On a beautifully-waisted vase the tree-of-life design with peacocks strutting beneath the branches. They were all old traditional designs and I was told they had been preserved for many centuries. The colours were chiefly blue and green—the

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blue shading from turquoise to indigo—the green from emerald to lime. After painting, the pottery is placed in a specially-built kiln and baked again.

I noticed a photograph on the wall. It was of Sir Ronald Storrs, and in his writing I read : " For Baron Ohanessian, in memory of 1918, 1.1.31." The proprietor told me he was the Baron, and shaking his head wisely said : " Yes, Sir Ronald was a good man ; we all loved him."

Then he took me downstairs and showed me a large store-room full of a gorgeous selection of pottery. "After the second baking the girls glaze it," he told me.

I bought a small bowl and two china candlesticks—for about half the price I should have had to pay in a Jerusalem arts and crafts shop. Then I walked back through King David Street to the Jaffa Gate where I turned left to visit the Armenian quarter.

All Armenians are paler skinned than the Arabs, although the paleness has a sallow tinge about it which distinguishes it from the whiteness of a European. The children are even paler than their parents, but their colour deepens slightly through exposure to the Palestine sun.

The Armenian quarter is famous for its beautiful church—another place which few tourists visit. It is the Church of St. James, and is completely unlike a church from the outside. A large courtyard stretches in front of it and in this courtyard in a tiny house lives the chief priest. Near him in another house lives a second priest who can speak excellent English and delights to expatiate on the glories of the church. If you are lucky you will find that the first priest is not at home and if so it is the duty of the second priest to find the keys and show you round.

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I was lucky. The first priest had gone out and his wife fetched the second one. Armenian priests wear peculiar black head-dresses. They are quite a foot high and pointed, the black drapery reaching the eyebrows in front. A black cassock is worn over the body, and a long black beard—the longer the better—droops down over the chest. As Armenians have curly hair these beards are usually intractable. The effect is not so dignified as their owners imagine.

He approached me from the opposite side of the courtyard and reminded me of a film I had seen in my youth called "The Terror," in which a cowled monster carried off the heroine to unknown tortures. Except that the priest's face was uncovered, the illusion would have been complete. As it was, he greeted me in cheery, friendly tones and waved me towards the church door. With a huge iron key twice the length of his fist he undid it. It swung inwards into darkness. In a moment he had found two tapers, lighted them for me, and I was following him through the gloom over a stone floor. I could see nothing except his back and wondered where he was leading me. Then in the side of a wall he started to light a row of candles from his taper and I saw we were standing in a tiny chapel.

"This is a very old chapel," he started; "it has a long history, too long to tell you now. But another day if you like to come and spend three hours here I will tell you." I thanked him.

He took me next out of the chapel, showing me the exquisitely inlaid door which closed it from the main part of the church. It was mother-of-pearl and tortoise-shell. Then he halted in front of a large

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picture, made me hold my taper beside his and pointed out the head of John the Baptist lying bleeding on the ground, and his beheaded body falling from the slaughterer's hands.

After a prolonged look at this gruesome picture he took me to the altar. I had never seen an altar like it before. It was in five tiers, rising half-way to the ceiling. On each tier stood a row of large candles, a collection of baubles and statues. There was no chancel, but the altar was cut off from the body of the church by a wide platform.

"Over this platform we give the Holy Communion," he said, "and here is the Holy Chair of John the Baptist, where no one is allowed to sit, not even the Armenian Patriarch. Except once a year. We have a great festival then—at Christmas." There was a tiny red light burning above the chair and it threw weird shadows on it.

He took me then through an opening in the side of the church into a second church. The altar was smaller. But he did not take me towards it. He stopped half-way there and asked me to shine my taper on the wall. It was covered with wonderful tiles, mostly cream painted in glorious patterns of indigo blue colour.

"Here, here are the oldest tiles," he said, "these are Chinese."

I looked at them. They were grotesque. There were pictures of Christ and the Virgin Mary, pictures of the apostles in attitudes of worship—all with Chinese faces, high cheek-bones, almond eyes, black hair, and pigtails—for the first tiles were made in China, where the artist made their pictures of Christ in their own image.

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Then he went to a cupboard in the wall and took out a tapestry screen.

"This also very old," he said. "This very valuable —but we shall not sell it. The tiles are very valuable, too."

I followed him back through the shadows to the entrance of the church, gave him a few piastres for the church, and walked into the street. The Armenian quarter is almost as clean as the Christian quarter in the Old City. The children are clean and it is a sheer delight to see them playing in the streets, chasing a football across the pavement. There are no grubby faces, no dirty eyes, nothing revolting.

Armenian food is not so highly seasoned as most Eastern food. They eat meat, vegetables, and fruit, and although they have absorbed some of the customs and habits of the Arab communities they retain in general their old way of living.

But the poorer women are as primitive in family matters as the Arab fellahin. They have their superstitions and they do not believe in going to a doctor till the patient is dying. However, the children are receiving good education in the various Government and missionary schools, and with education no doubt enlightenment will come.

But I should still like to see the picturesque costumes of the Armenian woman—the pretty embroideries, the spotlessly white-edged caps and velvet skirts. I hope that civilisation will not mean good-bye to these.

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Chapter 5

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IT WAS A MUGGY NIGHT WHEN I DECIDED TO PROWL around Mea Shearim, the Orthodox Jewish quarter of Jerusalem. I had no guide and wandered as I pleased. Clouds scurried across the moon and the path underfoot was muddy as there had been much rain. It was Friday, the Jewish Sabbath had begun at nightfall, and the narrow streets were deserted. The houses were tiny, miserably tiny, and squalid. Most of them were basement dwellings and the ventilation consisted of one small cracked window in the wall. Through these windows I peeped.

They were mostly one-roomed homes and the entire family was congregated in them. In each home there was a light burning in memory of the light which burnt day and night in the Temple of Solomon before it was destroyed. Electric light or candles are forbidden. Only oil lamps are allowed as these are true to tradition, and as the head of the family lights this lamp each Sabbath he repeats a prayer. The lamps may not be blown out when the family goes to bed as their flame has become sacred. They have to burn out.

In some rooms there were no beds—only large mattresses spread on the cold stone floors and on them parents and children were huddled together, asleep. In the less-poor houses there were wooden bedsteads

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and as I peeped in through the windows I could see the remnants of the last meal left on the table and the oil lamp burning steadily. The homes were sordid, pictures of utter poverty and destitution, but the deep religious spirit which animates the Jews' life was evident everywhere.

Through the steamy windows of synagogues I saw men praying. They wore round black velvet cone-topped hats trimmed along the edge with thick fluffy fur. This hat was worn by Jews in the Middle Ages and there were severe penalties for daring to dress in ordinary clothes. Jews had to distinguish themselves from Europeans and the headgear has survived in Jerusalem to the present day. This custom was contemporary with "the yellow spot" placed on the door of a Jewish house to proclaim the despised race to which its owner belonged.

Beneath the velvet hats the men wore flowing cloaks of black and blue velvet—the richer ones bearing fur down the borders. On their cheek-bones dangled greasy side-curls and from their chins hung frizzy beards, sweeping their chests as they lifted and lowered their heads in prayer.

The synagogue was lit by a chain of oil lamps swung across the ceiling in front of the rabbi, who stood reading from the sacred books. He was dressed in a white prayer garment edged with black—the same garment which would form his funeral shroud when he died.

The women were separated from the men. They prayed in another room by themselves, with no rabbi to lead them. In low, monotonous voices they mumbled ancient prayers, now raising their hands in an attitude of supplication, now clasping them

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passionately in front of them. Their heads were covered with thick white cloths, their dresses were poor and threadbare. Most of the women were old—the younger generation does not worship so consistently as their parents—and their faces were wrinkled with age and toil.

I could not peep at them for long. I did not want them to see me staring and so I wandered on through the alley-ways, smelling of dirt, of garlic, and of the cesspits which are built beneath the houses.

Through another window I saw an aged Jew poring over his Talmud, reading aloud verses in Hebrew. His eyes were moist. I did not know what he was thinking but felt he was mourning for the destruction of the Temple and praying that one day it would be restored.

I walked on further and rounding a sharp corner just missed colliding with a little woman carrying a basket of oranges.

" I'm sorry," I said, as I stood aside for her to pass. But she did not go on, just stayed and smiled at me, and replied : " Are you English ? I'm English too—I come from Leeds. My name is Mrs. Allpert. I'm a Jewess and my home is just along here. Do come inside."

I followed her readily and she took me into her small but spotlessly clean home and sat me down at a big, bare kitchen table. Her husband was sitting there, studying books. Two wooden beds and two cots were crammed along one wall. A sofa upholstered in oil-cloth ran along the opposite side, there was a dresser, an oil stove and a bookcase full of religious works.

From the dresser she produced a decanter of sweet red wine and poured me a small glassful. It

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was pleasant and warming and I drank it slowly while I explained who I was and she told her husband in Yiddish.

Mrs. Allpert had met him in London, they had married there, and he had come out to live in Jerusalem. She was happy. Yes, she missed her home, of course, but the living conditions, although poor, were tolerable. Yes, she still made Yorkshire pudding although everything was "kosher"—which is the Jewish word signifying that the meal is in accordance with the laws. No meat, for instance, may be eaten unless the animal has been properly killed by a rabbi.

With five children she considered she had done her duty and had decided to have no more. She admitted this was contrary to Orthodox Jewish law, but with an expressive gesture indicated that her husband was in full agreement, and that he, although Orthodox in other ways, did not abide by the law in this particular matter.

From her I learnt how the Orthodox Jews live and die, how they are born, circumcised, married, divorced.

She told me that it is usual during labour for the mother to have a holy tape attached to her big toe. This tape is taken through the house out along the streets to the synagogue, where it is attached to the doors which cover up the Ten Commandments written in Hebrew on slabs of stone. Certain prayers are recited along the streets where the tape is threaded and passers-by stop to join in. If the mother can twitch the tape or—better still—open the doors of the commandments she will have a safe delivery.

Orthodox Jews are as superstitious about the Evil Eye as the most ignorant Arab and this finds expression in a reticence to talk about any good luck. They

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believe that this will bring the Evil Eye and the luck will turn. Mrs. Allpert told me an instance of this. One day her milkman came to the door and said : "A daughter has been born to me." Later Mrs. Allpert found that his wife had had two girls. The next morning, being curious, she said : "What was your reason for telling me your wife had had one daughter only, when she really had two ?"

"Because it is so wonderful that if one talks about it one will get the Evil Eye," was the reply.

Later one of the kiddies—a weakling from birth—did die—and the milkman fervently believed it was the Evil Eye, due to his having spoken of it.

As with the Arabs, the birth of a boy is hailed with great enthusiasm, that of a girl with only mild rejoicing. The girl grows up uneducated except in the methods of keeping house and has no notice taken of her till she comes to the marrying age. The boy has to go through the ceremony of circumcision. This is performed on the eighth day after birth and the whole family and neighbours are invited to attend. Three days before the operation the circumciser calls to inspect the baby and to satisfy himself that the child is in a fit condition. Only official circumcisers are allowed to operate, and even these experts are responsible for illnesses which last for anything from a few days to a month after the ceremony—chiefly because it is done without an anæsthetic, although a surgical knife is used. Until comparatively recently a polished flint was the custom, the instrument being handed down from father to son.

Having got over circumcision the boy at the age of thirteen has to prepare himself for confirmation. This takes a month and consists in studying prayers, learn-

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ing some by heart, and practising the use of the phylactery. This is a special leather strap with a wooden box attached, which is formally presented to the child by the father at the confirmation service in the synagogue. If the child happens to be an orphan he is supposed to start practising with his strap some six months before the confirmation; it being considered that as the child has no one to teach him the correct methods it will take longer for him to become proficient. The little wooden box—three inches by four—attached to the strap, contains holy verses from the Law. There are two knots in the leather—one shaped like the Hebraic "Y," and the other like the Hebraic "D." On the side of the box an Hebraic "S" is carved. These three letters together are symbolic of "The Strong God." The wooden box is placed on the left arm and the leather strap trailed over the head to show that God the Strong One is over and before everything. The box is placed on the left arm as this is weaker than the right—signifying that everything is weaker than God Himself—it is a kind of shield against evil.

There are many laws governing the manner in which the Holy Strap should be taken on and off and kept while not in use. It must not be rubbed or allowed to lose its colour. If it accidentally drops on the floor it loses its holiness, and the person to whom it belongs has to fast for the rest of the day. If he is weak he has to give to charity in money the equivalent of his meals.

At the age of sixteen or seventeen the Jewish boy or girl may marry. The first step is taken by the parents of the girl. They get in touch with a matrimonial agent who keeps long lists of eligible bachelors.

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They decide according to temperament and accomplishments which couple are suited to each other and directly they think they have a suitable partner for the girl they arrange for the boy to visit the girl's house and meet her at a tea-party. To this tea-party are invited the girl's family and friends, and the girl has her hair adorned with flowers and wears a new frock. If she dislikes the boy she can raise no very strong objection but has to make the best of it. Often she is convinced against her will that the boy will make a good husband, for her parents are anxious to see her married, as it is a disgrace to have a spinster on their hands.

After this official meeting the boy tells the matrimonial agents his opinion of the girl. If he approves they get down to business and discuss the question of the dowry. It may happen that the boy is doubtful ; if so he is entitled to a second look at the girl, but no more.

Comes the official day of engagement—again in front of the family, and on this occasion the final money arrangements are concluded. An engagement has to last for three months and during that period the couple are not allowed to see or speak to each other, let alone recognise each other in the street. The Orthodox Jews fear that if the couple have any contact with each other the boy will wish to satisfy his natural desires.

The girls are usually extraordinarily innocent, and are not taught the facts of life until after the engagement, although nowadays modern schools, to which a tiny percentage of the Jewesses are allowed to go, do teach them in a roundabout way.

On the wedding day the girl wears a white dress with black shoes. When the Temple was destroyed the Jews vowed to mourn continually. The black shoes

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are a symbol of this grief—of the tragedy through which the Jews lost their Holy Land. So, on every happy occasion, wedding, birthday, or feast, something black is always worn.

The ceremony is performed in the morning under the sun to signify that the bride is a young virgin. If a divorced woman marries, the ceremony takes place in the evening under the stars—a symbol that it is the evening of her life.

Bride and bridegroom do not sleep together the night after their marriage, for the bride has to be washed in various ritual baths. The morning after the wedding the young wife covers her head with a large white kerchief which reaches down to the eyebrows in front and completely destroys any beauty she may possess. A black frock with long sleeves covers the arms and a long skirt the legs. It is not permitted for a Jewess to expose her limbs to the public gaze. Nor is it permitted for a Jewess to expose her hair, and the extremely Orthodox shave their heads completely after the marriage, in order to make sure that no man shall have any interest in them other than their husbands, of whose regard they think they are already assured.

Not only are the bride and bridegroom prevented from sleeping together, they are not even allowed to hold one another's hands until the ritual baths have been taken. The bride is not allowed to go through the ritual baths until she has menstruated after the wedding ceremony. The bath is usually a separate part of the big public baths in the Jewish quarter, and is in the form of a huge cistern with steep steps descending into it. The water has the chill taken off it and the bride bathes naked. After this bath in sanctified water the bride has an ordinary hot bath. The

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ritual bath has to be taken three or four times, wiping dry between each session before she is considered clean. Eventually she is purified and is allowed to go to her husband.

Once married, the woman is never allowed to shed her white cap, but must keep it on even at night. The wedding ring, although given on the third finger of the left hand at the wedding, is not kept on that hand unless the woman particularly wishes it. Often it is not worn at all ; often it is placed on another finger. Mrs. Allpert wore hers on the middle finger of her right hand.

Life is varied by festivals. Purim is the happiest. It commemorates the day on which Queen Esther and her Uncle Mordecai saved the lives of the Jews who were condemned to death in Jerusalem in the time of King Ahasuerus.

At tea-time on Purim the Orthodox Jews have a kind of " Christmas " ceremony—a feast of sweetmeats and baked goodies—and give presents to each other. The whole day is devoted to enjoyment and thanksgiving.

In February they celebrate the feast of unleavened bread. A month later is the Passover (Easter-time). It is at this time that the women spring-clean the house. Every nook and cranny has to be washed to make quite sure that no crumbs of leavened bread can possibly be left in the house. During the seven Passover days only unleavened cake is eaten. Rice and barley and certain other cereals are also forbidden during that week.

There are three other festivals—the Feast of the Tabernacles, the Black Fast, and the 9th of Av. At the Feast of the Tabernacles a wooden hut is erected outside the house—with four walls but no roof—in

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order that the Jews should remember they were not always at home and were once delivered from Egypt. In some cases the roof consists of struts or gauze, but the sky must be visible through it. The festival lasts for a week and during that time the entire Jewish family, husband and wife and children, eat and sleep in this makeshift house.

The Black Fast is kept in September and is a repentance for the sins of the year. No food is taken until 6 o'clock in the evening when a series of prayers is recited. At the end of the prayers a ram's horn is blown from the synagogues to announce to every householder that the fast has finished.

The 9th of Av is the day on which all Jewish shops in Jerusalem are closed and the men and women and children go down to the Wailing Wall in the Old City and mourn for the destruction of the Temple. The Wailing Wall is the only remaining portion of the Temple of Solomon and marks the boundary of the Haram or Moslem Mosque Area. Every Saturday throughout the year Jews go to this Wall and wail for the lost glories of Israel.

I decided I would go the next day, and as I left the house Mrs. Allpert invited me to accompany her to a funeral on Sunday.

. . . . .

King David Street was bright in the sunshine as I picked my way tortuously between the donkeys and women laden with produce. The stones were covered with fruit peel and blood trickles from the slaughter-shops on each side of the street. "Street" is a courtesy title, for it is used as a parking place for bundles of clothes, for food and animals, and as a

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garbage pail. At the bottom of King David Street I turned right into the cloth bazaar, pushed my way through a throng of chattering Arabs arguing about the price of a length of silk, and so into the Street of the Chain under the dark archway which prevents any daylight from entering the carpenter's shop situated beneath.

Halfway down the Street of the Chain, between the cloth bazaar and the entrance to the Temple Area, is the little turning which leads to the Wailing Wall. At its entrance stands a white-robed Arab, waiting to guide lost tourists to this famous place. He offered me his assistance and I endeavoured to shake him off, but he persisted in following me. The way to the Wall lies between high cream stone houses, and there are about six alternative turnings at every two or three steps. I followed the route by a map. The Wailing Wall is composed of a number of gigantic stones reaching to a considerable height. Between the stones there are crevices into which Jewish women place paper messages to God, praying for the safe delivery of their children, asking Him to restore the Temple, pleading for their husbands' recovery from illness. Hebraic writing decorates some of the slabs and there is a little wooden bookcase placed at one end of the wall for the talmuds and books of prayer used by the worshippers.

I looked at the throng of Jews moaning and mumbling in the small space before the Wall. They were mostly women, old women, with haggard cheeks and sunken eyes filled with despair. They held their arms high and clasped them around the cold stone, swaying backwards and forwards, pressing their bodies close to the Wall as if from that gesture alone they could

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TYPES OF JEWISH WOMANHOOD IN PALESTINE

Kurdistan Jewess ; University student of parasitology ; Orthodox great-grandmother in Jerusalem.

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gain comfort. Until a few years ago the worshippers drove iron nails into the crevices, in a symbolic effort to rebuild the Temple. This practice has been stopped by the Palestine Government; but the women still place their hands over the nails and clasp them reverently.

There were a few young women there and many children—little girls in long frocks and white head-cloths, boys with tiny side curls just beginning to grow, but wearing the same velvet and fur head-dress as their fathers, only smaller editions. They murmured their prayers and psalms in unison, the wailing bursting into a crescendo every few minutes as a rabbi in a loud voice led them in prayer. Then the praying would sink to a monotonous rhythmic mumbling. Several of the women had brought their market shopping with them and had deposited some distance from the Wall baskets of vegetables and fruit. Others carried their books of learning, the children school-books. Among the Orthodox Jews there were a few modern European Jews who had been brought up in ritualistic homes. Their civilised clothes, particularly their soft hats and bowlers—I saw one young man in plus fours—contrasted strangely with the flowing fur-trimmed garments of the older school. I could not see a modern Jewess among the crowd, but the British policeman whose duty it is to keep order in that extremely tense part of the Old City told me that it is not unusual. He himself had seen many a young European Jewess, dressed fashionably, with high-heeled shoes and powdered face, standing beside the primitive Jewesses of Jerusalem and worshipping with them.

"But the Orthodox women take their praying

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seriously and are deeply affected by it," he told me, " while the modern Jewess is obviously doing it just because her parents have told her to."

One woman turned away and left the Wall as I was standing there. Her face was smiling, although tears welled in her eyes. She clenched her gnarled hands together and walked with a firm and confident step. I knew that she had come to the Wall bowed by grief and that now she was going back to her home happy.

The policeman told me that on the left of the Wall stood the house of the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin el Husseini, and that in the garden of his house a brass band was set to play on a Jewish sabbath, causing the Wailing Wall disturbances of 1929.

As I wandered back into the Street of the Chain a group of Jewish children ran after me. I turned to see what they wanted.

On the ground beside me lay a tiny goldfinch, its wings bruised and torn. Round its neck and legs a piece of white cotton had been tied, and a child was dragging the bird over the stones with the length of cotton lassoed around its neck. I snatched the cotton from her, broke it, and picked up the bird. It lay in my hand, dying. The little beast knew how I felt about it and, hoping to sell the bird to me, shouted : " Five piastres, five piastres."

If I bought the bird it would encourage her to waylay other visitors with the same trick. Should I leave it to be strangled to death ? Or should I buy it and make certain that other birds would be treated in a similar way ?

There was misery in the bird's eyes. They looked at me, dumbly pleading.

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I could not hold it any longer. I handed it back.

The child followed me into the Street of the Chain, lowering her price half a piastre each few steps. But I did not turn round, and after a while she grew tired and gave up the chase.

When her cries had died away I looked at my hand —it was stained with blood.

. . . . .

Mrs. Allpert was waiting for me when early the next morning I met her at the end of her street and went with her to the house in which a distant woman relation had died, a Sephardic (Spanish) Jewess divorced from her first husband at the age of twenty-five. Divorce among the Orthodox Jews is a comparatively easy affair. It has to be made valid by the rabbi, but incompatibility, if mutually agreed upon, is sufficient. A girl does not lose her market value through divorce, although a priest cannot marry a divorced woman, nor is she presented with a ring at the ceremony, nor has she to go through the ritual baths or wait for the proper three months' engagement period. When the divorce is granted the husband has to pay back to the bride the amount in cash of her dowry. This naturally acts as a deterrent to divorce.

Outside the house a crowd of women mourners had gathered, weeping and moaning as they threw their hands up and brought them down in a sweeping obeisance to the deity who had robbed them of their companion. Their cries were sharp and grating and their faces pale, stained with sobbing. We followed the procession from the house on foot to the cemetery in the Kedron valley, where the Messiah, it is

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supposed, will first appear to the world. Mrs. Allpert told me that if the dead body had been that of her husband she would not have been allowed to follow it, nor would any female relative of her husband's. The Orthodox Jews believe that all men are unfaithful to their wives on at least one occasion during their lives and that at each act of infidelity an evil spirit is automatically born, but is not released until the man dies. The evil spirit or spirits follow the man's body to the cemetery and it is thought that they may settle on the wife or daughter should she attend the funeral. Apparently they think the risk considerable !

We walked down Suleiman Road, past the Damascus Gate and Herod's Gate, down the road that leads to Jericho. Near the Garden of Gethsemane we turned off into the Jewish cemetery.

The woman's body had not been placed in a coffin. She was wrapped in a simple white sheet, her face uncovered. A grave had been dug in the ground, and the body was lowered into it by the six men pall-bearers who had carried it from Mea Shearim. Before the stones were laid on top dust was thrown into the woman's eyes, and a handful of coins, copper and silver, were broken into tiny pieces. Then the mourners joined hands and walked around the grave, singing and chanting. They halted four times, and solemnly repeated a prayer as a pinch of the metal dust was thrown to the four corners of the grave—north, south, east and west. This ceremony is a sign that the deceased person leaves the earth owing nothing. It is a custom peculiar to Jerusalem.

After the metal throwing many prayers were recited, and the women worked themselves into a frenzy of grief. Most of them were official mourners

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and wailers, descendants more than likely of the official wailers in the New Testament.

It was a sorrowful and straggling party that left the cemetery later. There had been a frost and the earth still glistened. The air was cold and penetrating and we gathered our coats around us in an effort to keep out the wind that blew fiercely through the Kedron valley.

I walked back with Mrs. Allpert to the home which had been the dead woman's. After a funeral there is a week of mourning during which the relatives are not allowed to sit on chairs, but are forced to squat on small stools or wooden forms. Neither are they allowed to eat at a table, but their food is placed on a stool beside them, so that by this action they should remember the dead. They are not allowed to taste wine, and their food is restricted according to certain mourning rules. This intensive demonstration of grief is kept up for a week. General mourning, which is strict if compared with English mourning, is kept up for a year. During the general mourning the sons, if any, have to recite prayers three times a day—prayers for the salvation of the soul of the deceased.

I stayed in the house for a little while and then left alone. Mrs. Allpert had to stop with the mourners. The women took no notice of me as I went, and it was hard to realise as I stepped out into the cold daylight that behind those darkened windows such intense grief was finding expression, that women were moaning and wailing in such a primitive fashion—would moan and wail for six more days.

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Chapter 6

★

SHE WAS SHORT, DARK-SKINNED AND PRETTY IN HER way. Her face was long and thin. It was attractive because it was different from any face I had ever seen. Her body was thin too and her bones tiny. She smiled at me when she came to her open door to answer my knock.

She was a Yemenite Jewess, and she lived in the Yemenite quarter of Jerusalem. She did not ask why I had come to see her, but at once invited me to go in. Her home was poor, desperately poor, but she offered me all the hospitality at her disposal.

Her name was Rachel and she spoke a little English. She had learnt it from her brother who had worked for an English firm in Jerusalem.

"You will eat," she queried, and without waiting for an answer brought me a tiny plate with some highly seasoned flat cakes which I ate as best I could. They tasted of garlic and mustard and I wanted to cough.

She told me about her husband and showed me her baby. There were two rooms in her house—one a kitchen-living-room, the other a bedroom, both spotlessly clean. The floors were stone and the walls and ceiling stone—beautifully cool in the hot weather, but miserable in the cold. She had been married

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for a year and she was still revelling in the novelty of it.

"You, you are not married?" she asked. "I like being married. But I have to work. We have no money. I do washing. It is hard."

As we sat there talking her husband came in. He could not speak English, but Rachel told me he was a labourer. He was a thin sinewy fellow, coffee-coloured, with thick black hair. He wore shorts and a dark jersey, and his bare legs were thin like sticks. He had some news to tell her and his excitement intensified as he got it off his chest. They spoke Hebrew to each other, and at the end of the recital Rachel sat down and told me, her eyes filled with sadness: "He has lost his work. He must go and find fresh work now."

The father got up and walked across to the little cradle where his baby was sleeping. For a moment he gazed at it thoughtfully, then turned and went into the kitchen.

There was nothing I could do to help them.

Soon the smell of cooking came from the kitchen. The man was frying vegetables, seasoning them with green pepper.

As I got up to go Rachel beckoned me towards a cupboard which she opened and from which she brought out a wonderfully embroidered velvet coat.

"I make that for rich bride," she said. "It is Yemenite embroidery, gold thread, and coloured threads—I shall get some money for that. I must hurry and finish now."

It was a lovely coat—red velvet with gorgeous work. She was pleased that I admired it.

As I walked away along the rough path from her

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home she stood in the doorway and waved to me, her little yellow cap and blue-cotton skirt making a colourful note against the whiteness of her house.

. . . . .

The Yemenite Jews are a section of the Jewish race which was dispersed after the destruction of the Temple. They were driven south through Arabia and the Red Sea into the Yemen, which is the land lying to the north-west of Aden, and were forced to live among and work for the Arabs who lived there. None of them became Moslems except the orphans, who were forcibly converted. These Yemenite Jews therefore, although oppressed, kept their race and language pure. As a matter of fact the Hebrew spoken by Yemenites has a much better accent than the modern Hebrew, or even that spoken by the Orthodox Jews of Jerusalem.

Until a few years ago the Yemenites still believed in the curse of Ezra, but this is now gradually dying out. Ezra was the Jewish leader who cursed the Yemenites because they would not rally round him when he told them to return to Palestine. The Yemenites were afraid they would get thrown out again. Ezra swore that amongst their race there should never be a rich man, and it is a fact that no Yemenite has been known to be wealthy.

Angry at such a curse the Yemenites cursed back—telling Ezra that he should not have the honour of burial in Palestine. Just before he died Ezra went back to Baghdad. Until fifty years ago no Yemenite would give the name of Ezra to his child—but modern parents do not believe in this superstition.

Although the Yemenites are mostly opposed to

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Zionism they are coming in great numbers to Palestine to share in the general prosperity. They believe that Israel will be given to the Jews in God's own time. They believe that a nation will arise with a mighty empire, and that from this empire it will give the little country of Palestine to the Jews. After that the Messiah will come.

The Yemenites are so poor that even their rabbis have to work. Among the Sephardic and Ashkanazi sections of the Orthodox Jews the rabbis are maintained in dignity and comfort, but the Yemenite rabbi only dresses in his prayer garments in the evening when he goes to the synagogue. In the day-time you could not distinguish him from his fellow-workers.

Marriage and child customs do not differ to a great extent from the Orthodox Jews, although there are interesting points of difference. When the first child is born, if it is a boy the Yemenite father gives him the same name as himself, which is an honour—if it is a girl she is given her mother's name.

For the birth many precautions are taken to keep off the Evil Eye. Around the bed on which the mother is lying, and on the mattress itself, bunches of cheap green cotton are looped up, and clusters of evergreens. Mixed with these are handfuls of garlic. This combination of colour and smell is supposed to frighten the Evil Eye. In some cases a horse-shoe is hung on the bed—this tradition coming from the Talmud. If the child is a boy great preparations are made for the circumcision. The night before the ceremony—the seventh night—all the neighbours and relations gather, bringing lighted lamps into the house. In the smoky air the women sing in shrill treble voices and beat parchment drums. This they keep up for the whole of

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the night. But they are so poor that very little refreshment can be offered to the guests—only black coffee and perhaps a few dry cakes. Neither can they afford chairs even for themselves, and the guests usually sit on the floor. Even in the Yemenite synagogues there are no chairs. In the less-poor synagogues you may find sometimes a few low stools.

On the eighth day—the day of circumcision—the neighbours and relations meet again and begin to make curious gestures with their hands and faces, to drive away the evil spirits. At the same time they keep up continuous ululations for the same purpose. The men go to the synagogue where the circumcision is to take place, and while they are waiting they sing. The synagogue is usually decorated with little lamps. Meantime the women have started out from the house, carrying the baby, chanting and screaming and throwing their arms up to the heavens. They believe that when they bring the child to the synagogue Elisha the Prophet is accompanying them—but they are not worthy to see him. Many women attend circumcision ceremonies for this reason alone, hoping that he will give them a blessing.

As the operation is performed and the cry of the child is heard by the women waiting outside the synagogue they believe that any prayer asked at that moment will be granted. They say the child is innocent and does not know what pain is, and because of this innocence their prayer will have very special force.

After the circumcision the baby boy is given his name. If it is the first child everyone knows beforehand what it will be, but if it is the second the parents try to keep it a secret, for if the child should be called by its

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name before the rabbi has blessed it bad luck will follow. This custom is the same with a baby girl.

When the boy grows up he has to be taken to a holy Hebrew school to be educated. Girls are kept at home and do not have a chance to learn anything. Moses was given the Jewish law at the feast of Pentecost, and all Yemenite children are taken to school during this feast. Before this the child has to meet the rabbi who is to teach him and the father carries him to his house. The rabbi puts on his holy prayer garment, which is made of white wool with black strips around the hem. The child is wrapped in the father's prayer garment. The rabbi shows the child two or three letters of the Hebrew alphabet to signify that the little one has made a start.

Then the father produces some milk and honey he has brought with him, mixes it up and gives a little to the rabbi, a little to the child, and a little to himself. It has a rather lovely meaning. The honey is a kind of prayer from the father that the tuition of the child shall be as sweet to the rabbi as honey and the milk is a prayer for the boy, that he shall be as healthy as milk is.

This ceremony takes place at the age of five or so, after which the boy starts to grow ringlets in front of his ears. According to the Talmud a certain amount of hair must be worn over the bone by the ear—the zygomatic arch—but the Yemenites believe that short side curls, such as the Orthodox Jews wear, are not sufficient, and they grow them longer. The longer they are the more pious is the Yemenite. For the same reason they grow a beard. Yemenites believe that a kiss without a beard is like celery without salt.

When the children learn to read under their

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rabbinical teacher they have to share one book between, say, a dozen of them—everyone is so poor there is no money to buy sufficient books. This practice has been current for many hundreds of years and has resulted in the children being taught to read Hebraic characters from left to right, from the top or the bottom. In this way children are able to sit round a table and read from whatever angle they happen to be looking at the book.

When a girl reaches the age of seven or eight she is sent out to earn money, although since the British administration in Palestine a tiny percentage of the girls are getting a smattering of education.

Between the ages of ten and twelve a boy has to stop school and start work. He is confirmed at this age and engaged. The parents choose the girl and they may have had her in view since the day on which the boy was born. While the boy has been attending school various negotiations have been going on so that an arrangement can be come to whereby the engagement is officially recognised on the day of the confirmation. The boy, of course, does not contemplate marriage for several years, but the arrangement is regarded as an understanding—a kind of sacred agreement—which will make him realise that he is shortly to attain manhood. The little girl who may be only six or eight years old does not understand anything and cannot of course express any opinion on the matter. The boy, however, makes a speech on the subject at the confirmation ceremony.

A big celebration follows—with ululations from the women and blessings from the men, in addition to as much present-giving as can be afforded. A day or two later the boy begins to work. Up till then he had been

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regarded as a child, but now he is considered grown-up and has to share the burdens of male relatives. Every evening, after the day's work, he has to go to the synagogue and pray.

At the age of fifteen the boy is married. At sixteen, if not married, a boy is considered an old bachelor. A woman at the age of thirty-five is usually a grandmother and it is considered a disgrace if she is not. The Palestine Government is endeavouring to force the age up, and it is now illegal for Yemenites to marry before the age of eighteen. But this is evaded and child marriages are common.

If for any reason a boy should not marry the girl to whom he has become engaged she has no right to become engaged to another. The engagement is half a wedding ceremony, and although she has not lost her virginity her stock has gone down and her parents have great difficulty in persuading the parents of a second boy to agree to an engagement.

Before the wedding the engaged couple are allowed to acknowledge each other in the street, and during the past few years in Jerusalem the custom has grown up of allowing them to go to cinemas together. In this way the Yemenites are less rigid than the Orthodox Jews.

The bride is married in the open but beneath a canopy supported by four poles. The husband has to pay a marriage sum of not less than £5. If anything should happen to him the wife can claim this sum. During the ceremony the bride is covered from head to foot in white. She cannot see anything and has to be led. It is a symbol to show that she should be covered up and protected from everyone's eyes except from her husband.

Many prayers are repeated and after the ring has

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been placed on her finger a beaker is broken. This is a very old custom and is common to some Orthodox Jews and to the Yemenites. A certain rabbi was once present at a marriage festival and felt that the merry-making was out of place without some reference to the tragedy of the dispersion of the Jews. So to attract attention he broke a glass in front of the party and threw it on the floor. He told them that on every happy occasion a beaker should be broken to remind them of the Jews who have been killed since the destruction of the Temple.

After the breaking of the glass a pinch of ash is smeared on the bride's forehead—symbolic of the ashes to which the Temple was reduced. In the evening a feast is held—a kind of Dutch supper to which the guests bring their own food. The parents of the bride and bridegroom provide fruit and sweets. The Yemenites love one another so sincerely that they do not take it amiss when asked to bring their own meal —they say : " Ours and yours is all alike." During the feast the men and women are separated in different rooms. Then follows the ordinary time of waiting until the bride has menstruated and taken the ritual baths. Yemenite women do not shave the hair off their heads when married, nor is it compulsory for them to wear a head cover.

There is another feast before the marriage is consummated and on this occasion much dancing. Some families dance every day until the ritual bath. During this time the bride and bridegroom are not allowed to do any work. As they are all so poor and cannot afford good things to eat they make themselves happy with dancing. After the marriage both bride and bridegroom have to work hard.

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Divorce is very rare, for Yemenites are allowed to have as many wives as they like. In the seventeenth century the Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land, who had the power of excommunication for world Jewry, issued an edict applying to Jews who committed bigamy. In this edict he enumerated the countries in which Jews lived, but forgot to include the Yemen, Spain, and Persia. Because of this failure the Jewish inhabitants of those countries are allowed not only bigamy but polygamy. Many Ashkanazi Jews who wish to marry two wives try therefore to establish a Sephardic (Spanish) origin.

A widow rarely gets the opportunity to marry again. Like the Orthodox Jewesses she loses her market value. But if she possesses a number of children she has more chance than a woman with, say, one or two. Old Yemenite men are always in search of someone to look after them, and although a widow has no chance of marrying a young man she may get the opportunity to be an old man's darling.

When a Yemenite knows he or she is dying the rabbi comes from the synagogue and goes through a kind of confession ceremony. He tells the dying to repent the sin in their lives. A special prayer is said by the relatives at the death-bed, in case the patient is too ill to know what is being said to him and the evil spirits may cause disbelief in God at the last moment. After death the body is laid on the floor—no dead person must be left on a bed, for once life has gone out of them they belong to the earth. Under the head a stone is placed and special wailing women enter and take the clothes off the body, and collecting any jewellery or wealth the dead may have owned, place them around the body and say: "Look at these beautiful clothes, look at

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TYPES OF JEWISH WOMEN FROM THE YEMEN, SOUTHERN ARABIA, NOW SETTLED IN PALESTINE

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these beautiful things," wailing the while. Then the undertakers enter.

Originally Yemenites bought costly death garments while they were alive but now they have no money and follow the wish of Rabbi Gamaliel, who proposed that people should be buried in ordinary white clothes—to prevent any jealousy.

Then the eldest son or father or mother takes a little dust or earth and throws it in the eyes of the body before it is laid in the cemetery. When the body is lowered in the grave the face must be turned towards the gates of Jerusalem. Even if Yemenites are not buried in Jerusalem their face is still turned in the direction of the gates.

When the shroud is placed around the body no crease must be left, nor must the limbs be bent. This is in order that no movement shall be hindered on the day of resurrection. During the seven days of mourning after the funeral the food must be prepared by neighbours or friends. It is mostly boiled eggs, lentils, and rye cakes with a hole in the middle. This rye cake signifies that a person's mouth should be closed around God in this way.

Yemenites have a curious custom during illness. If, say, a girl is ill the Jewish family fetches the wizard. He decides, nine times out of ten, that an animal is gnawing at the girl's vitals. The family get a lump of lead, melt it down and pour it into boiling water. The girl is laid on a white sheet with a white sheet over her. The basin containing the water and the lead is waved over the lungs and the heart. While this is happening the lead solidifies and takes a definite form—maybe that of a dog. So it is decided that a dog is gnawing at her vitals. Then the family calls on Solomon and

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David, still waving the lead over the girl, and asks them to take away the dog. Eventually they wash her with the water in which the lead took shape. Any remaining water is scrambled for by the family, for by this time it is holy. The lead is taken to a cross-roads and buried in the ground, surrounded by salt.

Owing to the poor quality of the everyday food there is a great deal of ill-health among the Yemenites, although the women, even after child-birth, manage to keep their figures. In fact they get thinner and thinner. The food consists mainly of strongly flavoured vegetables—green peppers which can be so strong that tears come into your eyes as you eat. A lot of garlic is used too, but no meat as this is too expensive. The greasiness of the skin is caused by olive oil which is drunk in large quantities.

The Yemenite women are reputed to be sexually the most passionate in the world, but there is little or no immorality among the community.

. . . . .

But there are smaller Jewish communities than the Yemenites. In Jerusalem you will find quarters in which there are Jews from Baghdad, from Bokhara, from the Caucasus, Persia, and Greece, all separated the one from the other.

The Bokhara quarter is remarkable because it is the only settlement in Jerusalem in which the houses are built of petrol tins. It is not so purely petrol-tin as the village in Amman, for there are a few wooden huts sprinkled in between.

It was bitterly cold and pouring with rain when I tried to visit the Bokhara quarter. There is one main street, about two yards wide, made of flagstones, and

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the water from the drains and the roof-tops rushes down between the stones like a raging torrent. The Bokhara Jews are too poor even to afford to build shacks of whole petrol tins, filled with sand, as is the custom in some Arab settlements, but are forced to open the tins out and nail the sheets together. Inside the crevices are stuffed with newspaper, but the damp still penetrates.

The Bokhara women are swarthy-faced and buxom-figured, and they love to stand at the doors of their petrol-tin homes, arms akimbo, surveying the passing traffic. On this day I think I must have been the only traffic for several hours to pass down the main thoroughfare ; but I was determined, having reached the quarter, to visit it. I had no hat or umbrella and the rain pelted down on me, soaking my hair and splashing into my face. My resolve weakened half-way down the flagstoned path, and a kindly old Bokhara Jew beckoned me to stand in his doorway to escape the worst of the storm. His little house was no bigger than a beach tent. He had a bed of boxes along one side, taking up half of the room, a tiny stove in a corner taking up a quarter and me standing in the doorway took up the remaining quarter. He lay on the bed. Beside him copies of the Hebrew Law looked old and worn. The floor was stone, but in the cracks mud was oozing through. I had never imagined such utter destitution, particularly in a city holy to three faiths, a city in which the greatest philanthropic work should be done.

After a little while I left his house and walked farther down the street. In a doorway a little girl was standing. She could not have been more than ten years old, but her face was lined and worried,

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so quickly had she matured. She wore a little white frock, embroidered with beautiful stitches, and I knew that her mother was proud of her, even though she had been forced to make her work and worry.

At the end of the main thoroughfare two narrower streets led off at right angles. I did not walk up them for the rain was still drenching. I turned and retraced my footsteps past the little girl, still standing in the doorway, past the tiny home where I had sheltered for a moment, shivered across an open clearing and into the Jaffa Road.

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Chapter 7

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THE GREATEST JEWESS OF OUR CENTURY, A WHITE-haired old lady of seventy-seven, lives in Palestine. She is Henrietta Szold, and she is the fairy-godmother of Eretz Israel.

Behind her stands Hadassah and the Youth Aliyah. Hadassah is that network of medical institutions and activities maintained in Palestine by the Jewish women of America. The Youth Aliyah is the German Youth Immigration movement directed in Palestine by Henrietta Szold and sponsored in America by Hadassah.

To do justice to Henrietta Szold would take many volumes. One cannot write of her achievements in a few words. But fragments from her life will show what a wonderful woman she is ; how, faced with overwhelming difficulties, she has surmounted them and triumphed ; how her work stood out during the Russian immigration to America which took place in her youth ; and how now she has become not only a mother to the sick, a true Hadassah, but is shepherding the exiled German youth into Eretz Israel, giving them fresh hope and courage. Henrietta Szold is bridging the gulf between the old and the young, between the ultra-orthodox and the least orthodox Jews. She is moulding the women and

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children of the new Palestine into one progressive whole and one can only hope that she will be spared to live long enough to see the firstfruits of her work.

Henrietta Szold was born in Baltimore in 1860, her parents having come there from Hungary a month after their marriage, and retaining in spite of their admiration for American democracy a great affection for their homeland. She grew up in a family of five sisters—being the eldest—and by right of seniority sat next to her father at table, where she discussed the questions of the day, the Bible, and the Talmud. Through Henrietta the influence of her father percolated to her four sisters. The family table was swelled by guests many days a week and in discourse with them Henrietta improved her knowledge of politics and world affairs. Her parents entertained largely and their gift descended to Henrietta whose abilities as a hostess are famous.

Henrietta Szold did not have a college education, but she was ambitious. She would rise early in the morning, study English, French, German, and Hebrew. In summer she studied in the garden, in winter at a desk in the family sitting-room, where even though it meant the interruption of her studies she was always ready to listen to any of her sisters' troubles and give advice. She was clever with her needle and all the difficult jobs in the making of frocks for the family were done by her without a grumble. She was the soul of tidiness—unlike her four sisters, her desk in the sitting-room was a model of neatness, while the piano which her other sisters used was often littered with music. But she, too, played the piano a little and always scolded her sisters when she found it untidy. She was an accurate, but not an inspired

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pianist, and took the bass part with her sisters in duets—because they found it easier to read the treble.

Henrietta endeavoured to teach German to her sisters—but was not so successful as she might have been—although she herself speaks excellent German and has found this particularly useful in her recent work among the youth immigrants.

At the age of sixteen Henrietta graduated from a public high school and began teaching. Her graduating average has not been excelled in the entire history of the school. But this teaching position was temporary, and for about ten years following she taught in a private school, at the same time helping to teach Jewish children on Saturdays and Sundays, Hebrew, reading, catechism, and Jewish history.

With the immigration of Russian Jewish refugees into the United States, Henrietta put herself at the disposal of these poor creatures, teaching them English privately, and organised what must have been the first night-school in Baltimore for them.

Henrietta's father was responsible for her excellent letter-writing. He insisted that she should attend to his correspondence and he would not allow a note to leave his hands if it sounded perfunctory. Henrietta's letters to-day show the result of this training. Every letter that she writes has the exact tone and significance its circumstances demand.

Henrietta's second sister, Rachel, was the first to be married. She had shared a room with Henrietta, and they had become as intimate as two sisters who are older than the rest can. They had followed together a hobby which they had learnt while at

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school—botany. Henrietta tried to transplant the wild flowers she found to the garden of their Baltimore home, and often she was successful. To-day in Palestine she is the only woman who can tell you the name of every wild flower, what family it belongs to, and the only woman who can link that family with its opposite number in America.

In the home Henrietta first learnt what sickness was and first exercised her infinite love and care for the suffering. Her sister, Adèle, was taken ill with scarlet fever when a little girl, and Henrietta remained with her, not only nursing her, but reading stories from the *Arabian Nights* over and over again. When her sister Bertha had diphtheria she took complete charge of the sick room.

I have given this sketch of the upbringing of Henrietta Szold to show what influences were brought to bear on her character and how through her entire life she has acted in accordance with the principles instilled in her by her parents and her experiences with her sisters and friends.

From 1904 to 1908 Henrietta edited the American Jewish Year Book, and founded, and in 1912 became the President of, Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organisation in the United States. Since then she has worked unceasingly for Jewish women and has opened up new fields of life for them. In 1927 she was elected to the World Zionist Executive.

Her work for Hadassah will never be fully known. What she has done publicly, world Jewry can acclaim, but the time and trouble she must have spent privately is a thing which Henrietta Szold alone knows. But one of her greatest achievements, from the Jewish standpoint, was to insist that to become a member

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of Hadassah a Jewess had consciously, and of set purpose, to become a Zionist.

Funnily enough—or is it natural ?—Henrietta Szold is one of those few people who have so much to talk about and speak so little. Most of the information I have acquired about her has been from other sources —scarcely any from Henrietta Szold herself. To an interviewer she firmly shuts her lips, although she will talk freely about things that do not matter. It is only when one leaves her that it is discovered she has given away nothing.

While in Palestine I had a fifteen minutes' chat with Miss Szold. As I walked into her office at the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem I could feel her personality as a definite presence in the room. She fixed me with her lovely brown eyes and walked forward to shake hands, a diminutive woman, old in years and yet not old in spirit. Her forehead was high and her hair, which was white, had been bobbed and cut short.

I asked her about Hadassah.

"Hadassah ?" she questioned, as if she could scarcely credit that anyone should need to ask. Then she plunged into an enthusiastic description.

"We started here in Jerusalem twenty-six years ago—we did not discriminate between Arab and Jew. There were forty-four pioneers—physicians, nurses, bacteriologists, sanitary engineers. It was hard to begin with—but we persevered." Henrietta Szold's eyes grew misty as she thought of those early days, of the courage that was needed to break into a country infested with malaria, ridden by superstition, where it was necessary to become acclimatised and to learn the language before real work could begin.

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"During the war Hadassah did Red Cross work. It was a blessing to the soldiers. Yes, we have a plan of evolution and devolution at the same time."

Henrietta Szold wandered on, clasping and unclasping her nervous fingers as she spoke.

"We are building a large hospital on Mount Scopus—you know about it? In this hospital we shall carry on medical research work connected with the University. We are gradually transferring local hospitals to the communities themselves. We have practically completed this devolution in Haifa. In Tiberias we closed our institution some years ago. In Safed we still maintain a hospital. But we are not *stopping* our medical work—it is continuing in another form."

I looked at her gleaming eyes, at the wrinkles beneath them. I admired her smooth forehead—so smooth for a woman of her age—and her small, smooth, but pale lips.

"You want to know about the German immigrants I meet as they land in Palestine? The Youth Aliyah? There is nothing to tell. I always make a point of meeting these young immigrants when they arrive, accompany them to their destination and spend a day or two with them."

What a bald, bare description of a great work! I thought of the tales I had heard of Henrietta Szold tramping through rain and mud to reach some child newly arrived in Palestine—some child who was home-sick and unhappy—and how she has comforted and mothered it. I thought of her fairy-godmother work at the Haifa port—where she meets the immigrants in the large customs shed and lets them feel that they have one real friend already in Palestine.

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I thought of the days when she is feeling tired and worn out with work, when she has given advice in her office and talked to a continuous stream of visitors all day—and how, if someone should need her, no matter where in Palestine, she would be ready to go.

"I am keen to stop child marriage," she broke in on my thoughts.

"It is an old, old assumption that children mature in the East much quicker than at home, but we, the Hadassah, have found after lengthy investigations that this is not so. If the High Commissioner does not act soon in this matter, we shall agitate again, and if necessary we shall appeal to England direct.

"I would like you to read my memorandum," she said, as she pressed a bell and asked her secretary for a copy. "It is the memorandum I submitted to the Palestine Royal Commission and I wrote in it of the protection and rights of women."

She handed me the book and I read:

"The subject of early marriages for many years was a source of vexation and anxiety to women concerned with public welfare. The statistics gathered by them showed the occurrence of not a few marriages at twelve and less. After prolonged discussion with the Government, the authorities yielded to the arguments submitted, and the new Penal Code recently published fixed 'fifteen years completed' as the minimum age of marriage. But to the distress of all who had dealt with the subject the clear statement quoted is accompanied by several paragraphs (clause 183) which may in many instances completely void the intent of the law. The modifying clauses confer upon parents

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and guardians the right to adduce evidence of puberty and submit the attestation by a physician to the innocuousness of the marriage of a girl of less than 'fifteen years completed.' Moreover, no lower age limit is mentioned.

"We cannot but regard as pernicious what is obviously a concession to a custom not in consonance with modern science and the best opinion of trainers of youth. We plead here from the social service point of view, that Government review the wording of all paragraphs of the law on early marriages, and give the protagonists of the same attitude the opportunity of presenting their arguments against it. We express the hope, on behalf of the Department of Social Service (of the Jewish Agency) that the advocates of science and education may win the day."

After I had read it and we had discussed the subject a little she spoke of the reception houses for girl immigrants in Haifa and Tel Aviv.

"The question of girls' employment is very serious because there is, so far, very little industrial development in Palestine," she observed. "The girls are limited in their possible careers.

"But our greatest trouble is in public health—with endemic diseases. It is very difficult to nurse immigrants back to health if they fall a victim to one of these.

"Am I interested in politics? I think we should sit down to one problem, finding out how to live on good terms with the Arab. I have always held that view, I hold it as strongly as ever. I think it is Palestine's chief problem. If we don't solve that

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problem I shall feel we are not worthy of our National Home. But I do feel that the British Government should help us to live on good terms with our neighbours, and I have the conviction that if it had wanted to it could have."

. . . . .

I visited the Jerusalem Hadassah institutions one cold but sunny morning. First I was taken to a children's clinic where I waited for a moment in the long queue outside. I had not seen such a collection of types in one small space before and it was interesting to watch their changing expressions. There were Yemenite mothers there, clutching their children tightly by the hand, determined they should have medical treatment. There were Orthodox Jewesses, bringing with them small boys with long ringlets and the big velvet hats edged with fur, and little girls with white caps over their heads. There were orphans, Greek and Armenian children. And two women, each holding a child, standing apart from the crowd. They were Moslems, heavily veiled. I was told that in the 1936 Strike it was more than their lives were worth to be caught attending a Jewish institution—but that these mothers still came, risking anything for the sake of their children.

I was taken inside and upstairs where half a dozen small Jewish boys sat waiting on a bench for skin treatment. They looked up at me as I brushed past them, their big brown eyes eloquent with curiosity. As they sat, their little hands fidgeted on the bench as if they were scared of "what the tall nurse might do to them." Poor little things! It can only have been a few moments before the tall nurse soothed them and sent them away happy.

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But the actual treatment of the children, once they are brought to the clinics, is a comparatively simple affair. The pioneer work in teaching the mothers to bring the little ones has been done by those who have gone before. It was a work fraught with difficulty and danger. The mothers were so ignorant they thought children were not taken to hospital until they were dying. It took time and the example of mothers a little braver than the majority to persuade these poor women that it was best for their children to have medical attention—for preventive rather than curative work.

From this children's clinic I was taken into a maternity home where everything was the most up-to-date obtainable. I was shown the hospital nursery with quite forty new-born babes lying in cradles in rows around the walls. Two dark-haired Jewish nurses were on duty.

This maternity work is under the charge of Dr. Sondek, one of the world's greatest gynæcologists. He has two theories about child-birth—one that no woman need be childless, and the second that pregnancy can take place through insemination. Dr. Sondek is an exile from Germany.

Opposite the maternity hospital there is the Hadassah Pathological Institute, with Dr. Getsover, a woman physician, in charge. Dr. Getsover has run this side of Hadassah for sixteen years, and came from Germany—purely from choice—to start it because she realised Palestine was a country that would benefit from her work. She has never married —asked why, she once replied : "I am married to pathology."

I was shown upstairs into the laboratory where she

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worked. She was short and plump and looked attractive in her spotless overalls. On her table there were some fifty blood-tests on slides. She had a male doctor to assist her, and controls a staff of male bacteriologists, scientists, and chemists.

She asked me if I would like to see some of the specimens she used in lecturing on pathology, and told her assistant to take me through into the lecture-room. It was a small oblong place, with white curtains hung around the walls. I saw they were covering glass cases. The assistant pulled back the curtains and showed me the excellent collection of pathological specimens, though I must admit that some of them came upon me with something of a shock, in particular the specimens of bottled babies.

From the Pathological Institute I was taken to the Rothschild hospital where I saw American Jewesses who had come across to learn how to nurse. At one time it was difficult to get Hadassah nurses from America, but now—as my guide put it, "girls look on bed-pans as something rather interesting and noble." Before they thought nursing beneath their dignity. The Rothschild hospital is rather crowded as the work has outgrown the premises, but this will soon be remedied when the new hospital is built on Mount Scopus.

The Nathan Straus Health Centre is a fine building, large, roomy, and full of sunshine. There are dental clinics, sunshine playground roofs for kiddies and child welfare clinics there, and I had to wade through a congested stream of mothers and perambulators to walk upstairs to the roof. Once there I had great difficulty in getting away, for a fair-haired little Jewess—about five years old—developed a great

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affection for my hand and refused to let it go. She was quite upset when I went and I have often thought of her afterwards and wondered what sort of a life she led in her home. For it must have been a poor one. Only the poor children are given this wonderful playground, with careful supervision.

On the ground floor in the Straus Health Centre there are kitchens where girls are given lessons on elementary and advanced cooking. They are also taught invalid cooking, and how best to adapt the products of Palestine to supply the necessary vitamins and to tempt the palate. Both poor girls and new immigrants are given this training for it is considered necessary and vital if they are to settle down happily in Eretz Israel.

I was shown, too, in this building a corrective gymnasium for children of six to eight years, and a nutrition club for mothers, and the Nathan Straus Milk Pasteurization Plant to ensure that free milk distributed from the centre is wholesome.

Free luncheons are given by Hadassah to the children of poor Jews and I visited one of these kitchens at lunch-time. Rows of eager mouths fell upon deliciously cooked vegetables, drank savoury hot soup, gulped down fruit. They were hungry, poor kiddies, and I felt here, perhaps, the Hadassah was doing one of its greatest works.

I wondered if American Jewish women who contribute to Hadassah funds realise fully the amount of good they are doing in Palestine. The work is proceeding quietly and steadily to improve the lot of the people, and Hadassah is playing a very important part in endeavouring to improve public health conditions. In some ways it is ahead of the Government

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Departments run by the British Administration. During the sitting of the Royal Commission in the winter of 1936–37 important evidence was brought forward not merely to show that Hadassah was doing a great work, but to prove that Jewish health services are costing the Jews large sums of money and that the Jews are at the same time contributing as tax-payers to the general health budget of the Palestine Government which in the nature of things, caters almost entirely for the Arabs, inasmuch as the Jews look after their own people. Among the evidence that was given before the Royal Commission, for instance, was an urgent plea for the Government to allocate larger sums for infant welfare services both Government (Arab) and Jewish. It was urged in this connection that a sum of not less than £15,000 should be allocated for these activities for the financial year 1937–38, a proportionate amount of which should be allocated to Jewish infant welfare centres.

The Royal Commission heard how during 1935–36, 45 Jewish health welfare centres, largely run by Hadassah, dealt with more than 7400 infants. This work among juveniles extends also to school services and the Royal Commission were told how during 1935–36 the Jewish school system consisted of 342 schools giving instruction to about 40,000 pupils of whom over 6000 were in kindergarten, these children representing more than two-thirds of all Jewish children attending schools in Palestine—and in this connection it is important to note that more Jewish than Arab children of school age attend school.

The Commission learned among other things that Hadassah's pioneer work in the field of preventive service has outstanding value. It was the first to

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establish a network of stations for pre-natal care and the care of infants and children of pre-school age. This made possible a systematic campaign for the reduction of the high infant mortality rate prevailing among the poorer sections—particularly the Oriental communities of Jerusalem and other places.

The steady decline in infant mortality among the Jews during the period 1925–35 is in large measure due to the thorough intelligent work in the stations maintained by Hadassah and other Jewish bodies, though other factors, such as the influx of elements of a higher culture and the improved economic and sanitary conditions, have also contributed to the happy result.

The Jewish infant mortality has dropped per 1000 births from 131.25 in 1925 to 64.15 in 1935.

The convalescent homes have rendered invaluable service in obviating permanent disablement and break-downs. Similarly the well-planned care extended to women before, during, and after the period of confinement has had outstanding prophylactic value medically and socially. Among the preventive service special mention should be made of the sanitary supervision over the workers' camps in the villages ; likewise of the hygiene propaganda conducted among the members at large.

. . . . .

One of the most interesting women you may meet in Palestine is Mrs. "Goldie" Myerson. She is a member of the Secretariat of the Jewish Federation of Labour, organises the Council of Working Women and has her offices in Tel Aviv. I called on her one morning and sat in her office for an hour, although

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I had only half an hour's conversation with her—she was either answering the telephone or talking to new arrivals. For Mrs. "Goldie" Myerson is one of the busiest women in Palestine.

She has as you would expect, golden-brown hair, parted in the middle and looped down on the nape of her neck. Blue eyes added to this give her a Madonna-like expression. Her fingers are fine and sensitive and her lips carry a wealth of kindness.

She told me about the working women.

"Our ultimate objectives are immigration and colonisation—the principles involved in Jewish settlement in Palestine. Of course there is really no difference between the women's section and the General Federation of Labour. We are all working for the same end. The Council is the executive body that cares for the special needs of women."

She answered a telephone call.

"Where was I? Oh, yes. From time to time we have women's conferences. In the Federation there are some 40,000 women—this includes the wives of workers. I consider housewives are as much workers as land-girls—although some people may think that a bit revolutionary. Housewives look after food, houses and children—and if that isn't work,—well! Women are included from the age of seventeen—and, of course, there is no age limit. But at present the majority of the workers are young. The working women's conferences elect the Council, numbering twenty-eight, and the Council in turn elects an executive.

'Yes, come in.'"

An American Jew entered and engaged her in deep conversation for five minutes.

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She went on: "The Women's Working Council has the job so far as possible to train young girls who come to this country as workers. Jewesses as a general rule are not properly fit for work owing to the conditions under which they have lived. One of the basic principles of Zionism is to make out of the Jewesses brought to Palestine trained experts so that the basic industries and agriculture will be placed on a sound basis, and Jewish economy in Palestine will become a normal and wholesome one." Mrs. Myerson is an excellent orator and she is famous as a public speaker.

She answered a second telephone call.

"How wide is our movement? It functions in twenty-four countries—where it is called the Halutz (Pioneer) Movement. About 150,000 young men and women belong to it, and get training before they come here on farms in their own homelands. They work there as labourers and get inured to the soil.

"We also have women training for port work. To-day in Danzig there is a contingent training for special port work, heavy packing, etc., so that when proficient they can come to Tel Aviv and work at the jetty and the lighter harbour.

"The Council of Labour sends women from Palestine to farm groups to train them in the particular agricultural work of Palestine and its special problems. And in Palestine we have nine training farms where girls can go for a course of two years to learn the general science of farming, gardening, dairy work, poultry keeping, domestic science, etc. All this training is, of course, free. The farm-schools are practically self-supporting communities.

"But the girls when trained are not only farmers,

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They do road-making, building, tile-laying and plastering.

"We are particularly interested in improving the pay of the girl in the few textile factories in Palestine. If unskilled they are paid next to nothing, and we provide classes after working hours so that the girls can advance more rapidly in their work and command higher wages."

As she paused the door burst open and a little woman with horn-rimmed glasses rushed in. She was about to dash out again without speaking when Mrs. Myerson introduced us. She was the famous Miss Ada Fishman, the founder of the Jewish land-girls colony of Ayanoth. She sat for a little and talked to me of the hard work in Ayanoth and of the struggles she and the girls had had to make the farm flourish. She showed me photographs of her work, groups of the girls and pictures of the colony.

Then Mrs. Myerson went on with her tale.

"We have a special work in providing crèches and kindergartens for the colonies where mothers can leave their children from seven in the morning till five at night without worrying about them. And we see to club-rooms for children after school hours.

"Maybe you think we are not interested in politics —if so you're wrong. We are keenly interested in the political problems of Palestine. In the last year or so the women have carried the burden the same as the men. One of the great things we have accomplished here is to put the woman question on a new basis. There is practically no difference now between the status of women in a farm community and the status of the men. In the labour settlements the women work together and share the responsibilities. When

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troublous times come women take their share of the burden. In the 1936 riots one of the woman colonists was killed.

"But I would just like to impress this on you," and Mrs. Myerson paused while she thought—"In spite of riots and bloodshed we teach our children in the colonies not to be antagonistic to our Arab neighbours. We feel that among the Arabs the majority do not want to be antagonistic to us, and while educating our children we try to impart a feeling of brother-love and friendship towards the Arabs."

I wonder what the reaction of English women students would be if someone were to offer them £1 a week to sweep out the lecture-rooms, laboratories and dining-halls in their colleges.

In Jerusalem the girls at the Hebrew University are expert broom handlers. It is a case of needs must, for few of the students are rich enough to be able to pay the £22 required by the University on entrance and then from £3 a month and upwards to cover the cost of living in Jerusalem. Those who are not lucky enough to get the coveted sweeping jobs, work as newspaper distributors, saleswomen, waitresses or in domestic employment. Others help to run the Mensa Academica or students' refectory, conducted on a co-operative basis by a group of women students, at which about three hundred students—men and women—eat every day at a cost of approximately sevenpence-halfpenny for a dinner or supper.

But that's when the girls get to Palestine.

Many of them do all kinds of menial work to earn

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enough money to travel here. They have dreams of becoming teachers in Eretz Israel and nothing can stop them.

The Hebrew University, although making a feature of such courses as the Hebrew language, literature and history, Islamic culture, Jewish philosophy and mysticism, Arabic language and literature, has courses in bacteriology and hygiene, chemistry, botany, mathematics, zoology and parasitology. The degrees of M.A. and M.Sc. are granted after four years' study.

There is an excellent publicity department in connection with the University and any long-suffering journalist is assured of a deluge of literature or an invitation to visit the buildings directly he sets foot in Palestine.

The students start early in the morning—seven-thirty most of them—and I was forced to rise before that hour to join the bus which they take from Jerusalem. For the university lies some little way out of Jerusalem—on Mount Scopus, opposite the Mount of Olives. In the bus every European language was being spoken, though chiefly German—and, of course, Hebrew. At the University everything is Hebrew, even scientific subjects.

The girls were dressed poorly, and the boys, too. Many of them wore shorts and caps. All of them were "tough." The bus was a rattly one, like all Palestine buses—whether Jewish or Arab—and I was thankful when we stopped on the crest of Mount Scopus before the little arched doorway through which one steps into the grounds of the University.

From this archway one has a splendid panorama of Jerusalem. On the right stands the impressive

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building of the Hebrew University Library—on the left the Russian Convent with its high tower, further to the left the Hills of Moab. Stretching away in front, cream-coloured houses glaring in the morning sunshine, and scores of tiny minarets standing like white sentinels against the blue sky.

The students carry their books from the library to the lecture-rooms on the backs of donkeys, and I saw strings of these beasts wandering across the roadway, followed by groups of chattering students. They were the best-cared-for donkeys I had seen in Palestine.

I was taken around the buildings and shown the students at work. I saw them dissecting flowers, examining cross-sections of leaves and stems. I saw them experimenting on animals, on rabbits, on mice, and I watched some hundred-odd girls and men scribbling notes in Hebrew in one of the modern lecture-rooms.

Then I was taken through the University grounds and shown the big open-air amphitheatre in which plays are performed. Beneath the stage, which is of stone, there is a large hall which houses a marvellous collection of plants and flowers preserved through a secret process. This process which is known to only one man in the Hebrew University, preserves flowers in shape, size and colour—in fact, exactly as one picks them.

At the head of the University is Dr. J. L. Magnes, the distinguished American academician. Dr. Magnes is an inspiring leader for such a new institution—it is only a few years since it was opened by the late Lord Balfour. It is Dr. Magnes who has insisted all along upon Hebrew as the language of study and instruction. He points out that there are other

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universities in the world where instruction is given in the more important of world languages, but he maintains that in Palestine the re-born Hebrew people must work out their destiny in their own language and come once again, as he puts it, to the source of their being through their own medium.

I discovered that Hebrew although an ancient classical language has as easily adapted itself to modern technical requirements as Greek has. It was pointed out to me that most of the technical and scientific jargon in use now, is to all intents and purposes international : words like telephone, micrometer, gas, and so on. It is certainly curious to see how quickly an adult newcomer can pick up enough Hebrew to get along with some other immigrant with whom he or she has no other language in common.

Among the more practical aspects of the University work may be enumerated the climatological and pathological studies that are being carried on. In the marshy Huleh district, for instance, at the north end of the Sea of Galilee, an important malaria research station has been doing excellent work under the auspices of the University for some time. There is also an important technical centre at Haifa.

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Jerusalem appears to have more than its fair proportion of women journalists. In the nature of the case most of them are Jewish, all of them are better on the news, as the saying is, than on women's feature stuff.

During the sittings of the Royal Commission in Palestine, reporting for the *Palestine Post* was done entirely by women and during the opening sessions

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of this Commission the general supervision of this reporting was in the charge of Mrs. Agronsky, the wife of the editor, who was at the time in America. Mrs. Agronsky is a capable journalist who would hold her own in any circle. She can turn her hand to politics, or produce a good literary article or music criticism. She does much work also in connection with the *Economic Review* and is exceptionally well-informed about all matters concerning Palestine.

The advertising manager of the *Palestine Post* is a Jewish woman from America and a good deal of writing is done for the paper by Miss Dorothy Kahn, who is always worth reading.

There are other girl reporters in Jerusalem who work for various new agencies and cover various publications abroad. Most of them are at home in English, Hebrew and German and they can get their notes down competently in any of these languages. You can meet most of them any evening in the Vienna Café—a real European café—which is the clearing-house for the news of Palestine.

Between five and seven it is almost impossible to get a seat, but as the news correspondents, the residents and the special men from London, America and Cairo drift in, the indefatigable Moshe and his fellow-waiters produce extra chairs like rabbits from a hat and somehow make room for everybody. Occasionally one sees Captain Owen Tweedy, the British Press officer—friend of every working journalist in Palestine, the man whom you can ring up at any hour of the day or night to request information and whom you find unfailingly urbane, discreet and helpful.

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Chapter 8

★

SWEATING IN THE DESERT UNDER A GRILLING SUMMER sun—freezing in the winter of the Palestine uplands, the Jewish land-girl works the clock round. What is she doing? She is quite the most important section of Jewish womanhood in Palestine to-day and is turning this neglected wilderness of a country into the ancient Promised Land, really flowing with milk and honey.

She's given up all thought of beauty culture—her complexion is bronzed and burnt by the sun, and her hair dry and brittle. Her muscles are as large again as those of her town-dwelling sisters and her dark eyes shine with the joy of achievement as she looks around her farmlands, and sees acres of fresh green crops and herds of sleek cows grazing on new pastures.

What does she dress like? There's no silly modesty about the Jewish land-girl. She wears trousers or shorts or butcher-blue trunks with an open shirt, her sleeves rolled up, and a tweed cap slouched over one eye. On her feet thick hob-nailed boots. She rises at five in the morning, goes down to the cow sheds to milk, comes back for a breakfast of coffee, rye bread and oranges. Then she sets out for the orange and olive groves to dig irrigation canals—or in the autumn to pick baskets of juicy fruit. For lunch she eats thick

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vegetable soups, various kinds of meat which she buys from the nearest market, cold cooked rice, and cold chopped tomato. After lunch, in the hot summer, she has a siesta. In the winter she goes back to the fields and digs or ploughs. She can get several crops out of the ground in a year, so there is always plenty of ploughing to be done. Then home to the big farm-houses for a glass of hot milk.

In the evening she sits with her fellow-workers—who may number anything from twenty to two hundred, in the big communal rest-room. There is a dramatic society—a musical club. She can play games or read—the reading usually being on the heavy side—philosophy, science, economics, and of course agriculture. Sometimes there are lectures, and these are very necessary where farming activities range from bee-keeping to planting orange groves.

Some of the work is extremely strenuous and after a year's labouring the girls are sent to a special sanatorium for a fortnight's rest cure—this whether they actually need it or not—really as a precautionary measure.

After the first year of farming, during which an extensive general course is taken, the girls specialise in whatever branch of agriculture appeals to them. At the present moment the majority of land-girls are taking up chicken-farming—like the majority of their parents who have come to Palestine from Central Europe and settled on the mixed farming colonies. One such colony (situated near Petach Tikvah)—called in English "The Hill of Those Who Have Returned," is exclusively chicken farmers—all the men being European scientists and professors. It takes about three months to turn a scientist or

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professor into a successful chicken farmer. The colony is nicknamed Kikeriki—which is German for Cock-a-doodle-doo.

Although the land-girl is paid no actual wages she is given so much pocket-money each week, which she is allowed to spend on her day off, usually Saturday. Her normal recreation consists in catching a bus into the nearest town, going to the cinema, etc., and buying sweets. Orthodox Jews would probably be shocked at the thought of purchases on the Sabbath or even amusement for that matter, but the Sabbath is not observed strictly on the farm colonies. There is a new movement among the younger generation of Jewish people—showing itself very forcibly in the girls—to keep the Sabbath as a day of recreation as well as of religion. It does not mean that the Jewish religion is gradually being pushed into the background, but that the Sabbath instead of being dreaded as a day of restraint is looked forward to.

Not the least important of the land-girl's accomplishments is her ability to handle a rifle. This is particularly necessary in a land which is often in a state of upheaval. During the 1936 summer riots the girls showed marvellous courage. It was extremely dangerous for them to work in the fields, but they simply swung their rifles across their shoulders, filled their belts with cartridges and marched away to their jobs. Often they found themselves cut off from the farm-house at night-time and they had to cover the several miles back to their home by running a few yards, then dropping flat, then running again, then dropping. One of the girls told me laughing : " Our knees got so hard after a time we didn't notice it at all."

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That spirit is typical. There is no sign of fear. The land-girl is wonderfully courageous.

But there are other dangers besides riots which have to be faced. The climate hides a multitude of illnesses—malaria, sand-fly fever. In addition there are occasional snakes and scorpions, and often the heat is excessive. But none of the land-girls—and that's no vain boast—ever want to go back to their homes. Even if farm-life in Palestine has a spice of danger in it, they argue, how much better it is than life in the ghettoes of Central Europe, or even in England or America.

A number of girls are graduates of American and European universities and excellent linguists. Even so, although the girls are drawn from every country in the world, including China and India, there's one common language—Hebrew. This is used in general conversation and in study. One of the first things a Jewish land-girl fresher has to learn is Hebrew, and she picks it up surprisingly quickly. The minimum record is two months. The majority of girls take from three to four.

Luckier than the land-girls, however, are the little Jewish girl "farmerettes" who are being sent to Palestine from all over the world to be trained at the two children's farming schools here. They will have the advantage of being trained to the soil from babyhood and there will be no painful breaking-in for them.

The Ben Shemen children's farming school is the most interesting. I was shown round by one of the instructors.

I saw little kiddies of four and five looking after chickens, feeding lambs and goats. I saw them milk-

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ing cows and digging with tiny spades in their little gardens. They were all delightfully happy—and that is the chief object of the school—to teach the younger generation of Jewesses to develop a real affection for farming.

The tiniest children are started on their agricultural career with chickens. They are taught to feed them regularly, to clean out their coops and to collect the eggs. The little girl who does this latter job is the envy of the whole juvenile colony. Lambs are kept more as pets. The children play with them in their pens and learn how to look after them. Milking cows is a little more difficult. One of the prettiest sights I have ever seen was a five-year-old having her first lesson in milking at Ben Shemen.

On the gardening side the children are given equally good training. Each child has its own little patch of ground and can grow in it more or less what it chooses. Usually this is a few flowers, some vegetables and one or two flowering shrubs. "Learning by Experience," is the motto of the kindergarten nursery garden and the children are helped very little in their methods of planting or in their choice of plants or seeds.

Of course, they are taught Hebrew from earliest years—in a sunny classroom which would be the envy of many an English school-child. The Dalton system is used—the children sitting in fours around little blue-painted tables—more or less doing what work they wish to—with an instructor hovering in the background.

Sleeping accommodation is on the dormitory system. But each dormitory has heavy iron walls which can be swung across to protect the kiddies from rifle-fire. The fear of Arab riots is an ever-present

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one, especially among those responsible for the lives of children.

As the child grows older so the farm-work becomes a little more energetic. At the same time the study of Jewish writings and Jewish history is started. Although the life of Ben Shemen is not Orthodox, the dietary laws are observed and the children are given *kosher* food. On the Sabbath only the essential tasks are carried out, but the beginning and end of the Sabbath is festive. Guests from outside, authors, musicians, famous personalities—visit Ben Shemen and entertain the children.

The Jewish festivals are celebrated in great style—particularly the Sheep Shearing Feast which falls in summer. It is especially a children's feast and at it the first sheep of the flock of the Children's Community is shorn, and there is much folk-dancing and merry-making.

I was shown into a large classroom where girls and boys from about fourteen to sixteen were busily studying agricultural science—in Hebrew. As the children grow older they are taken through advanced technical and practical courses.

All the students looked fit and healthy. The new generation of Jew produced at places such as Ben Shemen will be able to compare favourably with any civilised race. There will be no stunted men and women such as the ghettoes of Europe have produced. In a few years the " little Jew " will disappear. His place will be taken by stalwart well-developed citizens of Eretz Israel.

Next door to the classroom I was shown a museum. Even the tiniest kiddies contribute to this. I saw specimens of the snakes and insects which attack

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the farm crops—and stuffed birds which the children had caught. There is no doubt that the training is thorough and practical.

I met two English Jewesses at Ben Shemen—girls of fifteen—who had spent the first twelve years of their life in London. How did they like farming? They adored it. Wasn't it strange to have to think in Hebrew? No, not after the first six months. Were they homesick? Yes, they would like to see their parents, but next winter the parents are coming to Tel Aviv for three months and the family will be re-united. What kind of farming do they like best? Citrus—although it is hard. There's nothing quite so thrilling as bringing back baskets of fruit from the groves and feeling—this is the result of those days of hard toil. One gets a wonderful glow of satis-faction from it.

They took me for a walk through the settlement, beneath tiny woods of fir and pine, down sweetly scented lanes, glorious with bougainvillea and creeping convolvulus, past garden-plots ablaze with yellow roses—though it was winter-time.

I left Ben Shemen laden with flowers and other gifts. A group of children waved me off down the hill shouting "Shalom, shalom," the Jewish farewell. As I drove across the valley I could still see their hands waving to me.

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The next day I visited Ayanot—which is one of the largest land-girl colonies. It was established by Miss Ada Fishman, the woman pioneer whose name is famous in Palestine. At Ayanot there are seventy-four girls. The farming is mixed—the crops include

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JEWISH LAND-GIRL GRAFTING FRUIT TREE

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tomatoes, pimento, potatoes, cabbages and fodder. There is no grass in Palestine—no grazing pastures on the hill-slopes. Every mouthful of fodder has to be cultivated. Of course, the most popular is clover for this leaves the soil richer when ploughed in than when the clover seed is first sown. In addition Ayanot makes a speciality of citrus and dairy-farming, also bee-keeping. And if all that isn't sufficient to stagger any self-respecting European farmer, I don't know what is.

But the girls at Ayanot are not impressed with their work. They are hoping to do much greater things. One of their experiments is with Christmas trees. They exported a number to England last Christmas. The nursery plantations cover several acres of the farm-lands. But eggs, milk, vegetables, flowers and fruit are their chief products and they are sold in the market of Tel Aviv and Rehovoth.

There is only one girl who speaks English at Ayanot —and she is a Canadian Jewess, named Ada Stollman —from Montreal. She was just recovering from an attack of malaria when I met her and she was not feeling too good. But she insisted on showing me everything—she was so proud of the colony.

She took me up to the flat roof first and showed me the cultivated land stretching away, acre upon acre. She pointed out the olive groves, the orange and grape-fruit trees, the dairy and the flower-garden.

From the roof I could see the land-girls at work. They all wore shorts and their bare brown legs gleamed in the warm sunshine. Some of them swung milk pails on their way from the dairy to the farm-house. One sat astride a carthorse, riding it to the fields. Two girls carried an enormous basket of golden oranges.

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"From this roof," Ada told me, "we kept guard during the summer riots. We took it in turns, and now we have rifle practice to keep us in trim. Every seven or eight years there seem to be riots in Palestine, and it's just as well to be prepared. But it was terrible at night up here. I could see Arabs creeping around the farm-buildings, peering through the windows. They were all in white, and reminded me rather vividly of ghosts. But I soon forgot that when they started shooting. I'm not frightened easily," and Ada slapped her sunburnt hands on her grey flannels.

She took me downstairs, showed me on the way the large recreation and reading-room used by the girls, and then to the stone-floored dining-room.

"It is lunch-time," she announced. "Would you like to eat with us?"

We sat down at a long table with a crowd of chattering land-girls. Each girl fetched her own food from a hatchway, seized a knife and fork with it and got down to the serious business of eating it without ceremony. It was a rough and ready meal but I enjoyed it. The soup was good and I had two large helpings. There was no meat but the vegetables were delicious. Everything had been grown on the farm. Ayanot is not only self-supporting, but has also repaid 65 per cent of its loan charges.

After the vegetables they brought me luscious grapefruit—not bitter as we get them in England—but with a subtle sweetness and no pips. The land-girl certainly knows all about citrus growing. When I left they piled grape-fruit into the back of the car—many more than I could have eaten in a month—but the land-girl is nothing if not generous.

My Canadian took me around the farm-buildings

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after lunch. She showed me the prize Friesian cows and the modern well-equipped dairy. She showed me the dairymaids at work. They were Polish girls, and Ada told me tales of their sufferings in Warsaw—how they had been shunned by their neighbours, ostracised from society, afraid to go to a cinema, or even to a Polish shop. But now they were happy. They were pretty girls, slim, black-haired.

Then she showed me the rose-garden and picked flowers for me.

Before I left she took me into her bedroom. She shared it with another girl. On her bookshelf I noticed works of philosophy and science, economics and sociology.

" I read a lot at night," she said, " after the darkness comes there is not very much to do."

" Am I lonely ? No, not really, but I'd like to get married one day. A lot of the girls meet boy friends in Tel Aviv and get married. Then they go to one of the *kwutzas*—a communal colony—where they live in little bungalows and leave their children in the communal crèches when they go out to the fields to work.

" It's a good life," she concluded, as we walked out into the garden.

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One of the loveliest and oldest-established colonies in Palestine is that of Degania. It lies on the shores of Galilee and you reach it through Tiberias. Galilee is below sea-level and the air even in winter is very warm. In summer it is almost unbearable. The road from Haifa to Tiberias zig-zags down to Galilee for the last mile and one has a marvellous view. The

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water on a fine day—and it is usually a fine day at Galilee—is a brilliant translucent blue, and the air is so clear that the cliffs opposite are revealed in every feature. In fact they seem too near to be natural. One can imagine that a child had cut them out of cardboard and pasted them against the sky. Down on the waters edge clusters of soft green palms cast lingering shadows on the hot ground. A boatman ripples the glassy waters with his narrow oars, rowing forwards as is the custom in the Levant. The ripples float away from him in ever-widening circles, growing tinier and tinier until they melt into the shore.

It was noon when I arrived at Tiberias. Everything was sleeping. Even the birds could not gather up enough energy to fly between the palms. The Arab shops were shut, and the streets were practically empty. I walked around in the silence. The heat dazzled and shimmered on the hill-side, the sunbeams fell on the white streets making the glare painful to the eyes.

I walked down to the quayside and looked at the limpid waters. A fisherman passed me, a string of queer spiny-looking creatures hanging from his shoulder. I asked him what fish they were, and he told me, " Thees, thees Galilee feesh." And that was all the answer I could get.

An old boatman lay sleeping in the shade of a palm tree. My footsteps wakened him and he offered to take me for a row. He was a Turk and wore a khaki kalpak. I climbed down the quay steps and got into his little boat. He rowed me along the shore and I let my hands ripple through the cool waters, leaving a trail of white bubbles. After a little while he started talking, telling me how his father had gone from

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Turkey on the great Mecca pilgrimage and on reaching Tiberias on the way home had not enough money to get further and so he had been forced to settle down there.

"Would you like me to sing?" he asked.

Without waiting for an answer he began:

Each dainty dove, and sighing bough
That makes the eve so sweet to see,
To me is far diviner now.
It bears me back to Galilee.

Oh, Galilee, sweet Galilee,
Where Jesus loved so much to be.
Oh, Galilee, sweet Galilee,
Come, sing your song again to me.

He told me it was the Galilee boatman's song, but could not say who had taught it to him or who had written it. On the way back he produced discreetly from a box in the bottom of the boat, bunches of shell necklaces in different colours.

"These are made by my wife and my daughters," he said. "Please buy some." I fingered them. They were of tiny curled shells in delicate shades of green, strawberry, powder yellow and Marina blue. He sold me half a dozen for two piastres. Then produced muslin milk-jug covers with the word "Galilee" embroidered on them. Around the edge more coloured shells dangled as weights. I bought some of these, too.

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In the cool of the afternoon I went to Degania. This colony was founded before the war by seven Russians —one woman and six men. They went through terrible times, disease, famine, siege and a succession of suicides. But they triumphed, and to-day Degania

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is like a little piece of heaven planted down on the shores of the sea. Shady fir groves lead down to the Jordan waters, acres of citrus and fodder flourish on the well-watered soil. The children of Degania are sturdy little creatures, I saw them playing football in the baking sunshine and wondered how they could do it. But I was told that the children thrive in the hot climate. Used to it from birth they are able to stand great heat.

They took me down to the Jordan to see A. D. Gordon's tomb. Gordon was one of the early settlers in Palestine and did a great work among the new immigrants. Near him lay the tombs of other members of Degania. The River Jordan washed silently along the bank beneath. Above, shady eucalyptus trees kept the sun from bleaching the brown earth. I stayed there for some time, gazing at the muddy river, looking back at the shining white houses of Degania.

They left me alone there and I could have sat on till the dusk came. But one of the children, a light red-haired sun-bronzed creature, ran down to tell me tea was ready, and so I left this lovely spot and walked back through the orange groves to the settlement.

At tea they told me of their experiments with mango trees. They hope to grow mangoes extensively and to supply the home market. At present this fruit is brought to England from India by air. The cost is high. Degania hopes to put mangoes on the home market at popular prices.

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I left Tiberias the next morning, passed through Nazareth and visited Geva, one of the *kwutzas* or

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communal colonies. A Dutch Jewess showed me round.

"Yes, you think it's funny, I expect, to find a Dutch Jewess in Palestine for the Jews are not persecuted in Holland. But I simply love it here. It is so wonderful trying to build a home for ourselves."

She told me she was married and had two babies. Her husband and she lived in a dear little bungalow and the children spent the daytime in the large communal crèche where they were looked after in turn by the women of the colony. That was the one thing she did not like. For the children to have, as she put it, "a borrowed mother."

"Every woman has the same feeling," she said. "She wants to work, to help to build Eretz Israel, but she is tormented by doubts for her children—whether it is right to leave them to go out to work, right to let them miss the comforting caress of a mother, the magic kiss that takes away a bruise.

"There are times," she went on, "when at the end of the day I look at my children and feel that I am a stranger to them. The clever things the children say, I get second-hand.

"The working-mother has a double burden—the pull towards her family and the pull towards her work. I wonder which will come out on top in Palestine. I think the latter."

She took me to the poultry section and showed me dozens of white leghorns.

"Every hen is trap-nested," she told me, "and of course we just chuck out the unproductive ones." She showed me the modern incubator and tiny coops full of thousands of fluffy yellow chicks. She introduced me to the prize Friesian bull for which the

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colony had paid one hundred and fifty guineas, gave me a lightning tour of the children's school, the communal dining-room, the gardens and the nurseries. Then she took me on to a roof and pointed out a new road in the valley, winding away like a broad white ribbon into the hills.

"That is the new road from Geva," she said. "We have spent many months building it. The women have helped. It is very hard work and we are near the end now."

She told me how the women in the colony had helped to build the first houses there, when Geva was only a tent-dwelling settlement. She described how they had mixed cement, laid bricks, carted heavy sackfuls of building material from the lorries to the houses.

"But no one minded. We were all so full of hope. And as you see, everything has turned out successfully. Many of us have been able to send to Europe for our parents and bring them out here to live with us, to spend their last days in the Promised Land. The colony is practically self-supporting. One day we hope to be entirely so."

We passed a white-haired old man, walking slowly through the gardens. "He is seventy years old," she said. "He is a German Jew, and was the first grandfather to come to Geva. Here in this colony we have his wife, his daughter, and his granddaughter. They are very happy now."

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Chapter 9

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IT IS A WINTER'S EVENING IN JERUSALEM AND THE rain is drenching the streets, running along the gutters in wide streams. Workers, late from their offices, scurry by with waterproof coats and rubber boots in a hopeless effort to keep dry. The wind whistles and howls through the bare branches of the trees and doubles around the house corners and races along the main thoroughfares. Everyone and everything looks miserable.

A dog slinks along close to the walls, trying to get what meagre shelter it can. A rain-streaked cat flashes across the road, lit up as it runs by the headlights of a swiftly driven taxi. For the Jerusalem taxis know little of skids—and drive blandly on through the greasy streets at hair-raising speeds.

Through the storm an Arab pads along, his soft-footed donkey trotting uncomplainingly beneath a load quite three times too heavy for him. They are a conspicuous couple for when the night comes down few donkeys pass through Jerusalem.

But even though the rain falls there are long queues outside the cinemas, waiting to see the latest films from Europe and America. They come out to Palestine only a few months after their general release and the film fans of Palestine are as keen

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as those in any old-established picture-going country.

There are no short storms in Palestine. When the rain starts it drenches the country for three days at least—floods down the sun-baked wadis, chokes the drains in the towns, leaks into the houses of the Old City of Jerusalem. To the poor it is a tragedy, to the rich a nuisance, to the cinemas wealth.

As the wind rises the rain lashes on the window-panes, streaming down them in a continuous sheet. As the night grows older the cold is more piercing and the policemen are sorry spectacles as they stand immobile and frozen at the street-corners.

But indoors it is warm and cosy.

I am sitting in a Jewish café and an orchestra is playing a selection from *Die Fledermaus*. Around me there is a collection of men and women who have come to Jerusalem from all parts of the world—though mainly Europe. They are all Jews—some journalists, some clerks, some typists, some shop-keepers. The waiters are German or Polish Jews, and nearly all are refugees from Europe. But there is no tension. Everyone is happy, happy with a freedom which is still strange to them although they have learnt to enjoy it fully.

I have ordered a coffee and they have brought me that delicious continental variety—with a layer of thick cream on top of the coffee—called Einspinner. The coffee lies at the bottom of the glass and the cream is piled high on top.

As I sit listening to snatches of French, German, and Hebrew, a girl walks into the café. Her clothes are soaked with rain and her hair is dank and dishevelled. She is a pathetic figure. First she looks around

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timidly, then walks slowly past the orchestra. As she comes nearer I see that her face is pale and her eyes moist with weeping. She seems at a loss, and stands for a moment while she takes in the scene. Then after a little hesitation she bears down on a group of men sitting in a corner. She has brown eyes and hair, she is, of course, a Jewess. When she reaches the men's table she tries to speak, but the words seem to choke her and she stands there gazing at them vacantly. Then she summons up courage and speaks.

"Will someone marry me?"

The question is so blunt that for a moment the men have nothing to say. She does not wait for them to answer, but repeats her question, hopelessly.

"Will someone marry me? The police are looking for me. I have overstayed my permit. I am frightened. I don't want to go back to Germany. I'd rather die."

She bursts into tears and sinks down heavily on a chair one of the men has pulled forward for her. He orders a coffee and she sits there sipping it, warming her frozen hands around the cup. After her outburst she has lost courage and is too shy to look up, but bows her head as she looks at the steaming black liquid. One of the men leans his hand across the marble table and smooths her hands gently. The others are silent. Everyone in the café is waiting to see what will happen.

After a pause one of the men speaks. He is young and his eyes are full of pity. "I will marry you," he says, "let's go to the Rabbi."

In an hour's time they have returned to the café. The simple marriage ceremony has been performed.

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The bridegroom has given his bride a silver trinket, maybe a silver coin, a symbol which clinches the bargain. As they join the group of men, a cheer rises over the tables. One more Jewess has returned to Eretz Israel and is safe.

They sit there talking and drinking coffee. After a little while the girl bids her husband good-bye and arranges to meet him in the café at the same time the next day, when they would go to the Rabbi a second time and get a divorce on grounds of mutual unhappiness. The Rabbi would grant it after a few questions, and the girl would be grateful to the man for ever—grateful for his having saved her from returning to a life of misery and hopelessness.

I watched her walking away out of the café into the night. I knew that her heart was glad within her and I could not feel that what she had done was wrong.

This kind of episode is not rare in Palestine. It is happening frequently in the big towns, in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Haifa—a loveless marriage contracted by a German or Central European Jewess to give her Palestinian nationality. Once she has this the police have no power to deport her.

Only those Jews who have themselves escaped from Central Europe know the sorrow and suffering, the cruelty and the hardship these girls have endured. Only they fully realise what it means to them to be sent back again—away from the Promised Land to a home of darkness, away from Freedom back to despair. The sympathy which they feel for these girls finds its supreme expression in this way.

Are they sinning, they ask themselves, in helping a fellow-creature to escape thus? Can anyone blame

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them for these loveless marriages—lawful, yet against all laws of love ?

I have talked to these Jewesses, asked them if they are happy, and they have answered, " Yes," asked them if they do not miss the romance which should come to every girl once in her life. They have told me that Palestine means more to them than a love affair in this transient life—that the ideal of Zionism is more satisfying than the fleeting joy of marriage in a world whose pace is too great for marriage to last happily. They have told me how they have prayed and pleaded for emigration certificates in their home countries—Germany, Austria, and Poland—how they lived on hope for weeks and weeks, getting up each morning with a song in their hearts because they have felt that that day would be a red-letter day —the day on which they would be given their emigration certificates—and how they have gone to bed with heavy hearts because the certificates have been withheld. They have told me their stories.

Take this case. A Jerusalem lawyer, visiting Haifa on business, told his chauffeur to wait outside an office for him. When, after half an hour, the lawyer emerged, he found the chauffeur had disappeared. But the car was still there, and on the steering-wheel a note which read : " I have been forced to leave my duty. I cannot explain. If you wish to dismiss me I cannot blame you. If you wait I will be back in half an hour."

The lawyer waited. In due course the chauffeur returned, bringing with him a girl. " My wife," he said simply.

This is what had happened : a ship of refugees from Germany had arrived at Haifa, and was making

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ready to sail for Syria. On board a Jewess waited. She had no landing permit, but had managed to get a passage on the boat. She knew that the odds were against her, that she would for a certainty be sent back to Germany, after this tiny glimpse of the Promised Land. But she was brave. She had risked much and might have got so much. She had hoped there might have been a Jew on board ship who would have married her. She had talked to every passenger, but there had been no one. Then one of the crew, more compassionate than the rest, left the ship, and shouted over the customs barrier to a group of men lounging there.

"We've got a Jewess on board here wants someone to marry her. She can't land. She has no permit."

The word went round. One of the group told the chauffeur, who volunteered and went on board with a rabbi and married her. His bride could only speak German, he, only Hebrew and French. No, they did not get divorced. They were one of the few exceptions. To-day that couple are living in Jerusalem—still married. They have two children, a comfortable home, and claim that they are one of the few Jewish couples who can boast of such a marriage with real happiness at the end of it.

But some of the girls get married before they get out of their own country. There are numbers of men of Palestinian nationality who spend their lives travelling to and from Germany and Central Europe —marrying girls there for a fee, and bringing them to the Promised Land and divorcing them there. These men are Jews. I have chatted to some of them and I know that their work is being done out of sheer love for Eretz Israel. They are not on a money-making

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stunt. The fee they are paid is just sufficient to cover their travelling and living expenses.

Under Jewish law, a divorce is obtained by mutual consent and there are many instances where the girl or the man really and truly falls in love with the other and refuses to go to the Rabbi. There is no way of compulsion and it is simply part of the risk these men and women have to take. Many tales are told of the awkward position in which these marriage contractors find themselves. Sometimes they themselves are guilty of losing their hearts and the Jewess who has trusted herself to the man finds that he is loath to let her go. Or, as happens more frequently, the girl falls in love with her "husband" and refuses to set him free.

There is in Palestine to-day a Jew who several months ago opened his doors to a destitute Yemenite girl—a Jewess—who had escaped from the home of a desert sheikh. The sheikh had married her under Moslem law and forcibly taken her away with him, condemning her to a life of great cruelty. For two years she was utterly miserable and endured terrible hardships. At length she became desperate and planned an escape. One night she ran away. She was successful in reaching Palestine where she threw herself on this Jew's mercy. He was at a loss—did not know what to do with her—but compassionately promised the Yemenite she could always have a home in his house. After a few weeks he had to travel to Austria on business. By this time the man and girl had fallen in love with one another, and they were to be married on his return.

But in Austria he met a fair Jewess who told him of her life of suffering and begged him to marry her

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and take her to the Promised Land. After much deliberation he consented, the two agreeing that they would get a divorce directly they landed. But on the way out the blonde Jewess fell in love with her Palestinian husband, and by the time they arrived at Haifa she refused point-blank to divorce him.

To-day you may find him in Tel-Aviv, living there with his Austrian wife. In the same house lives the Yemenite girl, but she is terribly unhappy. So is he, but is helpless. The Yemenite girl dare not go back to her home in Southern Arabia—even if she wanted to—for this would mean certain death—according to the Arab code—for shaming her husband. The Palestinian Jew does not wish to leave his home for he loves the Yemenite girl. The Austrian Jewess will not let him go.

The Yemenite is hot-tempered, like all Yemenites, and as she lives on, watching another woman loving the man she loves, she fosters her jealous spirit, and in her Arabian way nurses revenge. In her bosom she hides a dagger.

Will there be murder in that house one day?

But many of the Jewesses who enter Palestine land on a three months' tourist permit and hope during those three months to secure a husband, after which they go through the divorce ceremony and enter a Jewish land colony—a girls' colony or a *kwutza*, where in the course of their work they may meet some bachelor and settle down to a happily married life, though this is not so usual as one might think. Many of the girls are not fortunate enough during their three months' legal stay in the country, to go through a wedding ceremony and acquire Palestinian nationality, and they are put into prison at Bethlehem.

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There they are allowed to parade in the grounds once a day, and there over the prison walls compassionate Jews try to perform marriages. But the prison wardresses have vigilant eyes and not many girls win freedom in this way, although they may live in the hope that one day they may evade the ever-watchful eyes and have a lawful husband taking them out of prison to happiness.

After their sentence behind bars the girls are taken in closed cars to the boat and deported without a chance to contract a marriage. There is no tenderheartedness on the part of the wardresses, who know what these girls will have to face when they return home. The British women officials would rather send these girls back to death in Central Europe than encourage them to contract these fictitious if lawful weddings.

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Chapter 10

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"WHAT A BLOODY TASTE THIS WATER HAS," SAID MY friend, as we splashed about in the Dead Sea, half out of the water, spitting out the evil tasting brine in which we found it impossible to sink and almost impossible to swim. The description was apt; the water of the Dead Sea must be the most unpleasant beverage in the world, containing as it does a compound of salts such as the maddest, the most malevolent of chemists could scarcely devise.

It provides, however, one of the few forms of recreation enjoyed by the British Colony in Jerusalem and strangely enough I believe they really do enjoy it. On this occasion I had joined a moonlight bathing party, had shed my clothes in one of the special cubicles provided by the enterprising Kallia Café proprietors on the shores of the Dead Sea, and gripping my friend's hand firmly had plunged into the unknown waters.

I say plunged because it is difficult to walk into the Dead Sea. A good crop of stubble and an amazing quantity of rough stones carefully hidden under a layer of soft mud ensures that most bathers are sent headlong into the waters. Then, and then only, does one realise why kind friends told us in gentle words "to be careful not to splash the water in our eyes." The pain of the salt water is so sharp that one is

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blinded for quite five minutes or more, according to the dose. Having recovered from the salting and forgotten that the soles of your feet are quite so sore as they are, you try to swim. But you are too buoyant and try as you may to keep your legs beneath the surface they come bobbing up with every stroke. Next you try to float. That is comparatively pleasant. The sky on a summer's night is like blue velvet and clusters of silver stars shine down on you. But the sensation of turning over on to your tummy afterwards is not a pleasant one. For a breath-taking second you feel your head sinking and your feet coming up into the air.

You decide you have had enough and stumble ashore to change.

My friend and I decided that pretty quickly and found ourselves dressed and enjoying a whisky-and-soda on the café veranda long before the rest of the party had got half-way through their bathing. At week-ends during the hot summer nights there is a dance-band at Kallia and it plays on the veranda ; other nights an amplifier broadcasts dance-music from gramophone records. The floor is tiled but has quite a good dancing surface.

Kallia provides quite a summer Lido for the British colony, who like all British colonies in the East, never mix with the native-born inhabitants in the way that the French and the Italians, the Spanish and the Portuguese have done, although it is true that in recent years there has been a certain slackening in this respect. The fact remains all the same in Palestine, as in other parts of the East, that the English dinner party is purely English, suburban rather than Mayfair, in spite of the boiled shirts.

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The married women maintain as much as possible their English way of living, although they do interest themselves in various social activities among the Arabs. They run their houses in an English way—although with important modifications. The houses are built for heat—tiled floors, thick stone walls, of course, no fireplaces. This is particularly awkward when the winter is sharp. Coal or anthracite stoves have to be placed in the centre of the rooms and long flue pipes trailed up the walls across the ceilings and either out of the window, or through a hole specially knocked in the wall. It is a messy business and it does not really warm the houses.

The British women told me their drink bills are much larger than they would be for people in similar circumstances at home—due to the traditional hospitality of the Englishman abroad which prescribes open house to stranger and visitor.

There is no servant problem as there is at home, for there are plenty of trained boys, either Arab or Sudanese, and within recent years there has been an increase in the number of female domestic servants who have come in with the Jewish immigration from Central Europe.

The daily routine of these British matrons?

In the mornings bridge, varied by shopping. In the afternoons in the hot weather a siesta, in the cold weather tennis or squash. Dusk falls early—then the sundown whisky and soda and short drinks before dinner. Then either a quiet dinner or a dinner party at home or in some friend's house. In Jerusalem the King David Hotel affords facilities which no other town in Palestine enjoys for gala parties on the best European standard.

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What happens to the children?

They are put in the charge of a nursemaid, in some cases English, in most cases local. So far as the climate goes, doctors agree there is no reason why kiddies should not remain in Palestine always—not like the children further east, where it is necessary to send them home at the age of five or six. There are good English schools in Jerusalem, to which a number of the British residents send their children with no intention of sending them home afterwards. The tendency, however, is for the children to be sent to England, and as Palestine is within so much easier reach of London than for example, India, Malaya or China, there is not the same complete break between parents and children.

As one of the mothers said to me: "I don't mind Billy and Mary going home a bit, because I know I could reach them in three days if I wanted to. That makes such a difference, you know."

It is possible to get home comfortably from Palestine for less than £20 on one of the excellent little cargo ships that carry only a few first-class passengers and do the journey in about a fortnight. By air, if one travels by Dutch or French line, one gets home from Palestine within three days as against five by Imperial Airways, and eight by mail-boat to Trieste or Marseilles. The problem of educating British children whose parents live in Palestine is therefore not a very serious one.

For the young English girl coming out from home for a holiday in Palestine, life, as on all Eastern stations, is a bright round of gaiety. With the Navy occasionally in Haifa and the Army and Air Force semi-permanently garrisoned in the country, there

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are endless dances and parties at which the young English girl finds herself the centre of attraction. There are no wallflowers in Palestine !

Occasional visitors at these parties are women who come in from the lonelier stations on the pipe-line, who live in up-to-date bungalows—perhaps one married couple and two or three bachelors, who get bored with each other's company. The woman is glad to come into Haifa or Jerusalem to have her hair done and to look at the shops. I often wonder why these English women do not go to the Jewish quarter of Haifa, Hadar Hacarmel, which is socially "not known" to the English, but has good cheap shops. And hardly any of them take the trouble to go to Tel Aviv, where everything is on European standards, and clothes are more fashionable and cheaper than in Jerusalem.

British women find Palestine on the whole a healthy country, although in the spring-time the majority of them get "gippy tummy." This stomach illness is caused by bacteria in food and by flies. It is unwise to eat anything uncooked, such as fresh vegetables or fruit, particularly in the apricot season which is the worst for "gippy tummy." But very few women are as careful as this with their food, although they skin grapes for their children and bring them up on boiled milk.

Colds due to the sudden change in temperature constitute the greatest trouble in Palestine. The high and dry climate of Jerusalem stimulates people's minds and energies, but from time to time reaction sets in and you become sleepy. In Jaffa and Haifa the climate is humid and relaxing.

Mosquitoes are a great plague although the ano-

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pheles mosquito—the malarial variety—has been practically stamped out in the towns. The kulex mosquito still breeds. Its bite brings out festering sores and sometimes causes septic poisoning. But mosquito boots are not necessary in Palestine although sleeping nets and gauze windows are. Bamber oil —used by the Army—is more strongly scented and better than citronella for keeping mosquitoes away. Unfortunately the effect goes off after two hours and continual application is necessary. Near the Huleh marshes, however, gloves and face-veils as worn by the police are additionally necessary.

A small percentage of English women catch typhoid, and it is best to be inoculated against typhoid before leaving England, and every two years following in Palestine.

. . . . .

Among the British women archæologists working in Palestine there is Dr. Margaret Murray, who was Assistant Professor of Egyptology at the London Museum. She is a petite woman, white-haired, and looks much too frail to go in for the strenuous business of conducting "digs." But she is as energetic as any of them.

When I talked to her in Jerusalem she discussed her somewhat startling theory of the parentage of Jesus Christ. She considered He might be the child of an uncle and niece—it is known that there was a disparity in the ages of His parents. She pointed out that Moses was the son of an aunt and nephew; and as Joseph and Mary were of the same tribe there was every reason to believe they were closely related. She did not consider it probable that they were

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brother and sister—but it was possible, she said. In Old Testament days brother and sister were often married in order to keep the fortune within the family, as was the case in Ancient Egypt.

She told me, too, about the new site of Calvary.

"We know that Calvary was *outside* the city walls of Jerusalem," she said, "for the Romans never crucified their prisoners inside the towns. Now, fragments of what we think must be the old city wall of the time of Christ have been discovered some distance away from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which was built by the old Crusaders and St. Helena on what they thought was the site of Calvary. If we can prove absolutely that these fragments of wall were part of the original city wall, then we shall know at once that Calvary couldn't possibly be where it is now thought to be."

Dr. Murray told me she had really come out to Palestine to study anthropology and was seriously considering living with Bedouins for three years in order to learn their language and study their customs.

Dr. Murray worked with Sir Flinders Petrie for some forty years in Egypt and Palestine, and she told me about Lady Flinders Petrie, who is usually in Palestine, but at the time of my visit was excavating with her husband in Sinai. She told me of her excellent powers of organising and finance, and of her excursions through Syria in a little green motor omnibus she and her husband had bought for the purpose. They were looking for suitable sites for excavation. This bus is famous around the Levant. Lady Petrie does a great deal of sketching—particularly of the discoveries made by her husband. In her riding breeches and

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sandals she is a familiar figure to both Arabs and British, and she can speak Arabic fluently.

Miss Dorothy Garrod is another well-known archæologist working on the Palæolithic period in Palestine. She has been making a section of a prehistoric cave on Mount Carmel. Miss Garrod was the first woman to become president of Section H of the British Association—in 1935.

Miss Dorothy Bate is a palæontologist working in Bethlehem. She has discovered bones of elephants, rhinoceroses and hippopotamuses there—in fact, all tropical fauna. With her works Miss Eleanor Gardiner, a geologist.

Mrs. Barbour has set up an excellent folk museum in the Old City in which she has placed specimens of clothes, working implements, etc., etc., of the modern Bedouins and Arab men and women. It is a valuable collection and throws important light upon various folk-questions in Palestine. Mr. Barbour and his wife are well-known Orientalists whose work in recent years has taken them to Morocco and Egypt.

. . . . .

A further type of English woman in the Holy Land is to be met with in the winter months between November and Easter. They are the wealthy or comfortably-off spinster type who spend the winter in the Mediterranean regions for health reasons, or visit Palestine with religious objects in view. Many of them are semi-eccentric, although speaking generally they are very charming. I may mention one in particular—a little short woman—who bossed everything and everyone with whom she came in contact. She spoke four languages in addition to her native

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English and knew the Near East like a book. She saw that I was of an enquiring turn of mind, and afforded a great deal of amusement to a woman police official who rang me up to tell me the joke, by reporting that she thought I was a spy and that I should be watched.

Another strange type is the officer's widow who moves round from hotel to hotel, oscillating between Palestine, Egypt and Malta, meeting old friends, cadging drinks here and there, and avoiding income tax at home.

. . . . .

There are a number of English, French and American women, mostly American, living in Palestine in circumstances very different from those of the purely British women. These are the women who have left their Western homes to marry Eastern husbands. It is a strange thing, this so-called lure of the East, built up largely upon romantic films and novels, working upon the "escape" complex—the desire to get out of the humdrum routine of home. I have met a number of women here who have married Eastern men and nearly all have regretted it. Yet, as I shall show later in this chapter, when I sent home a story to my paper of a wealthy Arab landowner who had told me of his wish to marry an English bride, dozens of letters poured into the Editor's office and were sent on to me in Jerusalem to deal with.

But first let me describe the life of the Western woman married to an Eastern Christian. There are many Arabs who chiefly through inheritance, some through conversion, practise the Christian religion. They live either in the towns or in such villages as Ramallah or Beitunya, which are composed entirely

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of Christians, both men and women. They have studied either in the American University, Beyrouth, or have lived for some time in England or America. There they have dressed in civilised clothes, eaten and behaved as Westerners. They have met young girls who have been impressed by their romantic stories of desert life, by their tales of wealth, of sunshine and blue skies, have married them and brought them back to Palestine to live.

Once in their native land they have reverted to their old ways of living, have worn Arab clothes, eaten Arab food, and lived in the Arab way.

"After the first day I sat down and wept," an American woman from Ramallah told me.

"I have lived here now for six years and I am so terribly unhappy I don't know what to do. My people in America have died. I have no home to go back to. I have two little children and for their sake I must stay here. I do not understand my husband. I can scarcely eat the food he wants me to cook for him. Everything is so dirty and uncivilised. When he was in America I thought he was a glamorous sheikh with many servants, much wealth and an important position. I found he had none of these things. He just tricked me."

Of course the women in the British colony do not mix with these outcasts from society and they are thus deprived of all social life. As the wives of Arabs they have no position even among the natives and their intellectual opportunities are nil. Granted they have radio sets, but their husbands insist on Arabic music and Arabic talks and news, and this is far worse than having no radio at all.

Take the case of a French woman, the wife of a

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government official now living in Haifa. As it happened her life turned out more or less successfully in the end, although she had to endure terrible suffering for many years. She met her husband in Paris, where he was studying. He was the eldest son of a ruling sheikh near Gaza. She fell in love with him and they were married. The young sheikh at the conclusion of his studies returned to Palestine to his tribal home at Gaza where he tried to break the news of his marriage to his father. For a long time he could not summon up courage. Eventually, after a year had passed he told the old sheikh, who was dreadfully upset, and would not contemplate for a moment his son bringing his bride out to live in his household. He said to him : " Either you go and live with your wife, or stay here without her."

After another twelve months had passed the young sheikh managed to persuade his father to consent to his bringing his wife out from France. Directly she arrived he placed her in the harem, with his father's four wives, and the wives of his brothers. They were all Moslems and spoke Arabic. The French girl could speak no Arabic, and found it terribly difficult to get on with them. At every tea-party they gave the women would order her to come and sit with them, when they would poke fun at her in Arabic and show her off to the guests. It was more than her life was worth not to stay in the room, and she often had to endure this agony for two or three hours several times a week.

After several months the son persuaded his father to see his French bride, and the girl was brought into him, heavily veiled and wearing the orthodox black silk marocain shapeless garments of the Moslem

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high-class women. After a few moments he told her to lift her veil. As it happened she was very beautiful and her looks at once won the old sheikh over to her side. The son was overjoyed. Later the old sheikh discovered the French bride could lay a table better than his wives, put pretty flowers on it and gleaming silver and dishes. So, every time he entertained, he had her in to manage everything. In this way she won a unique position in the household. This, if anything, made the atmosphere in the harem worse, for the wives of the old sheikh were furiously jealous.

After several years the sheikh died. The house was completely disorganised. The French girl did not see her husband for three days, and during that time piercing wails and shrieks filled the house and nearly drove her crazy. In addition the women fasted for the whole of the three days. The French girl was starving, and she used to creep into the kitchen and steal a few olives and a crumb or two of bread if she could find them, and hide the food in her bosom until she got upstairs to her bed where she could eat them safely.

At the end of the three days, after the funeral, the young sheikh took his bride away with him to Tulkaram where—greatly to her joy—she was allowed to remove her veil. She still had to wear a black marocain frock and black shoes and stockings, but she could let her hands dangle outside her cape—expose them to the public gaze—and she could quicken her steps in the street. (It is supposed to be improper for a Moslem woman to walk quickly.) After this transition period the husband allowed her to discard the head-dress altogether and gradually—very gradually—she got back to normal. Then the husband was shifted to Haifa, where he now is, in a Palestine

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Government job, and his wife is one of the happiest persons on earth, entertaining on a European scale, dressed in the latest Paris fashions.

Asked why she endured so much, she said : " He is my husband. I love him and could not leave him."

But only a tiny percentage of these sheikh romances have such a fairy-tale ending. An English woman who begged me not to print her name told me some of the trials she has had to contend with in her marriage to an Arab in Palestine. First her husband did not wish the children to be educated. After many struggles and arguments she managed to have them sent to an Arab school and tried to teach them English at home, with the result that they now have the so-called " country-born " accent and cannot mix with English people. When she was having her babies she could not induce her husband to send for a doctor. She had met her husband in London—he had come there on a visit—and she had thought he was civilised, but all he would provide her with was a half-trained native midwife, who made her so ill she was confined to her bed for three months. She was not allowed to talk to strange men—only to the harem women whose education is nil. And she had to cloth herself in black and veil with three thick veils—her husband being exceptionally fanatical. There was no bath in her home and she had no means by which she could keep her children clean. Her husband washed rarely and was scarcely ever at home. Most days he would sit drinking coffee in the local coffee shop, or talking politics over his hubbul-bubbul at home, entertaining his men friends. His wife, of course, was not allowed to be present at these parties. Surprisingly enough he considered he was

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treating his wife well, and no doubt he was, according to Arab standards.

In addition to these trials she could not induce him to summon a doctor when her children were down with typhoid or when she was seriously ill with malaria. His Arab fatalism could see no reason for this. Then he married a second wife, and later a third. The quarrels in the harem made life a misery. But she is continuing to endure it because she hasn't the courage to go home and admit defeat, to strip her desert romance of its glamour, and acknowledge that her boastings of happiness have come to nothing.

As I said earlier, during my stay in Palestine, I sent home a story of a wealthy Arab landowner, a sheikh, who wished to marry an English bride. I met him at Tiberias where he had come to spend the night, hoping, no doubt, to satisfy his natural desires for the time being with a local outcast Moslem girl, or Jewess. He was twenty-five, quite handsome for an Arab, and said he was prepared to give his wife half his fortune of £20,000 and a three-months' holiday in Europe every year. I shall never forget him leaning back in his chair and saying : "Please don't think me rude, but I want a girl with a beautiful figure—not like—like——" he paused for a word, "not like a football, but slim, slim like a banana." He went on to tell me that he hated women to be veiled, that he would be proud of his wife, want to show her off to everyone—not keep her hidden. He knew that his family would never forgive him, but told me repeatedly that there was nothing to prevent a Moslem having a Christian wife. In fact as the evening progressed he thought it might be quite a good idea to marry me.

Anyway, he told me there was one thing he was

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terribly worried about. "I have a well-furnished modern home in the desert, many servants, several cars, several radios and radiograms, I can speak four languages—but I have a moustache. Do you think I ought to cut it off?" And he fingered his black moustache, lovingly. "I could not bear to part with it," he said, "but for an English girl I would." He preferred a girl between seventeen and twenty-seven, well educated, able to play the piano or sing, a good horsewoman, tennis-player, and able to bring up one child. I do not want a large family," he told me confidentially, his ebony eyes fixed on me : "One little baby—that's all."

As a result of this interview, love-starved English and Scottish girls sent plaintive letters to me and direct to the sheikh begging to be considered, saying how they had always longed for the desert, to get away from the prosiness and monotony, the restrictions and the boredom of home life ; to be given the glamour and the thrills which the modern blasé boy-friends at home somehow cannot give.

I felt as I read those letters that one word had prompted them. Escape ! That word had prompted these letters—these heart-aching appeals from lonely English girls. Escape from the humdrum routine of life, escape from disillusionment, escape from themselves.

I will quote some of the letters to show the type of thing sent me.

I think V. A. from Kent expressed herself in the clearest way. She wrote :

"Thinking men pretty hopeless here and convinced that England's best men have gone to the Colonies, I am quite willing to take a chance with

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the sheikh provided he cuts off his moustache and takes a bath every day. I am tall, blonde and blue-eyed, as graceful as a reed waving in the breeze and my accomplishments include music, and riding. I am 26 years of age. The sheikh is 25, but I wouldn't take advantage of that difference and be bossy. Of course I would expect him to be at my beck and call—but not too much."

V. A. concluded the letter with a P.S. asking me "if I was not the sheikh by any chance?"

I could not understand why V. A. made such a sweeping condemnation of English men. Perhaps she was very badly let down once. But her willingness to "take a chance" suggested that she thought the arrangements could be broken off at any moment she thought fit. That is not the case with Moslems.

P. H. from Nottinghamshire, wished to make sure the Sheikh would not think she was offering herself for sale:

"After reading of your desire to marry an English girl I was fired with a longing to write to you and perhaps one day to know you. I was educated at a high school in Cambridge, my age is 20, I am tall, very slim, fair skinned, light brown hair (not fair), grey blue eyes, and very proud—perhaps people think I am too proud—but who cares! I have a keen sense of humour, adore children, can sing, play tennis and most games, am a keen horse-woman—simply love horses.

"I do want you to realise I am not offering myself for sale. Money cannot buy happiness, but if my letter should appeal to you I am quite willing to spend a holiday with you, so that we could get to know each other better.

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"If, on the other hand, our temperaments were to clash, I should expect to come back to England at once and leave you to continue your quest for happiness. Please do not misunderstand me, for I would marry you if our liking were mutual.

"Sincerely yours,

"P. H.

"P.S. I forgot to mention that I am modern and can dance."

Poor P. H. She had no conception of Arab mentality. Once she had come out to the desert she would have found it hard to return.

J. B. from Yorkshire did not have many illusions :

"DEAR SHEIKH,

"I confess I am not usually intrigued by these 'lonely soldier wanting friend' advertisements one sees in the paper, but your £20,000 does interest me and also that three months' holiday in Europe every year.

"I have always been eager to hear more about the East and these veiled women of yours. It is rather strange to think you should want a wife to show off. You must be very travelled. I was always given to understand that however Westernised one of your faith became you still clung to your original ideas concerning your women.

"But how fantastically Eastern of you to announce that you would like to take an English wife, but you must sit back and make your choice. Why did you not come to England and pick one for yourself. The paper seems to make your story too good to be true. Either you will be fat, with a

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large harem, or violently ugly, or brutal, or else you do not exist at all.

"Prove your authenticity to me. Settle half your fortune on my mother and I will marry you.

"Yours doubtfully,

"J. B.

"P.S. age 18, eyes blue, hair light-brown, complexion—fair, temperamental and selfish."

J. B. may have been selfish in some ways but was she mercenary?

Then a letter from two girl friends writing together from Hampstead:

"My friend and I are very interested in your search for an English bride and wonder if we can help you. Enclosed is a snap of us. We have no good photographs to send you, but assure you we are both fair-haired, blue-eyed, answer your requirements with regard to music, and horsemanship. We don't suggest you marry us both, but choose one of us. We can pass no opinion on your moustache until we see you which we hope will be soon."

I was glad M. T. and S. M. realised that the Sheikh as a Moslem could marry several women, although the glamour of the desert seemed to have a strong pull for both of them.

R. L. also from Yorkshire was amusing. I felt sorry for her, for she evidently knew nothing of life.

"I am true blonde, hair like the waving corn, blue-eyed, rosy complexion, fair, with good teeth, height 4 ft. 11½ ins. in bare feet, very fond of music,

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can sing well, can also play tennis and hockey. Age 26. I leave the rest to you—from your blonde bombshell. R. L."

Then a more formal letter from a sad-hearted widow :

"Mrs. N. C. of London presents her compliments to the Sheikh and would like to hear further from him. She has been a widow for 2½ years, is tall, graceful, slim, has auburn hair, grey eyes, fair skin, speaks German, is fond of music, can sing, play bridge, the violin, dance, ride and play tennis. Her late husband was an officer in the British Navy. Mrs. C. would love desert life, and do all she could to make the prince a happy and proud man. She is a good hostess and entertainer."

I should have thought a widow would have acquired some common sense, but Mrs. N. C. seems sillier if anything than the love-sick young girls.

A pathetic letter from "Peggy" of Essex :

"I am thoroughly sick of English life. I have no parents. I am 22, blonde and graceful, fond of horses, can play piano and sing, am a keen tennis player. I would prefer you *with* the moustache so please do not shave it off.

"Wealth does not make any difference. Happiness means more to me than all the riches in the world. If I can do anything in any way towards making you happy I will do so gladly.

PEGGY."

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D. B. from Wiltshire thinks Scots women less likely to be taken in than English :

"I have really no outstanding features. I am 26, medium height and build, fair, blue-eyed, fair skin. I play a good game of tennis. I should not mind the gentleman in question having a moustache. I think it adds dignity to a man's appearance, so if we could arrange a meeting which might lead to something else, there would be no need for him to shave it off.

"Might I add that I am a Scot and would be pleased to communicate with the gentleman direct, should he desire it."

E. D. from Hampshire apparently fell head-over-heels in love with the Sheikh. This is what she wrote :

"I have read your request in the paper and I should be in heaven if you would answer my letter. I have always admired an Eastern man, and I am very keen on living in the desert. It is the dream of my life to get away from England, but I have never had a chance. I have never fallen in love before, but somehow, I seem to know that once I have seen you, I would like you very much. People say that I am attractive. I am tall, have naturally wavy copper hair, and very big blue eyes. If you would care to have a photo I should be only too willing to send you one. I am 20 years old."

One girl sent a card addressed as follows :

"The Sheikh,
The Arabian Desert,
Arabia."

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Here is the case of a boy writing for his sweetheart. Strange what queer things men will do. He is C. P. from Warwickshire :

"The girl I am writing for would entirely suit his Highness' taste. She is exceptionally pleasant and graceful with a delightful personality, fairly big built, fair complexion, blue eyes, not yet 21. She is thrilled by this venture and I have promised to do all I possibly can for her. I feel confident she would come up to all your expectations. Eagerly awaiting a reply."

What story lay behind this letter? Had the boy and girl friend quarrelled? Or was he making this sacrifice because he thought that she would be happier with the glamour and romance of the desert—happier than if she settled down with him to the prosaicness of urban life? Or, was the writer the girl herself?

Reading between the lines of all the letters I received, I am convinced they were prompted by a feverish anxiety to escape from modern life. It seems a pity that the life these girls lead in England to-day should cause them to rush at the first chance of marriage with an Arab, to desert their civilised homes for a life of sordidness and deterioration in the East. Admitting that some of the letters might have been "leg-pulls," there were so many that a considerable number of them must have expressed a genuine desire for a sheikh lover. Needless to say I sent none of the letters to the sheikh in question. There are already too many tragedies of the kind in the East.

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Chapter II

★

THERE IS NO BETTER WAY OF INTRODUCING MISS Margaret Nixon than by a joke which she tells against herself.

A British policeman just arrived in Palestine to join the Palestine police-force met Miss Nixon at a party.

"Oh!" he said, "I've heard a lot about you, and your work. You're the lady who saves girls?"

Miss Nixon nodded.

"Will you please save one for me to-morrow evening?"

. . . . .

I met Miss Nixon first over a cup of tea. She was full of entertaining tales such as this. But I knew that it was just a mask which she is fond of using to cover up the excellent work she does.

Miss Nixon is a Palestine Government official in charge of the welfare work among the women of the country. She runs the women's prison and the girls' reformatory, visits homes, patches up family quarrels and heals broken hearts.

She is a tall statuesque woman, blue-eyed, grey-haired, with an uncanny knack of knowing just the right kind of things one appreciates for tea. She gave me lovely home-made cakes, delicious hot

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buttered scones—the only hot buttered scones I tasted in Palestine—and better still—milk that had not been boiled and did not have wretched little bits of cream floating about in it—as one finds in most houses in Palestine.

She offered to take me around the women's prison and the reformatory and she told me of the difficulties she had to meet in her work. She told me how dangerous it was for an Arab girl to return home after serving a sentence for any shameful offence, for her family would try to murder her. I knew that Miss Nixon had done a wonderful work in this way, bringing police pressure to bear on the families to prevent such crimes. She told me of the Jewesses who served terms for illegal immigration. She described how the Bedouin strayed across the borders often to be arrested by the police. We discussed the incidence of immorality in Palestine—among the Jewish women and the Arab women.

Then she took me around her lovely old Arab house.

"Once," she said, "it belonged to a sheikh."

The walls were quite two feet thick, the ceilings arched and beautifully embossed. Outside, a little flagged courtyard separated what was originally the harem part of the house from the men's quarters.

Miss Nixon pointed out how obviously superior were the men's quarters. The women had to put up with the worst part of the house.

At the side entrance she showed me an inverted Roman capital now used as a doorstep.

"One day Sir Flinders Petrie came here to tea. It was pouring with rain, but he suddenly asked: 'Can I go out and look at your doorstep?' He got up and walked out, getting simply drenched, and

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looked solemly at the doorstep. 'Yes,' he said, 'that's a Roman capital, inverted.'

Miss Nixon had trodden on it for years without discovering it.

Miss Nixon's maid is an Armenian—a good-hearted woman of about thirty-five, whose entire family—a very large one—was murdered by the Turks. She wore a pink kerchief over her head when I saw her and a voluminous white skirt and blouse. She was a little short-sighted—but an excellent servant.

. . . . .

Miss Nixon took me to Bethlehem one Saturday morning. It was cold as are most winter days in the Palestine uplands.

I thought how strange it was that a prison should have been built in Bethlehem—in the one place in the world in which the Man was born who died to save people from sin.

Before we reached the prison Miss Nixon stopped the car and we got out to inspect the remains of an old Roman aqueduct running through a villager's garden. She told me it was a place few tourists were shown. Donald followed us. Donald is Miss Nixon's Aberdeen terrier, almost as famous as Miss Nixon herself.

At the prison gates we were met by a white-uniformed wardress dangling a large key. Bethlehem prison from the outside does not look like a prison at all. It is more like an English country residence. But inside, of course, everything is locks and bars.

To many people still the word prison conjures up a picture of underground cells with little ventilation or light, scanty food, and absolute misery. But this prison has barred rooms *upstairs* and from their big

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glass windows can be seen the most glorious views of the Field of the Shepherds, the broad stretches of olive groves and hillside rolling away towards Jerusalem. I don't think there can be many prisons with such a lovely panorama.

But there are no heating arrangements. The floors are stone and I felt this must be very trying for some of the women prisoners, particularly those from Europe—Jewesses—who were used to home comforts.

I was taken first into a large ground-floor room where a group of women were making camel-saddles for the Palestinian Police. They were most attractive—putty grey and deep navy blue with the monogram of the Police worked in the centre. I had seen them at a distance on Armistice Day on Mount Scopus when a section of these camel-mounted police took part in the service. The women who were making them were Arab fellahin—one woman had a child of six years old with her. Miss Nixon told me the mothers are allowed to keep their children with them when they go to prison. In a corner of the room two Jewesses were at work. They were pretty girls and I thought it seemed wrong for them to be kept in prison under the same conditions as the Arab women who are used to such a low standard of living and do not feel the hardship to any great extent. In fact many of the Arab fellahin women actually enjoy prison life.

I wonder why the Palestine Government has not provided a special detention place for illegal immigrants, for surely it is not right to punish them along with thieves and murderers.

Often the women are pregnant when admitted to prison and there are people who say that they are not properly cared for while in this state, and that

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medical attention is not usually given till the last minute. Against this I should like to point out that the Arab women who are admitted to Bethlehem prison have probably never had medical care in their lives, and have usually been attended, if at all, by a native midwife.

I was shown upstairs into a room where a group of Russian women were sewing. They seemed quite happy. From their window I looked out on to the parade-ground. There were half a dozen or so women prisoners exercising themselves there. I looked at the wall over which Miss Nixon told me some of the Jewesses had tried to contract marriages to avoid deportation.

Then she took me downstairs and showed me the kitchen. Everything was very clean and the food looked good and wholesome, although of course exceedingly plain, mostly vegetables.

. . . . .

We left Bethlehem and drove back to Jerusalem, down past Herod's Gate to the Girls' Reformatory. It is an old Arab house, an ideal building for such a purpose. The girls were in their class-room when we arrived. They were dressed in a rather attractive grey uniform. Miss Nixon had them brought downstairs and into the large open-air courtyard where they danced English country dances for my benefit. They were very good at it and I thoroughly enjoyed hearing such tunes as "If all the world were paper" and "Gathering Peascods" so far from home. While I sat there Miss Nixon showed me some of the handicraft the girls do. There were fine specimens of needle-work—duchess sets with Bethlehem cross-

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stitch work, table linen. Miss Nixon gave me a little cloth as a souvenir. It had a design of cypress trees on it.

Among the girls she pointed out a tiny dwarfed creature whose face was a mirror of sadness. I was told how a few days earlier she had smiled for the first time in her life. That smile had been the result of weeks of patient work in the reformatory trying to make the child believe life meant her to be happy. She was brought into the reformatory for stabbing her sister with a knife. Miss Nixon discovered that her mother was dead, her father lazy, and this little girl—only eleven years old—had been forced to cook, wash, and keep house for her father and two younger sisters. Her nerves had become terrible and one day when one of her sisters annoyed her in some trivial way she had swung round and knifed her.

But that sort of case, Miss Nixon told me, was not unusual. In her tours around the country-side she comes across suffering of which English people simply have no conception.

This ameliorative work that Miss Nixon is doing in Palestine is, of course, entirely new to the Arabs. In pre-war days there was no Government service of the kind and whatever welfare work was done was done under difficulties by foreign missions, which, however, confined their activities to the free population. Reform work within the prisons themselves was brought in by the British and it was fortunate that the British service is able to call upon people of the capacity and understanding of Miss Nixon.

. . . . .

"I don't want to go to hospital. I might see a

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man. I'd rather stay in my own home and die, if I must."

This from a Moslem woman.

" I shall not allow my wife to go to hospital. She will not be able to be veiled and she will, doubtless, be treated by a man doctor. I should prefer her to die than to suffer this disgrace."

This from the Moslem husband.

Such opposition as this to medical treatment was a common thing a few years ago in Palestine, for the Moslem population were then only just beginning to realise what public health meant. The Turkish Government—before the British Occupation in 1917–18—had no hospitals or clinics, the only medical services maintained being those of foreign communities, mostly French or Jewish. When the British Government hospitals started, they had to contend with great reluctance on the part of the Moslem women to take advantage of the facilities offered. Superstition and fear were the two most powerful factors and steps had to be taken eventually by the Supreme Moslem Council to persuade Moslems that no harm would befall their womenfolk.

" At first we had to allow the Moslem women to stay veiled in the hospital wards," Miss Cowan, Matron of the Government Hospital at Jerusalem, told me when I discussed the matter with her. " Then, very gradually, as the women realised that they were being treated entirely by women nurses they took off their veils. When they returned to their homes, restored to health, they praised the treatment they had been given, and now to-day we have women clamouring for admittance, particularly in maternity cases. Often we have no room, but the women just

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land on our doorstep about to have their child and we simply have to take them in."

Miss Cowan took me around the Jerusalem hospital, showed me the British section, the maternity wards and the prison section.

The British section is situated in Bute House facing the Russian Compound. It is a large, pleasant building.

The maternity wards are in a separate house with a shady garden in front. There were mostly Bedouin and Arab village women there when I visited the house and they were all wearing white caps.

"We can't persuade these women to take them off," Miss Cowan told me. "They are terribly upset if a nurse suggests they remove them."

She took me across the Russian Compound to the main hospital where she showed me the men's wards under the charge of Arab and Jewish nurses; in one instance, an Armenian. She showed me the nurses' own little sick bay.

Then she took me into the women's prison section. Cases are brought there from Bethlehem prison and a wardress is on guard day and night. I saw a woman who had quarrelled with a neighbour, had attempted to stab her, but had got the worst of the fight herself. She was young and I wondered if she had been jealous over a love-affair. She lay silently weeping, her dark face looking darker and swarthier than usual against the whiteness of the sheets. In another bed lay an old Bedouin woman. She had been caught stealing chickens from an Arab house. Taken to prison she had sickened with pneumonia and was dying. There were no friends with her, no one from her tribe to comfort her, no sister or cousin. She was meeting death alone.

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I passed into the men's prison section. Here I saw criminals from the Central Prison in Jerusalem. One had concussion, another a broken arm. Here an armed policeman was on guard.

After my tour I sat in Miss Cowan's office and drank tea. She told me why she thought the nursing life a good one.

Most of the British nurses in Palestine are in the Government service but there are a number of Royal Air Force sisters in the hospital at Sarafand. Speaking generally, R.A.F. sisters have the best time. Like the military and nursing sisters wherever British forces are serving, they are of gazetted rank. They have a good social life—they are invited to dinner parties and dances.

The Government nurses do not have quite such a good time, but on the whole they manage to get a lot of fun out of life. In many cases after they do their number of years in Palestine and have saved a bit, they go back to England and open up private nursing homes, or boarding-houses. In the civil nursing service, sisters come from England at the age of thirty, fully qualified as State Registered nurses and midwives, with, of course, experience in big British hospitals. They go to Palestine to give instruction, and in the British section of the Government Hospital in Jerusalem, to nurse British patients. In the Arab section of the hospital they may have to attend special cases, wealthy Arab patients, or even Bedouin if the case is extremely serious; but they have been warned of this possibility before they leave home. Except for such cases the British nurses simply supervise the work of the Arab nurses.

The British nurses get their jobs through the

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Colonial Overseas Nursing Association whose function it is to provide British nurses for all Colonial services. It also provides private nurses for British communities overseas. But so far as Palestine is concerned there are no British nurses in private practice at the moment, although a couple of years ago there was a number.

Three months' leave is given at the end of a three years' contract and the passage home is paid for. In addition a fortnight's local leave is granted every year and the nurses usually spend it either in Egypt or in the Lebanons. During the holidays, nurses are given a special ration allowance of four shillings per day. Yearly salary is £150 rising by £10 a year to £180, with free accommodation and rations. If employed in a mental hospital in Palestine there are extra allowances.

Matrons receive £180 rising by £12 to £240 plus £12 duty allowance. If employed at mental hospitals they receive an extra allowance, too.

Superintendents of midwifery, of whom there are five in Palestine, receive £288 rising to £360 with £24 cost of living allowance.

In Palestine there are five Government hospitals, two Government mental hospitals, and one municipal hospital at Gaza. The five main hospitals are at Jerusalem, Nablus, Jaffa, Haifa, and Safed, with a smaller one at Beersheba run entirely by Palestinian nurses. These nurses begin training at the age of 16 or 17. After a three years' course they become graduates, but they can rise no further.

The Jewish Hadassah hospitals are very largely self-contained, and they do their own training of their own probationers in the Hebrew language.

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As in all parts of the East, one of the difficulties that the Government hospitals have to meet is that the Jewish patients must only eat *kosher* meat. But in Palestine this question is not so acute as only the Jewish infectious diseases are treated at Government hospitals, all the other Jewish cases being treated in their own hospitals.

Outside the hospitals, Palestine is remarkable for the great number of women doctors which it possesses. This is due largely to the immigration of Jews from Central Europe. The story is told of a man who fell asleep by a window and let his hand rest on the sill. At once three women passing by rushed up to seize the proffered pulse and claim the patient.

Although in 1935–36 there were 457 women doctors in Palestine and 306 women dentists, there was only one Arab woman doctor and one Arab woman dentist, both graduates from the American University, Beyrouth, and except for four or five British women, all the rest were Jewish. The average number of nurses qualifying for the graduates' certificate is about twenty-five. Among the midwives there are 264 Jewesses, 187 Arabs, although the Jewish community at present is less than half the size of the Arab.

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There is only one British woman doctor in Transjordan and she lives in the capital, Amman. She is Miss C. Purnell, and she has worked in Transjordan for many years. To-day she is a little old lady, but she still carries on running her tiny hospital, supervising her Scottish matron.

I called to see Miss Purnell on one of my visits to Amman. She could not understand why anyone

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should wish to see her, she felt she was so uninteresting. But after a while she consented to tell me stories of her adventures in the desert, how she had ridden many miles by night across the sandy wastes to attend sick women among the Bedouin tents, or how she had crossed a dangerous raiding area to save the life of a new-born Moslem baby.

Miss Purnell in her youth was a real Florence Nightingale of the desert. But now she is a lonely woman, her eyes are not strong, and she has been forced to give up a great deal of her work, although she still visits the harem women, where, of course, no man doctor would be allowed.

She spoke to me at length about the prevalence of trachoma and told me she had had the little hospital originally built to deal with trachoma cases. Miss Purnell is a surgeon and in the hospital she still operates on the Arab women. Her bungalow lies half-way down one of the hills which slope into Amman. It is a pleasant little house—stone-built, warm in winter, cool in summer. There is no sign of luxury in the bungalow—but there is an enormous quantity of books, and there is no doubt that it is the home of an Englishwoman. On the wall over one of the doorways hangs a sword. She saw me looking at it and said : " Yes, I'm a soldier's daughter. That was my father's sword. I am very proud of it."

As I talked to her a little Arab boy came to the door. His eyes were paining. Could she do something to stop it ?

We stayed talking for a little longer, then she begged to be excused, and I stood outside her bungalow and watched her leading the little fellow up the hill-side to the hospital. Her farewell words

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still rang in my head—"the next time I saw the Cotswolds to think of her."

(Miss Purnell was born in the Cotswolds.)

. . . . .

People have no idea of the amount of money which pours into Palestine—particularly at Easter—to support the scores of missionary institutions at work there. It comes in the form of free-will offerings from churches, chapels, and religious organisations all over the world. In Nazareth, for example, the hills surrounding the town are covered by foreign mission buildings, such as the German School, which is as big as an English city hall and as imposing.

Such missions, financed by the entire Christian world, carry on excellent work in the Holy Land. Many of them are old-established and many of the missionaries have been in their particular schools and hospitals for a lifetime. All nationalities are represented—American, British, French, German, Belgian, Italian, and many others. Perhaps the best work is done for orphan children—Arab boys and girls left penniless and homeless. The boys are taught trades, the girls domestic work, and at the same time learn at least one other language than their native Arabic. This enables them to go out into the world and make a reasonable living. There is in Palestine a demand for orphanage-trained domestic servants in pensions and hotels.

Among the best-known missionaries in Palestine one may mention the Rev. W. M. Christie of Haifa —the Scottish Presbyterian missionary who has lived there for some fifty years. Neither he nor his wife has lost that Scottish accent.

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It would be tedious to describe the work of the many Palestine missions, for each institution, though differing in detail, is organised on the same general lines. One of the most interesting, I think, is the British Church Mission to the Jews, which functions just inside the Jaffa Gate of the Old City. It has a large school to which Orthodox and Yemenite Jews send their children. The education is free and there is no pressure exercised to persuade the scholars to take the Christian faith. No doubt it is due to this that the school is always full and has a long waiting list. Of course, Christianity is taught in school hours and the children, if they wish, can ask for Baptism. But this is not suggested to them and the request has to come spontaneously from them.

The mission was started in 1809 when the Church Mission to Jews was inaugurated in London. The story of the early years of the Society's work in Jerusalem is full of romance and thrills. Earthquakes, rebellions, plagues—they are just a few of the things that had to be met and conquered. In 1838 some buildings were purchased opposite the Citadel of Jerusalem inside the Old City and rooms were set aside for various purposes. The building lay in a piece of waste ground, which had once been part of the garden and palace of Herod the Great, but was at that time little more than a camping-ground for caravans of camels and donkeys, bringing vegetables and other goods into the Old City.

Nearby was an ancient but dry well into which animals' carcases and other rubbish was cast and left to poison the air. Farther away the so-called Pool of Hezekiah contained stagnant water full of malaria-carrying mosquitoes. This pool still exists. Here

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were laid the foundations of what has grown to-day to be the Society's Church, Schools, Hostel, Printing Press, Workshops, and Sales Depot. The Girls' Day School near the church has 150 pupils. There is a Men's Industrial Department consisting of carpentry and printing sections.

I was taken around this Mission by Mrs. Hornstein who with her husband worked there for many years. They are now retired and living in Talbieh. She told me of a discovery her husband had made while digging in the grounds of the mission buildings—he had found a wonderful mosaic floor which the Dominican Fathers said was part of the floor of Herod's dining hall. It had designs of water-fowl and birds as described in the Old Testament. Mrs. Hornstein took me through the school and showed me rows of dark-eyed kiddies lisping English. The girls are taught Hebrew, Arabic, and English among their other studies. In the upper forms I heard the pupils reading out Norse legends. The teachers were mostly Arab girls and Jewesses, although an English mistress had charge of the kindergarten. Miss Ruth Clark is head mistress and had held this position for many years. She is energetic, with a wealth of understanding behind her grey eyes, and the children adore her.

Christ Church itself is a simple building. It has the atmosphere of an old English church. Above the altar there are some rather lovely stained-glass windows. The aisle is carpeted and the pews are padded—both of which are excellent ideas many English churches might copy. Mrs. Hornstein told me that a collection has been started for £1000 to restore the roof which is leaking badly.

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Another mission in Palestine is the British Mission to Mediterranean Garrisons. One of the chief workers in this is Miss Emma Harrison, and I think she is the oldest woman missionary in the Holy Land —just seventy-two. This mission has Homes in Cairo, Alexandria, Gibraltar, Haifa, and Jerusalem, and provides recreation huts, coffee, games, and lectures for the Tommies. In Jerusalem Miss Harrison organises tours around the holy places.

"We try to interest the men in the country," she told me, "for they miss the liveliness of home. Life in Jerusalem is very uninteresting."

Miss Harrison spent twenty-four years working in India before coming to Palestine. Her face is lined and her hair white, but she works as hard as she ever did, to put it in her own words.

"It cuts my heart to see stalwart, fine-looking British policemen striding along the streets of Jerusalem and to know that they have no religious feeling whatsoever," she explained to me.

Miss Harrison is a dear old thing and does marvellous work visiting the soldiers and police in hospital.

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Chapter 12

★

IT WAS FRIDAY AND THE MOSLEM SHOPS NEAR THE Church of the Holy Sepulchre were shut. The silence was strange as I stood in the broad road which leads from the church to King David Street ; I missed the shouting and arguing of the bazaar dealers and the clip-clip of asses' feet.

It was an imposing building before which I waited. Three broad steps led up to the front door, which was of heavy teak. Above a four-storied house reared itself into the sky. This house is, in fact, one of the finest houses in the Old City. For myself, I have seen no better there, and I have combed the streets day after day and have the tiny alley-ways and lanes by heart.

In a few moments the heavy door swung inwards and a youth who was neither Arab nor Jew and yet seemed to have something of each in him, beckoned me inside. It was gloomy but I could see it was an old Arab house and I think it must have been built by a rich man for the walls were beautiful and the ceiling was exquisitely arched and vaulted.

"You wish to see Madame Einsler?" the boy asked. I nodded and he disappeared down a passage into the gloom.

While I waited an old carpet attracted my

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attention. It seemed a good one, a Bokhara—but its quality and colour were lost in the shadows.

Presently the boy reappeared and beckoned me towards a flight of stone steps leading down into what I thought would be a basement. But I was mistaken. At the foot it opened out into a large square courtyard full of flowering shrubs and shady trees. In the centre a fountain tinkled, its silver stream accentuating the beauty of the garden. Around the courtyard the house rose in four tiers to the blue sky. On each storey a cool balcony—it must be a lovely home in the summer.

I followed the boy around one corner of the garden, dived beneath a veranda into a long stone-floored room where he left me, shutting the doors as he went. Inside there were three large tables—on each a model. I was examining one of them when the door opened slowly and a little old lady entered. She must have been about eighty. Her hair was white and had been plastered down smoothly on her head. Her eyes were pale but sympathetic and her plump figure gave one a comfortable feeling.

"Good afternoon," she greeted me, in a slightly foreign accent. "I am Mrs. Einsler. You wish me to tell you about the Temple models?" She walked over to a shelf from which she took a Bible, opened it, and handed it to me.

"Will you sit here," she said. She brought forward a chair, facing the first model. "From here you get the best view. No thank you, I will stand. It is better to show you everything.

"This is the model of the Tabernacle of the Desert of the Children of Israel," she began. "Have a look at it, and then please read what I have given you. Exodus chapter xl."

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I looked at the Tabernacle. It was a good-sized model of a tent, something like a huge marquee, oblong, with a group of figures in front in various attitudes of worship.

Then I read :

" And the Lord spake unto Moses saying,

" On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation.

" And thou shalt put therein the ark of the testimony, and cover the ark with the vail.

" And thou shalt bring in the table, and set in order the things that are to be set in order upon it ; and thou shalt bring in the candlestick, and light the lamps thereof.

" And thou shalt set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the testimony, and put the hanging of the door to the tabernacle.

" And thou shalt set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation.

" And thou shalt set the laver between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and shalt put water therein.

" And thou shalt set up the court round about, and hang up the hanging at the court gate.

" And thou shalt take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle and all that is therein, and shalt hallow it, and all the vessels thereof : and it shall be holy.

" And thou shalt anoint the altar of the burnt offering, and all his vessels, and sanctify the altar : and it shall be an altar most holy.

" And thou shalt anoint the laver and his foot, and sanctify it.

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"And thou shalt bring Aaron and his sons into the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and wash them with water.

"And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.

"And thou shalt bring his sons, and clothe them with coats;

"And thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office, for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations.

"Thus did Moses: according to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he.

"And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up.

"And Moses reared up the tabernacle, and fastened his sockets, and set up the boards thereof, and put in the bars thereof, and reared up his pillars.

"And he spread abroad the tent over the tabernacle, and put the covering of the tent above upon it; as the Lord commanded Moses.

"And he took and put the testimony into the ark, and set the staves on the ark, and put the mercy seat above upon the ark:

"And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the vail of the covering, and covered the ark of the testimony; as the Lord commanded Moses.

"And he put the table in the tent of the congregation, upon the side of the tabernacle northward, without the vail.

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"And he set the bread in order upon it before the Lord; as the Lord had commanded Moses.

"And he put the candlestick in the tent of the congregation, over against the table, on the side of the tabernacle southward.

"And he lighted the lamps before the Lord; as the Lord commanded Moses.

"And he put the golden altar in the tent of the congregation before the vail:

"And he burnt sweet incense thereon; as the Lord commanded Moses.

"And he set up the hanging at the door of the tabernacle.

"And he put the altar of burnt offering by the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation, and offered upon it the burnt offering, and the meat offering; as the Lord commanded Moses.

"And he set the laver between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and put water there, to wash withal.

"And Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet thereat;

"When they went into the tent of the congregation, and when they came near unto the altar, they washed; as the Lord commanded Moses.

"And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work.

"Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

"And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode

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thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

"And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys:

"But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up.

"For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys."

"You have finished," the little old lady asked. I nodded and handed the Bible back to her, and she went on.

"This tent is the Tabernacle. It is made of golden pillars—surrounded by curtains—to prevent the Gentiles or the animals from entering and desecrating the holy place. Outside the Tabernacle you can see models of the children of Israel. Some are priests—they are those dressed all in white, with a cap, a long robe with a girdle and bare feet. There are women too, carrying instruments. One man is clasping a bull's horns, bending his head on the bull's horns and praying. Here you see the slaughter place. Here is where the sacrificial animal was cut in pieces before the burnt offering was made to the Lord."

Mrs. Einsler lent over the table with a wooden baton and pointed to each object.

"Not the whole bull was put on the altar—only certain parts, you know. The altar is outside the Tabernacle. It was made of wood, overlaid with brass with four golden horns on the corners. It was hollow inside—if it had been solid it would have been

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too heavy for the Children of Israel to have carried in their wanderings in the wilderness, crossing the Jordan, into the Promised Land, where they pitched it in Gilgal, which is near Jericho, in the Jordan Valley. The altar was carried on the shoulders of four men by poles run through—like an eighteenth-century chair.

"Every detail has been carefully copied. Look. My father, Dr. Schick, made it and the other two models you see. He had to spend years carefully studying and he decided as a hobby to build as accurately as possible models showing the progressive history of the Tabernacle and the temple which later crowned the sacred rock of Mount Moriah—now enclosed in the sacred Moslem building."

She was a proud daughter, and her face was full of happy memories as she spoke of her father's work.

"Here is the brazen laver which contained water for the priests to wash before entering into the holy place, and this is the sanctuary. My father made two kinds of roofs—one flat, one pointed. Then he was convinced that it could not have been a flat roof —for the rain-water would not have run off it. It says in Exodus that 'one pole went right through'— so he decided this pole must have been the central beam of a sloping roof.

"This tent has four covers. In Exodus xxvi, 14, you read——" and she handed me the Bible again.

> "And thou shalt make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering above of badgers' skins."

"Under these two coverings the Children of Israel were ordered to place a cloth of goats' hair and a

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covering of linen embroidered the same as the veil with cherubims and plant designs. You can see them."

She lifted up the four coverings of the tent carefully, one by one.

"Blue and white were the supreme colours in the Tabernacle—there were also red and crimson, scarlet and purple.

"Down the side of the Tabernacle there were aisles for the priests to sleep at night—a kind of cloisters—so that the holy place was always guarded. The Tabernacle was supported down the centre by a row of wooden poles—eight of them—all wood overlaid with gold, pointed with silver tips.

"Now please read Exodus xxvi, 31."

"And thou shalt make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made:

"And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver.

"And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy.

"And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place.

"And thou shalt set the table without the vail, and the candlestick over against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south: and thou shalt put the table on the north side.

"And thou shalt make an hanging for the door

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of the tent, of blue and purple, and scarlet and fine twisted linen, wrought with needlework.

"And thou shalt make for the hanging five pillars of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, and their hooks shall be of gold : and thou shalt cast five sockets of brass for them."

"These two places here are the two Holies—one the Holy, the shape of an oblong, the other the Holy of Holies, the shape of a cube. There was one gold candlestick in the Holy with seven branches—like the Hanuka candlesticks which the Jews light, one a day for eight days, just before Christmas, in memory of the Maccabees' victory, when the oil in their lamps was miraculously replenished, making their victory possible."

Mrs. Einsler put her thin fingers into the tent and drew out a tiny gold model of the candlestick.

"Here," she said, "at the end of each branch there was a golden cup with oil and a wick and it used to burn day and night because the Tabernacle had no windows. Opposite the lamp was the table of shewbread, of wood overlaid with gold. On top twelve trays in rows of six each. There is a great controversy about the table. I don't know what your theory is ?"

I had no theory—so I just smiled and hoped she would go on without revealing my ignorance.

"Some people believe the shewbread table was overlaid with gold and the twelve loaves were placed on the top. My father believed that as the bread was put there fresh and had to remain there for a week—there was only a weekly baking—and the priests had to eat it at the end of the week"—she took a breath —"my father believed that it must have had six shelves, divided into two compartments each—to

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house the twelve loaves of bread. So long as it did not mildew it would have been quite easy to soak it and eat it.

"And here"—she leant over the table farther, and pointed with her baton—"here is the altar of incense—wood overlaid with gold—so that the holy place had a sweet scent. You must not forget," and she bent her head and looked at me up from under her eyebrows. I was afraid I had forgotten before she began to tell me.

"You must not forget," she repeated, "that the greater part of the Israelites were idolaters and through Moses they came to believe in the new religion. The altar of incense would represent prayer. As the smoke ascends from the fire so our prayer from our heart ascends to God. It is a very beautiful idea.

"The Holy was divided from the Holy of Holies," she went on, "by a curtain which was always drawn except on the Day of Atonement, when the high priests entered and sprinkled blood at the foot of the Ark. The Ark is a wooden box overlaid with gold. Here it is."

She took it out of the Holy of Holies and handed it to me for inspection.

"These are the two cherubim," she said, pointing to two minute figures on the cover. "The lid can be taken off. Inside are the Ten Commandments on the two tables of stone, and beside these there should be a pot of manna and Aaron's rod which flowered in one night—but these two things have got lost. They were very tiny; my father spent a long time making them."

She went on to describe the story of Eli and Samuel

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and how the Tabernacle was four hundred years old when David became king.

"By that time," she said, her forehead puckering with seriousness, "the Tabernacle must have looked very old and travel-worn. So David made up his mind he must build a house of stone to the Lord. First he bought the land. Then he built a wall around it. Then he prepared the building. He had the stones hewed beforehand, and he must have had a plan so that the workers knew what kind of stone they wanted and the size of the stones which had to be ready. They had to be worked to such a degree of accuracy that no hammer was to be heard when the Temple was being put together.

"But we know that David was a man of war and of bloodshed," said Mrs. Einsler, shaking her head sadly as she spoke, "and the Lord did not wish him to build the Temple. But David had a son, Solomon, who was wise and clever and peaceful, and we know that he built the first temple. I will now show you this in the next model."

I got up and she turned my chair round, facing the table behind me.

"This is the Temple of Solomon, on Mount Moriah. It took seven years to build and was magnificent. The buildings encircling the Temple had four entrances on the south side, four on the north, one main entrance on the east and none on the west.

"In the south-east corner was the fortress of David."

She took a large piece off the model and handed it to me to look at, then replaced it solemnly. The model is made most ingeniously. Nearly the whole of the top is removable in pieces, disclosing earlier stages

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beneath ; the model is in fact a series of models with the earlier beneath in correct historical order. She pointed out a small village of round-domed houses just inside the first wall. Then showed me the second wall, with a treble gate as an entrance. I have seen the remains of this treble gate in the stables of Solomon beneath the present Moslem holy places.

"Now, please read this"; she handed me the Bible again and pointed to 2 Chronicles iii, 1.

"Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in Mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

"And he began to build in the second day of the second month, in the fourth year of his reign.

"Now these are the things wherein Solomon was instructed for the building of the house of God. The length by cubits after the first measure was threescore cubits, and the breadth twenty cubits.

"And the porch that was in the front of the house, the length of it was according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the height was an hundred and twenty: and he overlaid it within with pure gold.

"And the greater house he ceiled with fir-tree, which he overlaid with fine gold, and set thereon palm-trees and chains.

"And he garnished the house with precious stones for beauty ; and the gold was gold of Parvaim.

"He overlaid also the house, the beams, the posts, and the walls thereof, and the doors thereof, with gold ; and graved cherubims on the walls."

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"Here you can see all these things. Here is the palace of Solomon and here the palace of his wife, Pharaoh's daughter, and here was the judgment hall. In this hall was placed his beautiful and famous throne of ivory overlaid with gold. On each side he had statues of lions. His body-guard stood here—twelve soldiers to represent the twelve tribes of Israel.

"Next to the judgment hall is the house of the forest of Lebanon, built of cedars supplied by King Huram of Tyre. Read here please." She gave me 2 Chronicles ii, 3.

"And Solomon sent to Huram the king of Tyre, saying, As thou didst deal with David my father, and didst send him cedars to build him an house to dwell therein, even so deal with me.

"Behold, I build an house to the name of the Lord my God, to dedicate it to him, and to burn before him sweet incense, and for the continual shewbread, and for the burnt-offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts of the Lord our God. This is an ordinance for ever to Israel.

"And the house which I build is great: for great is our God above all gods.

"But who is able to build him an house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him? who am I then, that I should build him an house, save only to burn sacrifice before him?

"Send me now therefore a man cunning to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in iron, and in purple, and crimson, and blue, and that can skill to grave with the cunning men that are with

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me in Judah and in Jerusalem, whom David my father did provide.

"Send me also cedar-trees, fir-trees, and algum-trees, out of Lebanon: for I know that thy servants can skill to cut timber in Lebanon: and behold, my servants shall be with thy servants.

"Even to prepare me timber in abundance: for the house which I am about to build shall be wonderful great.

"And, behold, I will give to thy servants, the hewers that cut timber, twenty thousand measures of beaten wheat, and twenty thousand measures of barley, and twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil.

"Then Huram the king of Tyre answered in writing, which he sent to Solomon . . ."

Mrs. Einsler took the Bible back again and went on.

"Here you see the house. In verse 16 Huram's reply says: 'And we will cut wood out of Lebanon, as much as thou shalt need: and we will bring it to thee in floats by sea to Joppa [which is the modern Jaffa], and thou shalt carry it up to Jerusalem.' These cedars must have come from Jaffa to Jerusalem over the same route as we use to-day.

"This is the Tyropean Valley with a bridge leading from Mount Moriah to Mount Zion. You can still see the dip in the Old City to-day where the Tyropean Valley used to run. You must look to the left from the Street of the Chain, down one of the long alley-ways. You will see the ground slopes down steeply. At the foot is the Tyropean Valley.

"Solomon built three walls round the city—the innermost so that in winter the inner parts were

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sheltered from rain and in summer from heat. But it was not only for the comfort of his people—he built it as a protection to the holy place. It was also a sanctuary for the people when enemies were approaching the city—they could flee into this inner 'Temple Area.'

"Here is the Golden Gate—which is still to be seen in the Old City opposite the Mount of Olives, although it has been blocked up. It used to be called the east gate because it faces east. Actually it faces the Garden of Gethsemane. It was the main gate from the east to the Temple and had beautiful golden decorations on its doorways. Directly inside was the market-place with stalls for animals which could be bought for the sacrifice."

Mrs. Einsler lifted out sections of these stalls and handed them to me. Then she turned round and pressed an electric bell behind her.

"I must have my son to help me," she said. "It is too tiring reaching across!"

The son, a man of about forty, appeared in a few minutes, and she went on.

"Now inside the second wall there was a large court which surrounded the Temple on all four sides. Later the court was divided into two with small flights of steps leading from the lower to the upper part. On the side of the steps there were slabs of stone inscribed 'Under pain of death no one is allowed to come up here who is not an Israelite?' Such a stone was found in Jerusalem fifty years ago and is now in the Istanbul museum.

"This is the Beautiful Gate above which there was a hostel for worshippers. And this is the store-house—for the wood for the temple and oil. I know

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the lamps were small, made of clay, and not very much oil was needed for each, but when you consider all these hundreds of rooms which had to be lit by night, you would know that a great quantity of olive-oil would be needed. Here too are the store-rooms for salt, spices, shewbread, and incense. The priest's garments were stored here—the old ones—they would not be thrown away for they were holy, and they had to be torn into little pieces and twisted into wicks for the Temple lamps. Nowadays the Orthodox Jews on the Sabbath light the lamps with pieces of rabbis' garments.

"You know that gold was plentiful in those days. On the north side of the Temple were buildings occupied by the Levites who were set apart for the service of the Temple and goldsmiths and silversmiths. Only the Jerusalem priests had the secret of working in gold; so the metal was brought to Jerusalem from all parts of the world."

She turned round to her son.

"Walther, please lift up the house of everlasting fire."

Walther lifted up a section of the Temple Area and gave it to her.

"This is the house of everlasting fire. The Temple fire was supposed to have come down from heaven with the injunction that it was never to be allowed to burn out. The priests had to attend it night and day, and as in this country rain is very heavy and they were afraid it might get put out—they kept a permanent section of the fire in this house. The Bible says: 'You are not allowed to take strange fire.' Beneath this fire house were baths, dining-rooms, and kitchens."

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Walther took the house from her and replaced it silently.

"Here is the Court of the Women and here the holy steps of the Psalms of Degrees, on which the priests used to chant Psalms 120 to 134—on every step one psalm, with musical accompaniment. The people would stand in the Court of the Women and listen and to this Court every first-born son of every Israelite family was brought to be consecrated to the Lord's services. If the father did not want his son to become a priest he had to pay a large compensation.

"And here are more kitchens—in the corners of the Court of the Women where the parts of the sacrificed animal which were not taken for the burnt-offering were cooked and eaten. The man who offered the animal afterwards invited a great many friends and relatives and priests into these dining-rooms to a feast. When the sellers and the money-changers went into the Temple they were very likely driven out by Jesus into the Court of the Women.

"Then I think some robbery must have happened, for Solomon was obliged to build a high gate separating the Court of the Women from the Temple. Later a warrior king besieged the city, was defeated, and his body cut in pieces and placed on top of the gate, after which the gate was known by his name.

"Inside this gate was the laver which Solomon had cast for the purification of the priests. It was placed upon twelve bulls facing outwards.

"The burnt-offering was inside the gate between the Temple and the gate—on the highest point of Mount Moriah—the same rock on which Abraham intended to sacrifice Isaac.

"The Temple had a porch with two bronze pillars

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which were cast in the Jordan Valley—called the Pillars of Strength. But when they had built the Temple they found that the one old candlestick—you remember the one I lifted out of the Tabernacle and showed you—they found that was not enough to light the large building. They made ten golden candlesticks of the same pattern and two show tables—wood overlaid with gold, and lovely golden screens dividing the Holy from the Holy of Holies. Below the two holy places they hollowed out a treasury.

"My father was puzzled for a long time to know what had happened to the old ark. He knew that there was a second building on top of the Temple and he thought that the ark was probably placed there.

"After a long time Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, invaded the country and burned the city and the Temple, and it was not for seventy years that the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem and under Zerubbabel to build first the altar and begin their usual sacrifices, and afterwards to lay the foundations of the Temple according to the design given them by the Persian king.

"But the Jews were poor and the building a poor one, and when the old men saw it and remembered the beautiful one that had stood in its place, they wept.

"When Herod was made King of the Jews by Cæsar he was very ambitious and decided to rebuild the Temple in its old luxurious style. In the end he far surpassed Solomon's temple. He had lovely golden pillars traced with all kinds of golden vines and leaves and flowers and fruit. Look."

And Walther removed the old Temple and put in its place Herod's model.

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"Over the doors you can see clusters of golden dates."

I looked at them. They were so tiny they were hardly visible but they had been made exquisitely.

"This Temple was in existence in the time of our Lord—but it was destroyed in A.D. 70—on the very day, according to Jewish tradition, that the Temple of Solomon was overthrown. Titus destroyed the Temple—by fire. Some say a Roman soldier threw a burning torch into it. The Temple was built of white stone and people have scoffed and said that stones could not have burnt. But there is in Palestine a special white stone which bursts when fire comes into contact with it; so I think the Bible is right and the Temple was burst asunder by fire.

"Please look at the sheep-fold near the Sheep Gate where the priests came outside the city to see if the sheep were without blemish before the sacrifice.

"In A.D. 133 the Roman Emperor Hadrian levelled the whole city to the ground and built a new city which he called Ælia Capitolina. He prevented the Jews from even entering the city and built a Temple to Venus over Mount Moriah, placing a statue of himself on horseback in front of it, facing the Mount of Olives.

"In A.D. 534, after Rome became Christianised, Justinian built a Basilica to the Virgin Mary over the place where the porch of Solomon stood and it is believed that the present mosque of Al Aksa stands on that site, and originally got its shape from the Basilica. It is thought that the Arabs liked the interior of the church but did not like the cross on top. So they changed the top but left the inside.

"It was in A.D. 634 that the Arabs conquered the

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country and four years later Omar ibn al-Khattab built a Moslem prayer-place to the south of the Holy Rock. Two years later he began to build the Mosque and more than fifty years later Abd el-Malik built the Dome of the Rock, hoping to divert the pilgrimage from Mecca to Jerusalem. He decorated it with wonderful mosaic, marble slabs, etc., but the pilgrims still went to Mecca.

"Of course you know there have been all sorts of earthquakes to spoil the Dome of the Rock, and it has been repaired and redecorated many, many times. Saladin was one of the many people who spent money on it.

"Now if you will please get up and turn your chair around I will tell you all about the Temple Area as it is in Jerusalem to-day."

And Mrs. Einsler with the help of Walther took the model of the Temple Area into sections, telling me what had originally stood on the site of this and that in Solomon's time. She showed me Solomon's stables which one can still visit beneath the Moslem Holy Places, and a pillar from the entrance to the Temple which can still be seen beneath the Al Aksa Mosque.

"And now you would like to know about my father?

"He was a German and came to Jerusalem in 1846 as a missionary—but not to preach. He had to teach. He was a mechanic, a very clever man with his hands, a clever watchmaker, carpenter, turner, and blacksmith. His name was Dr. Schick and he taught people trades. He was sent by the London Jews Society. After a while he went in for house building, and eventually the Government asked him to become the city engineer. But they were afraid he would be too expensive for them to carry.

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"My father said : 'I don't want any money. Only give me permission to take measurements wherever I go.'

"They told him that was dangerous, and that any Christian entering the Temple Area would be killed. But they agreed to give him a police escort to take him into the Temple Area and he was able to take measurements ; but they would not allow him to dig. After three years' study he made the first model you saw of the desert Tabernacle. After six years he made Solomon's Temple. We sent the models to the Wembley Exhibition—it was Sir Ronald Storrs' idea. Each model can be packed in three boxes."

Mrs. Einsler's eyes suddenly looked tired and weary.

"We hoped some rich gentleman would buy them and they would remain in England. But they came back to Jerusalem. And now, although I would have been glad of the money, I am happy that they have returned to their real home. They do give me a little income from visitors.

"How many sons have I ? Two, but my husband is dead.

"You think I speak English well. I went to school in England when I was ten and then to a school in Germany. I spoke English before I knew my own language.

"And now if you will excuse me I must go. I hope you have enjoyed it. Good-bye."

I watched the little old lady walking slowly away across the courtyard and I marvelled at the learning she had been able to tuck away beneath that snow-white head. I marvelled too that at eighty years of age, or thereabout, she could stand for two hours and lecture without showing the least sign of fatigue.

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Then I followed her son out across the courtyard, past the fountain still playing melodiously among the shrubs, up the stone stairs, out of the heavy teak door into the Old City.

It was late afternoon. I walked home through the Christian quarter where the shopkeepers were packing up their wares and making ready to pull down the shutters. There was no feeling of tension there, no lurking thought that eyes were following your footsteps, would follow, until you had passed out of the Old City.

. . . . .

A cold wind was blowing along the Jaffa Road when I walked down on my way to the Temple Area. It was early in the morning, but everyone was astir. Outside the Jaffa Gate the shoe-blacks were already in position with their brightly-polished stands, against which they knock loudly with their brushes when they think they see a customer—it is a dusty land in summer and a muddy land in winter. The sweetmeat vendors had begun their trading and an Arab pedlar was endeavouring to sell a weird collection of goods—umbrellas, toys, handkerchiefs, kettles. He did not seem to have much luck. I noticed a friar in a khaki topee stop and look at his umbrellas. But he did not buy.

Inside the Jaffa Gate I met my guide—Mrs. Gray Donald. She is a sweet old lady, who is the permanent guide at one of the hotels in Jerusalem. She knows everything there is to know about Jerusalem.

She led me through King David Street, down the Street of the Chain to the main entrance to the Temple Area. By then the sun had broken through the cloudy

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sky, but the air was still cold. I paid my twenty piastres at the gateway, was handed a little green guide-book, and we stepped under the arch into the Haram, or sacred area.

I think there is no panorama in Palestine so beautiful as this view of the Temple Area. In front a series of stone steps leads under high arches to the foot of the Dome of the Rock. At the side the broad, flagged Haram stretches away spaciously through the fresh air. There is no noise, no clatter or babel of voices. The air is sweet and good. The sun shines on the Dome, irradiating the gorgeous mosaics with a beautiful light. After the tiny narrow, dirty *suqs*, how lovely it seems.

We walked across the flagstones, dazzling white in the sunshine, and climbed the broad steps, beneath the narrow, graceful arcades to the higher platform of the Temple Area.

"These arcades are known as *Mawazin*," Mrs. Gray Donald told me. "*Mawazin* means 'scales' and there is a traditional belief that on the Day of Judgement the scales of good and evil will be suspended there."

We stood at the edge of the platform, admiring, wondering.

A group of Moslems passed us, carrying the body of a dead man. They were making for the cemetery outside the city wall. Otherwise there was no sign of movement. Everything was peaceful and still, lovely in its simplicity, impressive in its dignity.

How different the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where every step brings some fresh jarring note. I wondered why it was that Moslems, whom many suppose to be a "philistine" people, should achieve such beauty in the midst of the squalor and wretchedness

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of the Old City. I wondered why, when they had seized the Temple Area at the time when the Arabs conquered Palestine a dozen centuries ago, they did not start to clutter it with mud-built dwellings.

I think all visitors to the Old City must have feelings similar to these—must ask themselves why Christian sacred places should be so cramped and spoilt, and why the Moslem Holy Places should be so inspiring.

We walked around the Dome of the Rock before we entered it. It has four doorways—facing the four points of the compass—one is the gate of Paradise, one the *Bab al-Qible*, the south gate, which fixes the direction in which prayers are to be said—the direction of Mecca.

The walls of the building are decorated with exquisite coloured tiles and marble, and verses of the Koran are inscribed around the frieze of the Dome. At the side stands a small model of the Dome—it is said to be the architect's model for the big building. It is called the Dome of the Chain.

"On this site the Moslems believe there was once a place of judgement where verdicts were given by a miraculous chain," Mrs. Gray Donald explained. "The legend tells how the chain was once suspended from Heaven over this spot and in Solomon's time it was the practice to appeal to this chain in cases where evidence conflicted. Each witness was made to grasp the chain in turn : if he succeeded in holding it his truthfulness was established, but if it eluded his grasp he was a liar. Later the chain was supposed to have been caught up to Heaven, and the Street of the Chain is of course named after it."

We stopped outside the main entrance while an Arab tied huge flat slippers round our feet—so that

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no unclean leather might desecrate the Holy Place. We gave him two piastres and stepped inside on to luxurious carpets. It was dark and I could see nothing for a few moments. Then gradually my eyes became accustomed to the gloom and I could distinguish the wonderful mosaics in the roof—mosaics of ivory, mother-of-pearl and rich shades of blue and green—blue and green everywhere. We stepped between iron screens into an inner part of the sanctuary and gazed on the Rock. It is a yellowish mass of stone, rising only a little way into the air. It is the highest point of Mount Moriah, where Abraham offered Isaac as a living sacrifice, where the great Temple of Solomon stood.

"You can still see traces of the altar which the Crusaders set up on the Rock," Mrs. Gray Donald told me, "and here on the top of the screen you can see the fleur-de-lis candlesticks of the Crusaders which were discovered and placed there when the screen was built."

I had a torch in my pocket and I took it out and flashed it on the walls opposite. I heard a voice muttering behind me and before I had time to turn around the torch had been snatched from my hand and snicked out. It was an Arab who had taken it from me, and he talked excitedly to Mrs. Gray Donald. She told me that torches were not allowed in the Sanctuary as the Moslems felt the light desecrated the Holy Place.

After we had walked around the Dome once, she left me and waited by the main doorway while I walked round a second time alone. The soft tread of carpet beneath my slippered feet, the pale glimmer of sunshine through the fragile stained-glass windows,

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the majestic red-veined marble pillars rising to the hollow of the Dome—everything harmonised, everything was lovely by itself, more lovely as a whole.

Mrs. Gray Donald then took me down beneath the Dome of the Rock into an inner sanctuary. It was completely dark, but after a moment we could make out a marble shrine in one corner. A Moslem woman knelt there, heavily veiled. She kissed the slab from time to time, squatting back on her haunches and swaying to and fro in an ecstasy of fervour. Mrs. Gray Donald whispered to me that no one can discover what secret power that shrine has or why Moslem women visit it and worship there. Only the Mullahs know—and they tell no one.

She showed me a place in the rock where I could make out a hollow in the roof. Beneath that spot the Prophet Mohammed is supposed to have knelt and prayed. He rose hurriedly, and would have hit his head against the rock, but a guardian angel waved the rock back and it retracted into its present shape.

"And here," Mrs. Gray Donald pointed to a hole in the rock, "here is where the blood from the Hebrew sacrifices dripped away from Mount Moriah. From here it drained away into the ground below."

I took a last glimpse at the mosaic walls, at the gold tracery, the blue tiles and the designs of the Tree of Life, the peacocks and fruit, the leaves and the floral motifs. Then I followed Mrs. Gray Donald out into the daylight. We did not shed our slippers but walked across the upper platform, bathed in sunshine and now warm, down a second flight of steps beneath a high arcade on to the lower level of the Temple Area.

In the centre of the broad pathway a fountain

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played. Around it several Moslems were washing their hands and feet and faces—prior to their devotions in the Mosque Al Aksa—the name means the Farthest Point from Mecca. We walked past them beside ancient cypress trees to the shadow of the Mosque.

The Mosque Al Aksa is not so impressive as the Ommayad Mosque in Damascus, but its roof is high and its pillars are of tremendous girth. The carpets are all similar—long striped designs. In one corner of the Mosque there is a rich red carpet which is said to be the most beautiful in Jerusalem.

Beside the *mihrab*—the prayer recess—at the top of the Mosque there is a magnificent pulpit from which the mullah preaches to his congregation.

"The nave, formed by the two rows of massive columns with capitals is probably the oldest part of the Mosque," Mrs. Gray Donald told me. "It is thought the columns were taken from Justinian's basilica, while the capitals, which are decorated with acanthus leaf and wicker-work, date from Byzantine times.

"In the *mihrab* you can see beautiful mosaics and slender marble columns." We walked up and inspected it. "It is said to be the work of the great Saladin." We looked at the pulpit on the right of it. It was made of wood and ornamented with inlaid ivory and mother-of-pearl. Mrs. Gray Donald told me that the four architects who had designed it purposely left a tiny section incomplete.

"No Moslem will ever complete anything he makes, or bad luck will follow. So this pulpit was left unfinished." Similarly the great Dome is imperfect.

On the right of the nave there is a screen, behind

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which Moslem women come and pray. During the sunset prayers, when the Mullah harangues the Moslem men, the women kneel behind the screen and listen.

We left the Mosque and, turning sharply to the right, descended a broad steep flight of steps.

"This is a place which visitors rarely see," I was told.

"It is part of the old Temple of Solomon and I am going to show you one of the original pillars of the ancient Hebrew Temple. We are going directly underneath the Mosque."

An Arab came behind us and turned an enormous key in a heavy door.

We entered into a dank, musty atmosphere. I could see nothing, but felt myself treading on soft dry earth. It was warm and the roof echoed my words. The ground sloped gradually and every few yards there was a deep step. After some time we came into light shed by a window high up the farthermost wall. Then we descended a few more steps and stood in a huge vaulted room, the centre of which was dominated by a white crumbling pillar—about four feet in diameter.

"That is one of the old pillars of Solomon," Mrs. Gray Donald said.

We walked back over the dry dusty floor out into the sun. After the hot mustiness the air struck cold. We wandered away to the right, across a broad expanse of glittering flagstones. I was told we were going to see the old Stables of Solomon. Before we entered by a tiny doorway in the side of the wall we clambered up on to a sheltered ridge and looked into the Kedron Valley. The immense Jewish graveyard

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lay before us bleached and colourless. On the Mount of Olives the gold cupolas of the Russian convent above the Garden of Gethsemane caught the morning sunshine and flashed and sparkled. Below, the old gnarled olive trees in the Garden itself still looked imposing, though seen from such a distance.

Then we descended the narrow flight of steps, past a shrine which the Moslems believe to be associated with Jesus Christ's infancy. The Moslems believe that Jesus Christ is a prophet and as such reverence him, but to them Mohammed is the last and final Prophet of God.

We opened a doorway and found ourselves standing in the great subterranean chamber called Solomon's Stables. It is an impressive sight. The piers stretch in orderly row after row in each direction, north, south, east and west. At one end a tiny window, high in the walls shed rays of light on the floor of century-old *débris*. As one descends the steps into the stables there is a hollow echoing sound. During the war these stables were used as a place of refuge, and Lord Allenby released many hundreds of families who had sheltered here—starving and ill and many of them dying. The air is noisome, and there is little light as one penetrates farther down the aisles between the stone piers. The gigantic chambers are cut off one from the other by high doorways, and at the side of these, holes can be seen hollowed in the rock. In these holes, it is said, were fixed the iron hooks to which the horses were tied. But the ground level has risen since those days and the holes are now only three feet from the ground.

We left the stables and walked back along the high wall, across a soft grassy patch of ground, stood and

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gazed at the Golden Gate for a few minutes, then climbed the Steps of Degrees. We passed the houses of the goldsmiths and coppersmiths on our way to the main gateway, and on the right the tomb of King Hussain, the father of the Emir Abdullah of Transjordan. He died in Cyprus half a dozen years ago and his body was brought in a British destroyer to Palestine. His funeral was attended by his four sons, Ali, Faisal, Abdullah and the Emir Zeid, and by British official representatives. In a second tomb lies the body of Mahomet Ali. Whatever doubts there may be as to the presence of the late Mahomet Ali, there is no doubt whatever of the presence there of the ex-king Hussain. The health authorities really ought to do something about it.

We left the Temple Area by the same door through which we had entered. As we stepped down the broad steep ledge into the Street of the Chain I saw a lovely old fountain in the wall. I had missed it as we passed into the Haram. Their bare feet standing in the pools of water, a group of Moslem fellah women held petrol tins there, waiting for the water to fill them. Then with great care they balanced them on the little round rings of rope on their heads and walked away up the Street of the Chain, the tins swaying perilously, but never toppling over.

We followed them, and watched them disappear one by one into tiny dark alley-ways at the side of the *suq*, still walking with measured tread, still balancing their gleaming tins of water.

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Chapter 13

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"DID YOU REALLY THINK THAT PALESTINE BOYS AND girls had no Children's Hour? Why, we just simply wouldn't know what to do without it."

I apologised for my ignorance. It was pleasant being put in one's place by a fourteen-year-old.

"We have two Aunties—Wadi's Shatara and 'Aida Shammas—and they tell us lovely stories, mostly from the *Arabian Nights*. Auntie 'Aida can play the piano."

Mahmud's brown eyes twinkled away as he got deeper into his subject.

"Of course, all of us children write to these two ladies. We tell them how much we like the Children's Hour, and sometimes we tell them when our birthday is, and they read out our names on the day. But it isn't only Palestine children who write. They get letters from Syria and Egypt and Transjordan. Many of the children perform themselves. I've talked on the wireless three times already and I hope to talk a lot more. I'm not a bit nervous. Of course, everything's in Arabic, but they don't have Moslem names for the fairy-tale characters or Christian names, so as not to offend the two kinds of Arabs in Palestine. My father told me that. Even with stories for the tiniest children they are careful about this."

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In Palestine politics thus enter even into the kindergarten !

" The children often act plays and sing and say poetry, and sometimes our Aunties tell us tales about Englishmen and Americans. Once Auntie Shatara told us about an American who made electricity. His name was Ed—Ed——"

Mahmud paused as he racked his memory.

" Yes, I remember, Ed-i-son. And Auntie 'Aida once told us about the man who first made a train. His name was Stephenson. Did you know ? And sometimes we have English fairy-stories told us—only they take place in Palestine. And for the younger children an Egyptian, Kamel Keilani, has made some of the *Arabian Nights* stories very simple.

" For the younger children, too, they have animal sounds and listening games in which the children have to guess what is going on. A child might be brushing her hair, or drinking tea, or putting on her shoes—the sound is broadcast and the children have to guess.

" You know that in Arabic, except for the *Arabian Nights*, there are very few stories. But our Aunties make up a lot of them. Would you like me to tell you one ? "

I said " Yes," for I could see Mahmud was bubbling over with eagerness.

" Once upon a time," he started off in orthodox fashion, " there were two brothers, one very rich, the other very, very poor. The rich one gave money to the poor one. When the time of the pilgrimage arrived——"

Mahmud broke off to explain to me that Moslems make a pilgrimage to Mecca every year.

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"When the time of the pilgrimage arrived the rich one went away to Mecca, and the poor one had to go to his brother's wife to ask for money. But she refused to give him any, and kicked him out of her house. He was very unhappy and went and lay down under a palm tree. He picked up a stone and started to hit the soil. What do you think happened? A witch came out of the ground and asked him why he was kicking the roof of her mistress's home, wakening her from her sleep. The poor man told the witch that his brother's wife had told him to 'go to hell,' as you say, and that he didn't know where it was and he was looking for it. The poor man explained that he had no money and the witch took pity on him and brought out from her grotto a magic box with a short stick.

"Go back home," she said; "gather your children together, put this in the middle of the room and strike it with this stick and ask from it what you want, and it will give you the food you ask for." The man went back, did as he was told, and a magic meal appeared. He really had too much to eat, so he took some to his brother's wife, but she refused it and kicked him out again, telling him to go to hell again. So he gave the extra food to the poor.

"Shall I go on? You like this story? So the man went back again and knocked on the roof, told the witch that his brother's wife had kicked him out again and she brought him a magic broom and told him to sweep up the crumbs from his meals with it. He did this and found the crumbs turned to gold and silver. He took some of this to his brother's wife, but she just cursed him again and he returned to the witch, who this time gave him a large candlestick.

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When he lit this dancing-girls came out and danced and sang and played music. So the poor man got very, very rich. He built a lovely house and then decided to build another lovely house for his brother, when he came back from Mecca. His brother arrived and the 'poor man' invited him to his new home. But the rich brother was jealous, and planned to steal his magic things. He gave a party and asked his brother to bring the magic things with him. But because of his bad intentions everything went wrong. The box gave him stones instead of food, the broom dust instead of money, the candlestick black slaves who beat him instead of dancing-girls.

"The 'poor brother' blew out the candlestick and saved his brother who, in the end, apologised and told him everything. All was forgiven and they lived happily ever after."

"You think I speak English very well? Yes, I know a lot of English people and my father lived in England a long time. That's how I learnt it."

"Of course the two Aunties wouldn't be able to run the Children's Hour all by themselves. Mr. Ibrahim Tugan-Dirtr is the man in charge. He's very nice. I know him."

. . . . .

There is a group of Jewish children sitting round the table. They are broadcasting. It is the Hebrew Children's Hour and I am in the broadcasting room in Jerusalem, watching their performance. I cannot understand anything, but I am told by Dr. Eliezer Lu Crany that they are acting a children's play. Dr. Lu Crany is in charge of the Hebrew Children's Hour and he has five "Aunties."

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The children are thoroughly enjoying it, watching the green lights flashing, gazing at the red danger light, waiting for the signal from one of the Aunties to begin, or to go slower or quicker with their dialogue. As they finish each page of the play the children pick up the sheet and lay it on the floor beside them.

"That's so as not to make a noise—that would sound over the air," one of the kiddies told me afterwards.

During the Hebrew Children's Hour Dr. Lu Crany told me descriptions are given of places such as Ben Shemen, the Children's Farm School, and these are entirely prepared and given by the children themselves. They tell of the first rains, their experiences, their walks, how they grow crops, look after animals. Dr. Lu Crany thinks that material prepared by children for children finds the quickest way to their minds.

But there is one great difference between the Jewish children in Palestine and the Jewish children in Central Europe. You are unable to tell a fairy story to a child from Poland or Lithuania. Their life is too realistic for them to believe in magic. For a time the Hebrew Hour from Jerusalem did not tell fairy stories. Then gradually it was realised that the children in Palestine do not have the same outlook. They are as innocent and happy as children everywhere. To-day they love fairy stories and adventures.

They are given an indirect education during the Hour. One of the Aunties tells musical stories—for instance, a short life of Schubert, illustrated with extracts from his works.

Once when the Hebrew children were told a series of stories about homeless children they took it so

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seriously they sent presents and money for them to Dr. Lu Crany. One little girl sent a package of stamps.

The Hebrew Hour also runs a club for the preservation of birds. Habits and migration are studied and members of the club write in and say: "We have seen such-and-such a bird," and the next day they are told on the radio what the bird was.

The Hebrew kiddies had the honour, too, of naming Dr. Lu Crany's baby boy. He appealed to them to send in names, and out of a list he chose Rimon—which means pomegranate.

But the birthdays have become too numerous for the Hebrew Hour, and these have had to be cut out.

. . . . .

The English Children's Hour is in charge of Miss ("Erica") Graves—the daughter of the late Alfred Graves (who wrote *Father O'Flynn*), niece of Philip Graves of *The Times* and a sister of Robert Graves, author of *I, Claudius*, and of Charles Graves, the London social journalist.

She has organised a small informal advisory committee, composed of English mothers—some forty or fifty—which meets once a month to prepare an advance programme in skeleton for the following six weeks. All these mothers can either perform or write. One of them is an excellent children's dramatist. She is Flora Moody, and has written three first-class children's plays.

Miss Graves, whose abilities might well be transferred to England to improve the B.B.C., told me she believes in entertainment, not instruction, for a children's hour, although from time to time she features talks—a description of the harvesting of the

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salts of the Dead Sea, or a discussion on flying by a flying officer. There is a great deal of music and often the kiddies perform themselves. Birthdays have become too unwieldy for the English Hour too.

Whereas the Arab and Hebrew Aunties are in receipt of salaries, the English artists are voluntary.

Miss Graves told me that in Egypt audiences for the Children's Hour consist of one child and ten grown-ups. This, I think, also applies to England.

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Chapter 14

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DOWN THE JAFFA ROAD THERE IS A LITTLE SHOP where you may spend all your money and go away wishing that you had more to spend. It is run by two sisters—Lily and Kathleen—and if you don't know Lily and Kathleen, then you don't know Jerusalem.

They are two charming girls and they have worked very hard indeed to make their shop a success. They specialise in the native arts and crafts of Palestine and have an amazing collection of embroidery and jewellery.

It was Lily who enticed me into the shop. She greeted me one afternoon as I sauntered along looking for souvenirs.

"Would you like to come inside?"

Who could resist such an offer from such an attractive little damsel as Lily. She smiled me into the tiny little shop, begged me to sit down, and proceeded with the aid of Kathleen to lay before me such a succession of beautiful things that in the end I had to ask them to do it all over again—I had forgotten what they had begun with.

"This," said Lily, tossing back a mop of black curly hair, "this is our speciality. Hand-made satin pyjamas—any size—any shape—all embroidered by

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experts. You can have Yemenite embroidery done in our workshop by old Yemenite women who have brought the secrets with them from Southern Arabia. It is a variation of a complicated chain stitch with delicately-blended colourings. The old "sun-ray" and tree-of-life designs are the most lovely, I think. Yemenite embroidery is chiefly floral and of course it is laid on the outside of the material—appliqué is the word. Look!"

And Lily walked into the middle of the shop, held the satin pyjamas against her and struck a pose. They were gorgeous things. The palest green satin with stitches in deeper green, yellow and mauve, mixed with gold and silver thread.

"Of course you needn't have satin unless you want to be extra smart," Lily confided. "I think this kind of heavy silk is just as attractive." And from the back of the shop she produced a white silk pair, embroidered in rainbow colours. "This pair is much cheaper. Would you like it?"

I said I would decide when I had seen everything. It was Kathleen's turn.

"Have you seen a Cleopatra jacket? No? This is one. It is rather like a Spanish bolero. Rich Bethlehem women wear them as bridal jackets. That's where they originally came from."

It was a lovely little coatee—black velvet, lined with red satin, embroidered in gold thread, scarlet and emerald green.

"This is Yemenite too," Kathleen said, as she slipped it on for my inspection; it looked grand against her dark-coloured hair.

"It would be nice over a black evening frock. But we can make them in any colour and any pattern

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you like. The Yemenite embroidery on these coatees is a kind of cord. Sometimes we make them with Ramallah and Bethlehem embroidery—but personally I don't think it's quite so pretty as the Yemenite, do you ? "

She brought out a Bethlehem one and I compared the two. Bethlehem embroidery is cross-stitch—not appliqué, of course—and the colours are more vivid. The Ramallah work is also cross-stitch, and here one find the olive-leaf and the rose-and-thorn designs.

By this time coffee had arrived, and they stopped the exhibition while we sipped it slowly, drank our glasses of water afterwards, and discussed the weather.

Then they showed me models of opera cloaks covered with the eight-pointed star of Bethlehem worked in gold and silver thread ; and angel-sleeve gowns in satin and silk. The angel-sleeve is a special invention of these two sisters—it gives the dresses a sort of kimono effect and is most attractive.

Then they opened a big cabinet and produced a wonderful assortment of jewellery. As we were looking at it I heard a sound of a woman sobbing. We turned round. In the shop doorway an old Bedouin woman was standing. In her wrinkled hand she held a heavy silver bracelet—and speaking in Arabic asked them to buy. Lily told me she was sobbing because she had to sell a family heirloom.

Evidently bad times had hit the tribe and it was their only hope of buying food. The bangle was bought and the old woman hobbled away satisfied. Lily polished it in a velvet cloth. It was heavy, but although crude it was genuine.

They showed me filigree silver. It is made of old coins, mostly Turkish, melted down into fine silver

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wires and then worked into ornaments—bangles, earrings, cuff-links, necklaces, and mazuzes. Mazuzes are special pendants, worn by Orthodox Jewesses. The Ten Commandments are written in Hebrew characters on a tiny piece of parchment inside the pendant.

Some of the bracelets were inlaid with stones—Palestine stones. They are not valuable but have pretty colours, the favourite being turquoise—as used by the Bedouin. The stones are cut and polished and are known as "Biblical stones" because similar stones were used in the breast-plates of the high priests of the Temple of Solomon.

Lily produced a ring which she told me was worn by rich sheikhs. It was in six parts—really six small rings—joined together.

"As the sheikh marries a wife he takes off one of these rings and gives her. Until they are all gone! I think it's a good idea."

After the jewellery I tried on a series of sheepskin coats from Hebron. They were wonderfully warm but too primitively made for use anywhere except in the desert. These sheepskin coats are worn by Arabs in the winter. Richer sheikhs have them made of camel hair—on the outside—and sheepskin as a lining on the inside. The weight is then terrific.

Molly entered the shop as I was leaving. Molly is a third sister and I was told she had a shop further down the road. All three sisters share the same workshop, however, and they were the only Palestine handcraft exhibitors to get a medal at the 1933 Anglo-Palestine Exhibition in London.

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Chapter 15

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I MET HER IN A CINEMA AT TEL AVIV. SHE WAS NOT blonde nor blue-eyed. Her hair, if I can remember rightly, was coal-black—as coal-black as her eyes. She was an English Jewess and she was sitting alone. I was alone too, and so we got talking. The film was *Rose Marie* and I had seen it before. So had she. And so we decided to cut the film and go to a café.

She did not ask me any questions but sat there smoking quietly, answering mine. She found it easy to talk and I had to put but one leading question to her and then sit back and listen.

She told me about her profession. It was the oldest profession in the world.

"I would rather work in Piccadilly," she said. "The money is better and the men more attractive. I could buy clothes cheaper there and board myself cheaper. But—perhaps you think it funny—I am a Zionist—and so I have come to Palestine.

"You want to know about prostitution in Palestine? Of course there is no open solicitation in the streets, nor are the girls licensed and registered as in most Eastern countries. Most girls have pimps to collect business for them. That is more usual in Jerusalem, where the police are hotter. But here in Tel Aviv there is not so much need. I get my own business."

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As she spoke her eyes roved around the café. She told me it was one of her haunts although it was a little early—six o'clock—for her usual custom.

Her name was Ruth and she asked me to call her by it.

"Of course, all the prostitutes in Tel Aviv are Jewesses, but in Jerusalem and Haifa you may find local Christians—Armenians, Greeks. The European Jewesses are the best lookers, although I am afraid their appearance will deteriorate with the hot summer climate here."

She smiled discreetly to a man friend as he sauntered in the café. He hesitated whether he should join our party and then decided to sit down—to wait, I suppose, till I had gone.

"Of course, most of us have regular clients. But we are always on the look out for fresh business. Usually it is brought to us by people who know us, sometimes we meet strangers in the cafés, get to know them through having a coffee together.

"In the summer evenings we do better business for there are more people about. But in the winter if I am having a bad time I always go up to Beyrouth or Tripoli or Damascus for a little and get an engagement in a cabaret there. I can make a bit of money that way. But it means hard practice to keep up my dancing in between and I have to buy clothes for my turns. But even so, I make quite a lot—at any rate, enough to tide me over till the summer."

I ordered two more coffees and sat silently for a little while. She snatched up a German paper and started reading it.

"How many languages do I speak? English, French, German, and Hebrew—and a little Russian. One simply has to here."

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She read for a while about the Spanish war, talked sensibly on European politics, and then asked: "Shall I tell you how I make my money in Beyrouth?"

I was keen to hear.

"After our cabaret show is over we are invited to join someone at a table—and this is where I myself and the cabaret management get a rake-off. The trick is this. When asked to have a drink I order what is known as *bols*, which I think was a Dutch drink originally. Actually this drink is made up in the cabaret kitchen and my companion for the evening pays 25s. a bottle. Usually he drinks beer or whisky and soda. My drink looks like champagne, but costs only a few pence to make. Its main ingredient is soda-water which gives the bubbly effect and it is sweetened to give it the continental champagne taste. There is no question of getting drunk on this, and out of the 25s. paid by the boy friend, I get 5s. That is where I make on the average 10s. to £1 a night—much more with my engagement fee than I could ever hope to make in Tel Aviv regularly. But as I said, I like to live in Palestine and so I put up with it."

She broke off to greet a girl friend, asked me if she might sit at our table, and waved her over. She was fair and slim; if I had been a man, I should have found her more attractive than Ruth.

They talked to each other in Hebrew. Then Ruth went on.

"My friend only speaks a little English, but she understands. I will go on where we left off.

"Most of the clients, of course, have other objects in view than merely standing treat to a dancing girl,

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but the majority of the girls are pretty straight—perhaps because most of the men are not attractive—perhaps also for the very sordid reason that there is more to be made out of the 'champagne' ramp. Personally I try to earn as much as I can in all ways."

"Have—you—told—her—about," her friend broke off and spoke in Hebrew to Ruth.

"My friend wants me to tell you about the girls who work during the day-time in offices and shops, earning good money and maybe living with their parents—so that they do not have to pay out much for board—and then step into our trade in the evening. It isn't really fair. For they don't need the money, whereas we do. There aren't many of them, of course, as the Jews, speaking generally, are a pretty moral people."

I asked her about the Arab girls.

"I think the Arabs get a very poor selection really," she joked, "but, of course, there is a great deal of homosexuality both among the Arab men and among the women, but the women are very rigidly looked after so far as men are concerned.

"In the Old City of Jerusalem there are several houses which Arabs can visit, but their inmates are either Christian or Arab widows or tribal women, who have run away from their tribe for some moral offence.

"But there is a number of Arab women connected with the hashish trade. Hashish is made from a plant similar to hemp and it is collected at a little village in the Lebanons in Syria. It is cut and dried in the sun and packed tightly into little metal containers. There is no woman customs officer and therefore no search at the two frontier stations from Syria

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into Palestine—Nakoura on the coast and Rosh Pina near the Jordan—and so these Arab girls can easily smuggle the hashish through. Once into Palestine they spread it around among the Arab cafés, and sell it at exorbitant prices, particularly in Nablus. Cocaine is smuggled into Palestine in a similar way, but not so much as hashish.

"Sometimes the girls smoke it themselves, too. It has a terrible effect on them. First they get a wonderful feeling of exhilaration, then they go to sleep and have dreams of paradise. The next day they are complete wrecks, for the drug saps their energy and drains their vitality.

"Other Arab women, more adventurous still, take the drug right through to Egypt, but that is more dangerous, although there is more money there."

Then an idea struck her and she leaned across the table and whispered: "Next year I hope to come to England. My friend and I are saving up. It will be a good holiday. We shall make enough there to bring us back to Tel Aviv again. I do so want to see London again. I miss it dreadfully, but I like Tel Aviv better."

As I left the café the boy friend strode across and sat talking to the two girls.

Outside the streets were cold and dry. They were crowded with workers rushing home from their offices and shops. The women were mostly pretty, all well dressed. The Ruths in Tel Aviv are the exceptions that prove the morality of the Jewish women.

Often have I thought of Ruth since that night. I wonder if Piccadilly will ever see her again.

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Chapter 16

★

I LEFT JERUSALEM IN THAT GREY HOUR BETWEEN THE dawn and sunrise. It had been snowing and the roads glistened in the half-light. My Arab driver chatted aimlessly. Had I seen such and such a place? Had I met the Mufti? Did I know his wives?

Occasionally he illustrated his remarks. As we wound up on to the north road by Mount Scopus he waved his brown hand towards a squat house on the hill-side.

"That," he grinned, "is the house of the Mufti."

I looked at it. Behind the high stone wall which hid its main entrance from curious eyes lived the veiled wives of Haj Amin el Husseini, the President of the Supreme Moslem Council, Chairman of the Arab Higher Committee, active leader of the Arabs against the Jewish immigration. But they knew little of his activities. They were forced to exist in rigid Moslem conditions, to obey his precepts, to refrain from visiting this or that cinema in Jerusalem, because they might be stared upon by unwelcome eyes.

As we sped past I thought of the clever Moslem women I had met in Palestine—friends of the Mufti's wives. The blue sky, the sunshine—everything is spoiled for them. How long will Moslem womanhood tolerate these chains? How long will the charming

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smartly-dressed Moslem wife be satisfied to see life through a haze of black—be content to be deprived of taking her place in the world by half a yard of dingy cloth?

The car swerved—and skidded. A bank saved us from disaster and we drove on more slowly. The wadis were raging torrents with the winter rains, thick yellow water swirling around the hill-sides. Above them, among the stones and gravel, bloomed the narcissi. In an hour—perhaps less—the Arab women from the villages would pick those flowers to carry them into the Old City of Jerusalem, to sell them in the *suqs*. Old women, young women—women who were ill and unhappy—they would climb those hill-sides to begin yet another day of toil. How many piastres would they take home that night? How much food would they be able to buy? Those were the questions they would ask.

We came to Ramallah.

Houses of brick red peppered the hill-sides, contrasted with the tawny background of the sand and flint. Along the roadside walked two Christian Arab girls—rows of Turkish coins decorating their heads, long white dresses reaching to the ground.

On their shoulders they carried petrol tins—empty—for they were walking to the village spring. They turned and stared as we passed them. White teeth gleamed at me as I looked, black eyes flashed inquisitively.

Comparatively free were these Christian women. They were not forced to live a harem life.

I looked again at the brick-red houses. It was in one of those homes that I had listened to an American woman telling me her life tragedy—of her "romance" with an Arab sheikh in New York—how she had come

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to Palestine to find her dreams shattered, to realise that her life was to be one of hardship and suffering.

"Ramallah women," my driver informed me as we passed a second picturesque couple.

The sky was golden when we reached Nablus, one apex of the Nablus-Tulkarm-Jenin triangle, in which the riots of 1936 reached their greatest intensity. Along the roadside barbed-wire barriers told their own tale of the control maintained by police and army on the bandits whom these Arab towns shelter.

Below Nablus silver-grey olive trees dotted the hill-sides. Against the rich green of an English meadow they would have passed unnoticed. But in the barrenness of Palestine they possess a great and wonderful beauty.

We drove on down into the plain.

A string of sunburnt Jewish land-girls swung baskets of vegetables as they strode along the highway from the side-road that led to their settlement. Dark blue shorts—white silk blouses, bronzed skins—I thought of my visit to Ayanoth in the Plain of Sharon —of the grape-fruit that had been piled into my car. I thought of the dynamic energy that is driving these Jews to build up Eretz Israel.

Across the plain, up and up into the hills towards Nazareth.

"You know Nazareth?" my driver queried, and seemed disappointed when I told him yes.

The main road skirts the village. Nazareth lies to the right of it—in a hollow. Above it gigantic hostels and convents have been erected—memorials of Christianity—Roman Catholic, Protestant. From a convent on the crest of the farthest hill-side a bell rang. It was prayer-time and I pictured the black-robed nuns kneeling devoutly before their glittering altar.

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Strange that within a short motor run you can see representatives of the three great faiths who claim this Palestine as their Holy Land.

As we leave Nazareth behind us I see the great mass of Carmel against the western sky. Mount Carmel is not a peak as many imagine, but a long range of hills with the blue Mediterranean at their feet.

Past more Jewish colonies, then dropping, dropping down to sea-level. Outside Haifa, Jews in their farm carts and tractors, Arabs with their camels. Over all the faint smell of oil, for the wind is from the north, blowing the odours of the Iraq Petroleum Company's tank farm from across the Kishon.

And so into Haifa with its feverish building of new villas on the hills, new homes where the modern European Jewess might, so far as the architecture is concerned, imagine herself in Vienna or any Central European town.

At the quay-side my boat waits for me.

. . . . .

The moon was rising as the bearded British pilot came on board and we cast off. Up the side of Carmel, lights were shining. Dominating the great mountain was the lighthouse which the French monks of their charity established generations ago and which under modern conditions they are still permitted to maintain.

Only a soft breeze as we pass the breakwaters. The lights of Acre shine across this storied bay. As we stand out into the black Mediterranean the glow that is Haifa grows dim until it is a haze on the horizon.

Staccato flashes stab the darkness. It is a British warship wishing us good luck on our homeward voyage.

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