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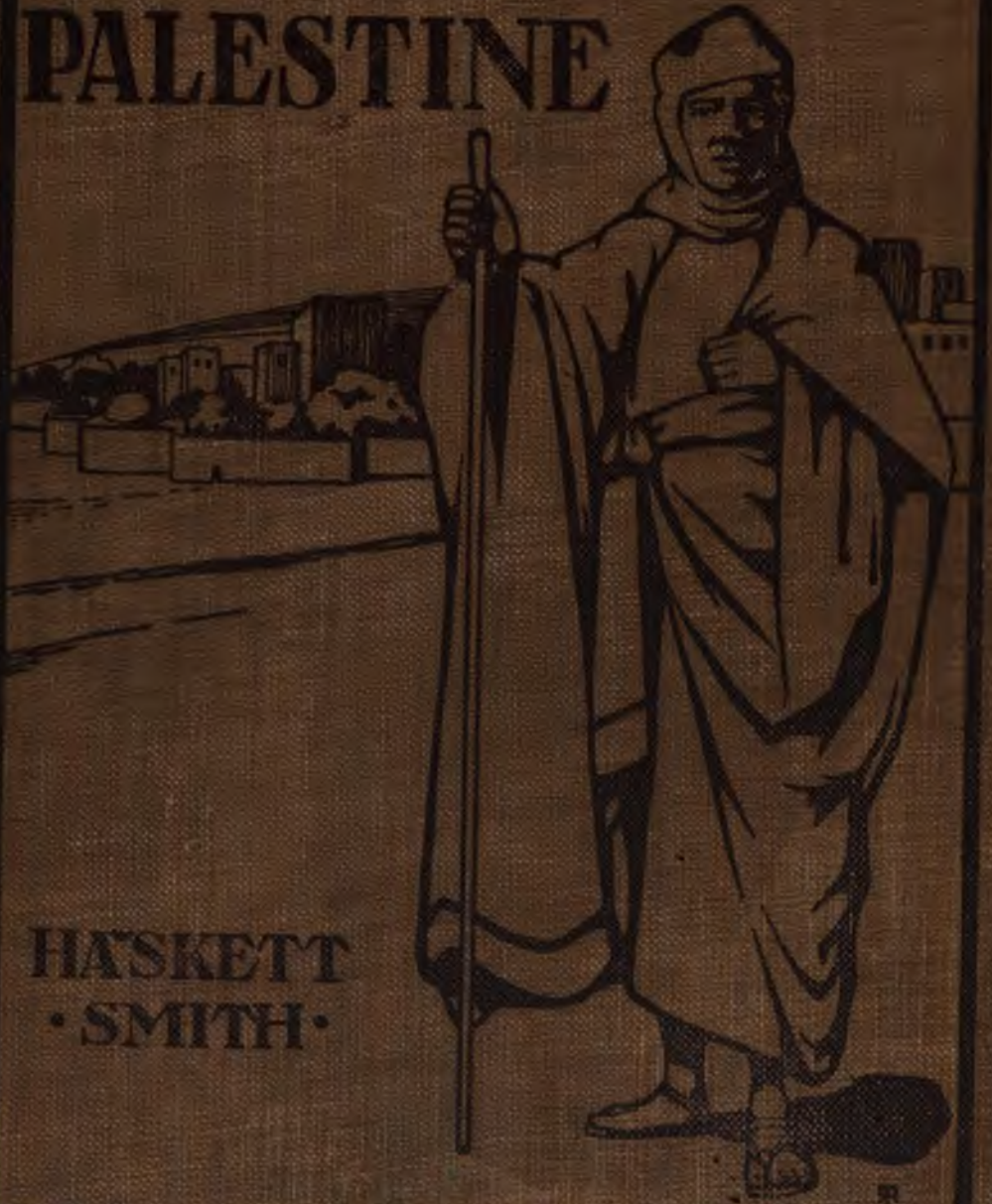
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# PATROLLERS OF PALESTINE



HASKETT  
• SMITH •





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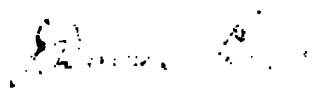








THE SHEIK.



# PATROLLERS OF PALESTINE

BY THE

REV. HASKETT SMITH, M.A., C.P.O.S.

EDITOR OF 'THE BIBLE HERALD' AND 'THE BIBLE RECORD'

WITH

FOR GOD AND HIS FAMILY: A HISTORY OF THE PATROLLERS OF THE MOUNTAINS  
OF GALILEE AND THE BIBLE HERALD.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON

EDWARD ARSOLD

10 & 43 MADDOX STREET, BOULEVARD STREET, W.

Publisher to the India Office

1906

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BY THE

REV. HASKETT SMITH, M.A., F.R.G.S.

EDITOR OF 'MURRAY'S HANDBOOK TO SYRIA AND PALESTINE, 1892'

AUTHOR OF

'FOR GOD AND HUMANITY: A ROMANCE OF MOUNT CARMEL,' 'THE DIVINE EMPHANY,'  
'CALVARY AND THE TOMB OF CHRIST,' ETC.

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## P R E F A C E

The Author died almost immediately after completing this book, and before any arrangements had been made for its publication. The following brief Note, which was appended to the MS., is therefore inserted in place of a more formal Preface.

THREE observations only are needed in regard to the following pages :

1. I have endeavoured most carefully to be strictly accurate in all my historical and geographical statements, as also in my description of scenes and incidents.

2. With exception of the Sheikh himself, none of the members of his tribe are portraits of any actual personages, but rather embodiments of different types of travellers whom I have encountered in my many journeys through Palestine.

3. I only hold myself responsible for the statements of the Sheikh.

HASKETT SMITH.





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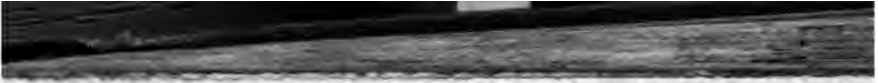
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# PATROLLERS OF PALESTINE

## CHAPTER I

### THE SHEIKH AND HIS TRIBE

The Sheikh—The Archbishop—The Fossil—The Enthusiast—The Matter-of-fact Man—The Pessimist—The Angel—The Malaprop—The General Nuisance—The Gusher—Monte Carlo.

THE leader of the party was by universal acclamation invested with the title of THE SHEIKH.

Nor was this title inappropriate.

He had resided for many years in the Holy Land, wearing for the most part the costume of the natives, speaking their language, adapting himself to their daily manners and customs, partaking of their hospitality, conducting business relations with them, indulging in every opportunity of social intercourse and conversation with them, and closely studying the various idiosyncrasies of their dispositions and ideas.

By these means he had succeeded in penetrating beneath the surface of the Oriental character, and had become thoroughly imbued with Oriental modes and thoughts of expression.

Moreover, he had travelled frequently and in all directions through Eastern, Western, and Northern Palestine, so that there was scarcely a town or village which he had not visited from Baalbek to Gaza, from Damascus

to Kerak, or from the Mediterranean to the Great Syrian Desert.

Nevertheless, he was a true-born Englishman, and English to the core—a typical John Bull in appearance and character. A journalistic interviewer had once described him as ‘a pleasing, practical, portly parson, this patroller of Palestine, of robust form and full round voice, with the cool confidence of a clear-headed cosmopolitan who has seen places and people innumerable in variety, and who has a way of taking his companions along with him, not so much as a personal conductor, but as a genial friend, philosopher, and guide.’

One phrase of this description so fascinated the Sheikh’s companions that they appropriated it to themselves, and they became known to their friends as ‘The Sheikh and his Tribe ; or, The Patrollers of Palestine.’ Eleven of them they numbered altogether—seven males and four females—and a strange and motley assemblage they looked as they gathered together on the deck of an Austrian Lloyd steamer one sunny morning in early March, peering intently towards the Eastern horizon, where the sacred hills of Canaan were looming in the distance. Enveloped in the haze of the misty dawn, the mountain ranges of Judæa and Samaria appeared to the enraptured gaze of the devoted followers of the Sheikh as though they were in very truth ‘the everlasting hills of unearthly mystery.’

As the steamer slowly advanced to its anchorage in the open roadstead outside the rock-bound harbour of the venerable Jaffa, the Sheikh stood on the upper deck near to the bridge, pointing out to his companions the various scenes and objects of interest which gradually unfolded themselves to their view.

Immediately at his right hand stood an elderly clergy-

man, immaculately orthodox and proper. He was arrayed in faultless clerical attire, which he never relaxed upon any occasion. He acquired the sobriquet of **THE ARCHBISHOP**, in consequence of an amusing incident which had occurred during their short sojourn at Port Said, in the course of trans-shipment from the P. and O. steamer on which they had travelled from Marseilles to the Austrian Lloyd vessel which was to take them to Jaffa, as Joppa is now called. They were compelled to remain at Port Said for about twenty-four hours ; and on the evening of their arrival, the moon being full and the atmosphere delicious, it was decided to take a moonlight excursion on donkeys to the shores of Lake Menzaleh. Accordingly, the Sheikh sent a message to 'Bob' that he was to be at the door of the hotel at half-past eight o'clock precisely with eleven donkeys, four of which were to be provided with side-saddles.

Every visitor to Port Said is well acquainted with 'Bob.' He is called a donkey-boy, though in reality he is a man of about sixty years of age ; and, being a devout Moslem, he rejoices in the possession of three wives. His good-natured, round Arab face, his brawny muscular form, his deep sepulchral voice, his inimitable grin, and the ludicrous way in which he pronounces the names which he gives to his donkeys—names varying according to circumstances—are familiar as household words to every traveller who passes through the Suez Canal.

On the particular evening in question Bob was very late in keeping his appointment ; and, after waiting in vain for his appearance until long after nine o'clock, the Sheikh and his tribe were on the point of giving up their moonlight trip in despair. Suddenly, however, the sound of donkeys' hoofs was heard, as they came pattering down



the street from the direction of the Arab part of the town. In a few minutes they were brought to a standstill outside the door of the hotel, and Bob, wiping his forehead with a huge red pocket-handkerchief, began to make his excuses for being so late.

'Excuse me, ladies and gentlemen,' he began; 'I am very much sorry to keep you waiting, but, as I was leaving home, my three wives began quarrelling, and I had to stop and give them all a flogging.'

Having thus satisfactorily disburdened himself, as if it were the most natural thing in the world for an Arab donkey-driver to flog his wives, as no doubt it is, Bob proceeded to assign the donkeys to their several riders. The four ladies had duly allotted to them 'Mrs. Langtry,' 'Lottie Collins,' 'The Princess of Wales,' and 'Hoop-de-Doodm-Doo.' Then came the turn of the gentlemen, and all were rapidly in their saddles, on 'Mr. Gladstone, Gra-and Old Man,' 'President Roosevelt,' 'Joe Chamberlain,' 'Two Lovely Black Eyes,' and 'Keep your Hair on.' There only remained the Sheikh and the High-Church parson. The former was assigned a donkey whom Bob denominated 'Mr. Slowly Big,' explaining that the donkey would go slowly because the Sheikh was big. The orthodox cleric then put his foot into his stirrup in a pompous and deliberate manner, majestically mounted his animal, and sat there bolt upright with an air of conscious dignity, his long coat-tails flapping over the donkey's hind-quarters, his wideawake pressed well dawn on his forehead, and his neck nearly throttled by a stiff, closely-fitting collar. Altogether he presented a most comical and incongruous appearance.

In slow, patronizing tones he said to Bob:

'And what shall be the name of my ass?'

Bob eyed him and his garb for a moment with a whim-



DONKEY-BOY.





sical expression of awe, respect, and bewilderment, and then, prostrating himself before him with an irresistible air of mock reverence, he replied :

‘ Archbishop of Canterbury.’

And thus the worthy parson was henceforth dubbed ‘ The Archbishop.’ An excellent man in his way, but exceedingly narrow-minded, he was pre-eminently a type of that numerous class of people who implicitly believe everything that they find in the Bible, simply and solely because it is in the Bible ; and who are ready to consign to eternal perdition everyone who does not hold exactly the same views as themselves.

The direct contrast of the Archbishop was a little wizen-faced man who was universally styled THE FOSSIL. He was a confirmed old University Don, steeped to his eyes in classical lore and musty quotations, utterly unpractical, and full of theories, many of which were doomed to be shattered by the relentless force of prosaic facts, before the march of the tribe had come to an end. He affected to be an agnostic in his creed, and professed a profound contempt for what he styled ‘ the fairy-like myths of the Old Testament records.’ This naturally brought him into continual conflict with the Archbishop, who, as became a sound orthodox Churchman, accepted without question the traditional interpretations of all the reputedly miraculous events.

The arguments and controversies of these two opposite thinkers often led them to forget the occupations on which they were engaged at the time, and the Sheikh was frequently obliged to hurry them up during the riding tour through Palestine ; for they would linger far behind the main body of the tribe, allowing their horses to creep slowly along whilst they were hotly contesting some disputed points of doctrine or theory.

The Fossil had a great University reputation as a Hebrew and Arabic scholar, and he was undoubtedly possessed of a profound acquaintance with the classical literature of these two languages. When, however, he tried to talk to the natives of Palestine in their own mother Arabic tongue, neither he nor they could understand each other. The language in which he addressed them was that of a long-past era, and it was just as though some foreigner who had only studied the English of Chaucer's time were to give his orders to London cabmen in choice Chaucerian dialect.

A very amusing story concerning the Fossil found its way by some means into the circle of the tribe. On one occasion he paid a visit to Athens, in order to satisfy a life-long ambition to declaim upon the stage of the theatre of Dionysus some portion of the immortal Greek dramas, on the very spot upon which they had been first presented to the public. On arriving at the famous capital of Greece, he lost no time in hastening to the theatre, accompanied by several friends belonging to the party with which he had travelled from England, as well as by other casual visitors at the hotel which he was patronizing. The conductor of the party was a native Athenian, who was able to speak a little English, and therefore considered himself perfectly competent to guide British and American tourists over the city. Having duly posted his companions on the old stone benches of the Auditorium, the Fossil mounted the ruined stage, struck a dramatic attitude, and in as loud and theatrical a voice as he could command he proceeded to spout a passage from the 'Agamemnon' of Æschylus. In an ecstasy of enjoyment, he warmed to his task, giving, as he imagined, an exact rendering of the words of the ancient dramatist in the identical language and pronunciation of the Greeks them-

selves. Before he had advanced very far in his oration, the Athenian guide turned round to a member of the party who was seated beside him on the Auditorium, and innocently asked :

‘What language is that old gentleman talking ? It does not sound to me like English.’

A very different character from the Archbishop or the Fossil was a gentleman who had left England for the first time in his life, and who thoroughly deserved the title of THE ENTHUSIAST, which he acquired very early in the march. He was a healthy man in the prime of life, with a florid countenance, thick curly brown hair, and a light bushy moustache. His whole life had hitherto been spent in a small provincial town in the Midlands, and his mind had had little scope for enlargement. The chief topics of conversation to which he had been accustomed were horses, cattle, sheep, and the corn markets. Yet he was naturally of an enquiring disposition, and the novel experience of a foreign tour was a delightful revelation to him. He entered into every new scene and experience with all the freshness of youth. His untiring energy and restless desire to see everything that was to be seen was rather embarrassing at times to the other members of the tribe, for he was always eager to be on the move, and never seemed to know when his companions had had enough.

Before the dawn of day the Enthusiast was up and stirring, clamouring to the camp-servants to get ready for the onward march, and shouting aloud to the less energetic and more sensible travellers, who were still reposing comfortably within their tents. His services, however, were very useful on several occasions in spurring up the flagging spirits of the weaker and more faint-hearted members of the tribe, and in urging on the loiterers to more speedy progress.

His disregard of expense was truly magnificent. He invested recklessly in Oriental curiosities and artistic treasures at all the bazaars which he visited, and he patronized extensively the innumerable vendors of articles who waylaid the tribe on their march through Palestine. It is scarcely necessary to mention that the majority of these treasures which he thus acquired were fictitious trash ; but, inasmuch as he was none the wiser, no very great harm was done. Doubtless many of these curios will be handed down to his children and his children's children, to the third and fourth generation ; and romantic stories of their great ancestor, the famous Palestine patroller, will be woven around these marvellous relics. At any rate, his purchases afforded him unbounded enjoyment at the time, and served as excellent safety-valves for the escape of his superfluous steam of enthusiasm.

An excellent foil to this indefatigable pilgrim was to be found in THE MATTER-OF-FACT MAN. Utterly devoid of any sense of humour himself, this worthy individual was quite unconsciously the source of constant amusement to his companions by the absolutely commonplace remarks to which he gave utterance in circumstances of the most romantic nature, and by the incongruity of his actions in the most sentimental of scenes. When even the least emotional of the members of the tribe would be moved to rapture and enthusiasm over some incident of extraordinary interest or some vision of exquisite splendour, the Matter-of-fact Man would remain solid and undemonstrative, scarcely indicating by word or demeanour that he was conscious of anything at all out of the way in the place or incident in question. His whole heart and soul appeared to be engrossed in the everyday concerns of this mundane world, and it was difficult to understand what motive had induced him to visit the

worn-out regions of the past. Sometimes he would sit silent for an hour or more, smoking a foul briar pipe, and apparently listening to an animated discussion on some topic of thrilling interest suggested by the scenes through which the party had been riding that day, and then he would suddenly interpolate some utterly irrelevant remark of the most prosaic nature, which would effectually dispel the glamour of the conversation, and show that all the while he had been far removed in thought from the subject which had been so keenly exciting the interest of his companions.

Notwithstanding these peculiar idiosyncrasies, the Matter-of-fact Man was in reality a most invaluable member of the tribe, for he was kind-hearted and good-natured to a degree, always ready to help any of his comrades, and continually doing small acts of service in a quiet and unostentatious way.

By no means so popular and agreeable a companion was a nervous, discontented, and unhappy bachelor, who invariably looked at matters from the most gloomy point of view, and who, in consequence, was branded by the highly appropriate cognomen of **THE PESSIMIST**.

His medical adviser, it appeared, had ordered him abroad for change of air and scene, on account of the hypochondriacal condition into which he had gradually fallen ; and, unfortunately for the little tribe conducted by the Sheikh, he had heard of the expedition, and had enlisted himself a member of it. His face wore the chronic expression of one who has just swallowed a dose of some horribly nauseous physic, and he always had some imaginary grievance to nurse. His grumblings at every trifling inconvenience and contretemps were amusing at first, but they soon became monotonous, and it required all the tact and forbearance of the Sheikh,



aided by the general good sense of the majority of the tribe, to prevent a serious outbreak of bad temper on more than one occasion. Some of his habits were most peculiar. It was noticed that he invariably placed himself in the most uncomfortable of seats, and in many other little ways he evinced a perverse pleasure in manufacturing for himself causes of discontent.

And yet, in spite of all his fancied troubles, it is doubtful whether any member of the tribe enjoyed the march through Palestine more thoroughly than did the Pessimist in his own sour and dismal fashion. He was never detected in a genuine outburst of laughter, but, when all the others were convulsed at some ludicrous anecdote or mirth-provoking incident, a sardonic grin of lugubrious enjoyment would play upon his lips, rendering the castor-oil expression of his features more melancholy than ever. Then, in a slow and mournful drawl, he would murmur :

‘That amuses me much—that amuses me as much as anything I ever heard in my life.’

Having thus testified to the abundant enjoyment of his soul, he would relapse once more into gloomy silence, looking for all the world as though he had just received intelligence of the death of his dearest friend, or the failure of the bank in which all his money was invested.

He was the object of the deepest pity and compassion to the camp-servants and attendants of the tribe, who one and all, poor innocent natives ! were convinced that he was suffering from some terrible calamity which had crushed and beclouded his whole life. Not a bit of it ! It was only his peculiar way of enjoying himself.

Place aux dames ! An apology is due to the ladies of the tribe for having kept them so long in the background. We can only remind them that the sweets and the dessert come after the fish and the solid meat.



The Archbishop had a daughter travelling with him, a young lady of about twenty-three years of age. She soon became a general favourite throughout the tribe, and well she deserved to be ; for, as the Sheikh himself often declared, she was almost as perfect a travelling companion as anyone could wish to conduct upon a tour.

She never gave the slightest trouble to any member of the tribe. She never suffered from the grievances of which the general type of female tourists complain. Her saddle was never improperly adjusted, neither too far forward nor too far back. The girths were never too slack nor too tight. She was always satisfied with the dragoman, the muleteers, the camp-servants, the food, the cooking, and the tents. She was invariably punctual at meals, and never kept the party waiting when about to start on an excursion. She never galloped too far ahead, nor loitered too far behind. She never asked foolish or irrelevant questions. Though affable and pleasant to all her companions, she never monopolized the attention of any one individual. Intelligent and natural in all her ways, she never displayed the slightest symptom of affectation, frivolity, or cant. Lively and full of humour, high-spirited and fond of fun, she yet observed a reverential respect for the sacred sites and associations of the Holy Land. The native servants adored her, and if the whole tribe had resembled her in character and disposition, the march of the Palestine Patrollers would indeed have been one of triumphal progress, of peace, happiness, and concord.

In a word, the Sheikh considered that there was only one title corresponding to her merits, and on his initiative she was endowed with the appropriate name of **THE ANGEL.**

Though as firm and devout a member of the Church of England as her father, the Archbishop, himself, she was far more broad-minded in her sympathies and ideas, and consequently she was more ready to receive the intelligent and rational views of the interpretation of Scripture which have been opened up in the present day as the result of scientific investigation and impartial research.

She was standing on the left hand of the Sheikh on the deck of the Austrian Lloyd steamer, and by her side was a short stout lady of middle age, 'fair, fat, and forty'—extremely fat and extremely forty. This buxom dame was busily engaged in sharpening a pencil which she held in her hand, whilst a voluminous notebook was tucked under her arm. She was ever taking notes, and had intimated more than once to the tribe in general that she proposed writing a book of the march on her return to British shores. Dear, good soul! she had the most marvellous faculty of getting hold of the wrong end of the story, and of mixing up information in the most hopeless and glorious confusion. She earned for herself the sobriquet of *THE MALAPROP*.

The simple fact was that she was so much engrossed in general over her notebook and diary that she failed to listen to the remarks which were made and to the information which was imparted by the Sheikh and others. Consequently, she was continually trying the patience of her companions by requesting that the information should be repeated from beginning to end. She was kind and good-tempered, but remarkably obtuse and self-satisfied, and this was, on the whole, perhaps an advantage to her, for it rendered her quite oblivious to the general cause of laughter, when she perpetrated some egregious blunder. She would on such occasions look round her in bewilderment, as if endeavouring to discover



the mysterious subject of mirth. Then, producing her notebook and pencil, she would placidly ask the fellow-traveller nearest to her to be kind enough to tell her what it was that had made the whole company laugh.

With all her peculiarities, the Malaprop was an infinitely more desirable member of the tribe than was a certain elderly female who was standing at no great distance from her on the deck, keeping a jealous eye on the luggage of the tribe in general, and on her own personal belongings in particular. The baggage lay piled upon the deck, in readiness for disembarkation ; and a curiously confused mass of articles presented themselves, truly characteristic of the British tourist. Portmanteaux, Gladstone bags, hold-alls, valises, umbrella-cases, hat-boxes, bundles of rugs, and other miscellaneous impedimenta, lay huddled together in glorious disorder, each separate article adorned with a conspicuous bow of red and yellow ribbon, the distinguishing badge of the property of the Sheikh and his tribe. The lady who had constituted herself for the occasion the guardian of this heterogeneous collection had already earned for herself the invidious epithet of **THE GENERAL NUISANCE**, short though the time had been since the tribe had started forth on their march from England.

A tall, gaunt woman, with spectacles on nose and reticule in hand, she stood there bolt upright, apparently engaged in the twofold occupation of challenging any outsider to touch the belongings of the tribe, and of endeavouring to sniff out the first obnoxious odours of Jaffa, and to prepare for the coming struggle against all the forces antagonistic to propriety which she was anticipating to encounter on her march through Palestine.

According to her own account, she was the right hand

of the vicar of the parish to which she belonged, and had been sent upon this trip at his personal expense as a slight recompense for her devoted and long-continued services. It was commonly believed, however, by the other members of the tribe that the poor pestered parson had been driven to adopt this course, in order that he might have at least three months' peace and respite from her fussy interference.

But how she had managed to tear herself away from her multifarious duties was a mystery to them all. Amongst the many parochial and social functions which, as she took care to inform everyone, she discharged, she was superintendent of the Sunday-school, manager of the Band of Hope, secretary of the District Visiting Society, local president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, correspondent of the Girls' Friendly Society, agent for the Social Purity League, and member of the Board of Guardians. She might doubtless have added, though she kept it to herself, that she was also chief inquisitor of her neighbours' private concerns, parochial mischief-maker, and general prowling prude. To judge from the experience of the Sheikh and his tribe, it was quite impossible for her to refrain from meddling with the business of others, and by her constant habits of interference, she did her best to wreck the harmony and enjoyment of the march. Naturally, she prided herself on her own strength of mind and upon the firm determination of her character. Like all people of her class, she was quick enough to resent what she considered any attempt on the part of others to dictate to herself. If one of the tribe mildly ventured a word of suggestion or advice to her, she would draw herself up with an air of injured dignity and say :

' Excuse me, when I want your opinion I will ask for it.



## THE GUSHER

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Until then, I will trouble you not to interfere, if you please.'

The remaining lady of the tribe soon recognised in the Enthusiast a kindred spirit with herself. She belonged to a type of tourist which is very common, especially among the fair sex. The type is frequently encountered in such countries as Switzerland or Italy—wherever, in fact, the regions abound in natural beauties or historic associations. It is generally known as **THE GUSHER**.

Of all countries in the world, Egypt and Palestine are the happy hunting-ground of the Gushers. At every turn they are to be found, sighing ecstatically, or bubbling with enthusiasm over some sacred scene or some time-honoured monument. They appear to have ransacked the whole vocabulary of the English language for the choicest adjectives and the most rapturous phrases. At first there is something really refreshing in the hyperstatic delight of the Gusher, but when one happens to be her fellow-companion upon a lengthy tour, one's ears are at length palled by the incessant sound of the long-drawn 'O-h!' and the high-flown interjections of admiration and rapture.

The Gusher belonging to the Sheikh's tribe was a good-natured creature between thirty and forty years of age, and, but for the somewhat tiresome monotony of her effusiveness, she was a pleasant companion in travel.

But the heart and soul of the whole party was a jovial, round-faced, close-shaven man, who had joined the tribe at Marseilles, after having spent the winter at Monte Carlo. He was at first regarded with suspicious eyes by the more serious members of the tribe, who could not conceive that anything good could come out of that sink of iniquity. The Archbishop and the Fossil both looked at him askance—the former because he considered

him likely to be irreverent, the latter because he dreaded his frivolity ; whilst as for the General Nuisance, the horror depicted on her face would have afforded a delightful study to an artist, when, on the first evening of their voyage on the Mediterranean from Marseilles, the newcomer mischievously introduced himself to her as 'The Man from Monte Carlo.' It soon became apparent, however, that there was no real vice in his nature, and that he had visited that notorious resort of gambling purely from the desire of seeing life in all its phases. It was the same spirit which was now taking him on a pilgrimage through the Holy Land.

MONTE CARLO, as by his own special request he became known and addressed by all, was a born traveller, who had visited almost every quarter of the globe. A shrewd observer of places and people, with a highly retentive memory, he was a perfect storehouse of anecdote and reminiscence, and, consequently, at all times a delightful companion. Add to this a keen sense of humour and an inexhaustible fund of animal spirits, and it will readily be understood that Monte Carlo soon established himself on terms of easy fellowship with most of the members of the party, and in a short time became one of the most popular of the Palestine Patrollers.



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## CHAPTER II

### THE ENTRANCE INTO CANAAN

A night on deck—The coast-line—Askalon—The Crusades—The Lady of Shallot—The rose of Sharon—Ebal and Gerizim—Jaffa—The perils of landing—A tragic story.

The Enthusiast and the Gusher had remained on deck all night, so as not to miss the first glimpses of the Holy Land when the morning should dawn.

Some others of the tribe had sat up late, enjoying the ideal beauty of the still, clear night and the moonlit waters of the still Levant. The weather, indeed, on that ever-memorable evening was almost perfection itself. There was scarcely a breath of air, save that which the vessel herself was making by her own progress through the waters. Not a single cloud obscured the starry sky. Not a ripple on the sea disturbed the steady motion of the steamer. The air was balmy, but not oppressive ; fresh and fragrant, but not cold. It seemed almost a sin to leave the deck for the stuffy cabins below ; and the little group, having comfortably settled themselves down on the folding deck-chairs in a compact circle, spent the first portion of the night in prospective discussions on the country and scenes which lay in front of them.

The Archbishop and the Fossil, being somewhat advanced in years, had retired early to rest, in order to be



fresh for the enjoyment of their first day's experience of Palestine. The Pessimist had made up his mind to be seasick, and had therefore laid himself down in his berth even before the steamer had left Port Said. The Malaprop had remained below in the saloon after dinner, in order to write up her wonderful diary; whilst the General Nuisance, offended by a casual remark of Monte Carlo, perfectly innocent in itself, but regarded by her as a personal allusion to herself, had withdrawn in a huff to her cabin. The group on deck had therefore consisted of the Gusher, the Angel, the Enthusiast, the Matter-of-fact Man, Monte Carlo, and the Sheikh. The Angel had been the first of this party to retire below, followed not long afterwards by the Sheikh and Monte Carlo. The Matter-of-fact Man had gone to sleep in his deck-chair, with his pipe in his mouth, long before the conversation had ended, and he looked so comfortable that they left him there without disturbing him in his slumbers. It was not very long before the Enthusiast and the Gusher, having made themselves as comfortable as possible with rugs and cloaks, with a view to maintaining a night-long vigil, had unconsciously followed the Matter-of-fact Man's example, and were as soundly asleep as himself.

With the earliest light of day, they all three awoke, declaring that they felt delightfully fresh after their unbroken slumbers in the calm, pure air of the peaceful night. The Pessimist joined them soon after, complaining that he had been unable to sleep all night, owing to the horrible smells which had entered his cabin, and to innumerable fleas by which he had been bitten. As he emerged from the companion-steps to the deck, he had the melancholy and resigned air of an early Christian martyr; but he promptly ensconced himself in the chair which the Enthusiast had momentarily vacated, and soon gave

evidence by his wheezy snoring that he was making up for the sleepless night.

It was certainly an ideally lovely morning. Away to the west, directly astern of them, the moon was beginning to set ; and in the long white trail of the wake of the steamer the moonbeams glinted and danced like myriads of diamonds. The Matter-of-fact Man leaned over the rails of the steamer and watched the porpoises disporting themselves gaily in the clear waters of the sea, which was calm as a mill-pond, with a surface like oil. The Gusher and the Enthusiast peered anxiously ahead, striving to make out the land to the east ; but they were still a long distance away from the sacred shores, and the daylight had not yet become clear enough for them to discern it.

Presently, one by one, the other members of the tribe began to appear on deck. The Archbishop was the first to show himself, all the better for an excellent night's rest. The Angel soon followed her father, and then came the Fossil, the Sheikh, and the General Nuisance in quick succession, the last-named having apparently put on one of her most gracious airs with which to greet the Holy Land. The last to put in an appearance, nearly an hour after the others, were the Malaprop and Monte Carlo.

Long before these two showed themselves the land had been clearly visible to those on deck. A long, straight stretch of low, sandy hills lined the shore on either hand, north and south, as far as the eye could reach. Behind this low, natural rampart there spread eastwards a broad green plain, running for many miles. Beyond this plain, again, and bounding the distant horizon like a vast uneven, gigantic wall, ran a continuous range of lofty mountains, from twenty to thirty miles away from the shore. Clear and well-defined against the liquid sky, now gradually changing from the faintest gray to the warmest

shades of yellow and orange, red and purple, as the dawn grew into the rising sun, the highest and most prominent peaks and ridges of this mountain range stood out, as though chiselled by the hand of the mighty sculptor, Nature.

A more transcendently beautiful and impressive greeting could scarcely be imagined than that which the ancient land of sacred romance offered to the little tribe of Palestine Patrollers who were now approaching her shores.

'You observe the coast-line trending away to the south,' the Sheikh was saying to his followers; 'that is the maritime border of the tract of country which you know as the land of the Philistines. That dark and confused mass on the prominent hill immediately overhanging the shore, yonder to the right in the far distance, is the ruined site of the once famous and important city of Askalon.'

'Let me see,' said the Archbishop, 'Askalon never belonged to the Hebrews, did it?'

'Well,' replied the Sheikh, 'it was nominally allotted to the tribe of Judah, and was actually held by that tribe for a few years after the conquest of Canaan by Joshua; but it was soon recaptured by the Philistines, and through all the after-period of Hebrew history it remained one of the strongest and most important cities antagonistic to the Israelites.'

'That, I suppose, accounts for the threats and imprecations against Askalon that we find so frequently in the inspired writings of the Hebrew prophets,' rejoined the Archbishop.

'Precisely so,' returned the Sheikh.

'To my mind, Askalon presents a far greater fascination from the part which it played in the great Crusades,' observed the Fossil; 'for there I can feel myself upon historical ground.'

The Archbishop shrugged his shoulders impatiently at this side-thrust against the facts of Old Testament history, but the Sheikh, in reply to the Fossil's remark, said :

' Askalon was by no means devoid of historic interest between the days of the ancient Israelites and the era of the Crusades. Herod the Great was born there, and when he became King he rebuilt and enlarged the city with great magnificence and expense. After his death his sister Salome resided for many years in the splendid palace which he had erected.'

' Is that palace still in existence ?' asked the Enthusiast.

' Unfortunately not,' replied the Sheikh ; ' Askalon is now a deserted ruin. Herod the Great's city has long since disappeared, and even the famous crusading town which stood upon its site is nothing more than a shapeless mass of stones, the greater part of which lies buried ten feet or more beneath the rolling sand, which encroaches on the shore in that neighbourhood at the rate of three or four feet a year.'

' The crusading town was erected by our own King, Richard Cœur de Lion,' remarked the Fossil, with the tone of an authority.

' Well, not exactly the town itself,' rejoined the Sheikh. ' Richard erected a splendid citadel there, and surrounded it by a semicircular chain of walls and towers, which were nearly two miles in circumference.'

' And are any of these walls and towers still to be seen ?' asked the Angel.

' Not precisely of those fortifications,' replied the Sheikh, ' for Saladin captured Askalon and destroyed Richard's citadel only a few years after it was completed. Cœur de Lion, however, reconquered Askalon, and restored the greater part of the fortress, which was once more, and finally, overthrown and demolished a hundred

years later, during the last and most fatal of the Crusades.'

'How sad it seems that these glorious old places should be suffered to fall into decay!' sighed the Angel.

'Oh, it is too dreadful to think of!' ejaculated the Gusher. 'What an unspeakable monster that Saladin must have been—too atrocious for words!'

'The howling blackguard!' re-echoed the Enthusiast.

'On the contrary,' interjected the Fossil, 'Saleh-ed-Din, which was his correct name—meaning, I believe, "The Just Man of Faith"—was, as I read my history, a very noble and magnanimous hero, and, in this respect, a most admirable contrast to many of the so-called Christian Crusaders.'

'So-called Christian Crusaders!' hotly rejoined the Archbishop, ever ready to resent any imputation upon the heroes of Christianity at the hands of his arch-antagonist; 'I must ask you to have respect for the feelings of others, and to speak with more reverence of those grand soldiers of the Cross.'

The Fossil's lips curled with an ominous sneer; and the Sheikh, to check the first rising of an angry controversy, remarked:

'I hardly think that Saladin should be branded either as a monster or a blackguard; for he was really a very brave and chivalrous warrior, and in all he did he was merely obeying the precepts and principles of the Moslem faith, of which he was so devoted a follower. As regards his demolition of Askalon and its citadel, his Arab historian, Beha-Eddin, expressly tells us that it was with the most sincere reluctance and grief that Saladin found himself compelled by strategic necessity to destroy the fair and noble city. As he gave orders for its destruction, he exclaimed: "In the name of God, I would rather lose

my own son than touch a stone of the goodly city ; but it is the will of God, and for the good of Islam it must be done." The historian goes on to say that thirty thousand men were engaged on the ghastly operations for fourteen days, and that when the work of destruction had been completed by fire, every heart was filled with sorrow and mourning at the sight of the once beautiful Askalon now reduced to a heap of scorched and blackened ruins.'

'Who destroyed Richard Cœur de Lion's second fortress?' asked Monte Carlo, who had hitherto been a silent but interested listener to the conversation. 'I understood you to say that it was reduced to ruins about a hundred years after his time.'

'Yes,' replied the Sheikh, 'the second overthrow occurred towards the close of the thirteenth century. You will doubtless remember that the Christians were finally expelled from Palestine by the Moslems in 1291 A.D. The Mohamedan commander under whose auspices Askalon was for the last time reduced to ruins was a very notorious and fanatical Egyptian potentate, who is commonly known as the Sultan Bibar.'

'By the way,' remarked the Angel, 'I fancy that I have read somewhere that the shallots are in some way connected with Askalon. Is this so?'

'Ah, yes,' rejoined the Fossil, before the Sheikh could reply ; 'and a very interesting example we have here of the philological history of words and phrases. A shallot, as you all doubtless are aware, is a particular kind of onion, used chiefly for pickles. This peculiar variety of the well-known and highly useful vegetable was first found growing at Askalon. The Norman Crusaders pronounced the place "Eshallon," and when they returned home with specimens of this onion they gave it the name of Eshallon, or Shallon, from the spot whence they had

imported it. In process of time the word Shallon has become corrupted into shallot.'

The Malaprop, who had been so fully occupied with her notebook that she had not been listening very attentively to the conversation, caught the last few sentences, and interposed with the question :

'Did you say that the Lady of Shallot lived at Askalon ?'

'She may have done so, madam, for all I know,' answered the Fossil curtly ; 'I really had not the pleasure of the lady's acquaintance.'

'Oh dear no,' confidently remarked Monte Carlo to the Malaprop, with a merry twinkle in his eye. 'The Lady of Shallot was a personal friend of Lord Tennyson, who gave her that name because of the excellent pickles which he once enjoyed at her hospitable table.'

Down went this piece of historical information at once in the Malaprop's wonderful diary.

The steamer was by this time drawing much nearer to the shore, and the wide, green plain between the sea-shore and the distant mountains became clearly visible to those on deck.

'Has that extensive plain which stretches as far as we can see both to the north and to the south any particular Bible name ?' asked the Angel.

'That,' said the Sheikh, 'is neither more nor less than the famous plain of Sharon itself, though the portion of it which lies at our right hand—that is to say, to the southward of Jaffa—was known more particularly to the Hebrews of old as the plain of Philistia.'

'Is the rose of Sharon still to be found upon the plain ?' asked the Archbishop.

'There is no rose that actually grows upon the plain now,' replied the Sheikh—'at least, so far as I have been

able to discover. I have ridden over the greater part at various times.'

'Is it known what the rose of Sharon was really like?' asked the Angel.

'Or, rather,' interposed the Fossil, 'was there a rose of Sharon at all? I take it that the phrase was a mere figure of poetry.'

'It is rather a disputed point,' observed the Sheikh. 'I have seen various conjectures on the matter. For my own part, I am inclined to identify it with the cistus, or rock-rose, which, though I have never seen it growing on the actual plain itself, abounds in great luxuriance on the slopes of the hills which run down into the plain. You will doubtless, in the course of our ride through Palestine, have many opportunities of seeing and admiring the beautiful white and purple blooms which literally cover the thick bushes.'

'As to those mountains in the distance,' exclaimed the Enthusiast, 'you have not yet told us anything about them. I suppose they are of some importance, are they not?'

'I should rather say so,' smiled the Sheikh; 'they are the backbone of the Holy Land, the ever-famous mountain range of Judæa and Samaria. Do you see that highest point, standing out on the sky-line away to the south, as far as the eye can reach? That is the hill immediately above Hebron, from the summit of which Abraham is supposed to have watched the conflagration of Sodom and Gomorrah. Further to the north, over there on our right, are the ridges which conceal from our view the city of Jerusalem itself. They are a portion of what the sacred Psalmist alluded to when he said: "The hills stand round about Jerusalem." The whole of that range between Jerusalem and Hebron we read of in the Bible as the hill-country of Judæa.'



‘And how far should you say we are from Jerusalem at the present moment?’ asked the Enthusiast?’

‘Well, Jerusalem is about forty miles inland, as the crow flies, and we are now, I should say, about ten miles from the shore, so that Jerusalem is now about fifty miles, more or less, from us.’

‘Oh, fancy being actually within fifty miles of Jerusalem!’ exclaimed the Gusher in ecstasy; ‘it is really too exquisitely delightful to realize.’

‘We shall be a good deal nearer, if all is well, in a few hours,’ remarked Monte Carlo, with a smile. ‘I hope to have my luncheon there to-morrow.’

‘I wonder what the food will be like,’ murmured the Matter-of-fact Man.

The Archbishop had been meanwhile gazing earnestly through his field-glasses at the mountains trending away to the north, and he now observed to the Sheikh :

‘I understand you to say that those are the mountains of Samaria. I have been trying whether I can distinguish Ebal and Gerizim among them from the pictures I have seen and the descriptions which I have read. But I have failed to do so, and I therefore conclude that they are invisible from this point.’

‘Oh no, indeed they are not,’ replied the Sheikh, indicating a direction with his finger. ‘On the contrary, they stand out quite distinctly. Those two crested summits which are higher than the rest are the mountains for which you are looking. The one to the left and further away from us, with a rounded shape, is Ebal, whilst the nearer and more pointed one is Gerizim.’

‘And can we see Shechem?’ breathlessly asked the Angel, as she peered eagerly in the direction in which the Sheikh was pointing.

‘No; unfortunately, we cannot see that ancient city,’



said the Sheikh, 'for it lies down in the hollow depression between the two mountains, and is thus entirely concealed from our view. But, all being well, we shall visit it on our journey, when you will be able to appreciate its interest and beauty in detail and upon the spot.'

At this moment their conversation was interrupted by a shrill whistle from the steamer, and in a few minutes the engines ceased their throbbing, and the anchor was lowered in the open roadstead of Jaffa.

The quaint and picturesque old seaport, still a flourishing centre of commerce, rose up on a conspicuous hill from the seashore, its flat-roofed houses and red-tiled buildings crowded one above another from base to summit. They were now a little more than a mile from the shore, and from the inner harbour there issued forth a perfect shoal of large row-boats manned by eager native boatmen, whose loud shouts of excitement and emulation were wafted far in advance of them along the water to the ears of the expectant passengers on board the steamer.

The Pessimist, who had but lately awoke from his belated slumbers, turned pale with apprehension and alarm as he watched this motley crowd draw near, and, edging his way nervously to the Sheikh's side, he inquired in a tremulous voice :

'Do you think we shall get safely to land?'

Monte Carlo, who heard the remark, could not refrain from exclaiming in a loud voice :

'I understand that Jaffa enjoys the unenviable reputation of being considered at Lloyd's the very worst and most dangerous harbour in the world.'

The Gusher gave a little scream of terror and dismay, and murmured something about being 'too, too dreadful,' whilst the acrid countenance of the General Nuisance assumed a more forbidding expression than ever. The

Archbishop and the Fossil looked at Monte Carlo as though to express their disapproval at his ill-timed remark, whilst the face of the Enthusiast beamed with healthy enjoyment at the thought of some possible adventure in store. Only the Angel and the Matter-of-fact Man appeared unmoved by the bomb-shell which Monte Carlo had exploded in their midst.

The Sheikh, however, soon quieted the nerves of his followers by assuring them that on a morning so calm and peaceful as that there could be no possible danger whatever, and that there would not be even a ripple on the waters as their boats shot through between the rocks which girt the little harbour round about. At the same time, he did not disguise from them the fact that when the weather was at all rough the landing was very unpleasant, and that at times it was dangerous and even impossible.

As a matter of fact, there is no real harbour at Jaffa at all, in the modern sense of the word, though in ancient days it answered its purpose well for the little sailing vessels which plied along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Similar vessels still enter its so-called port, but all craft of any larger size are compelled to anchor in the open sea. There is only a very narrow opening left between the jagged rocks which encircle the small area of smooth water dignified by the name of harbour, and, except in calm weather, the landing from the steamer in the native boat is, to say the least, uncomfortable and alarming. The passengers frequently become drenched to the skin by the water which dashes over the rocks, and in really stormy weather no sensible captain will allow any of those under his charge to attempt to land.

As soon as the Sheikh's tribe had become thoroughly satisfied that there was no need for anxiety in their own

case, they began to importune him to relate instances of discomfort and catastrophe which had come under his own personal observation and knowledge.

'So like human nature,' grunted the General Nuisance who was still intent upon guarding the luggage; 'when they find out that there is no danger for themselves, they try to find amusement in the troubles of others.'

And for once in a way her reflections were just.

'There was one very disagreeable experience that happened to a friend of mine,' began the Sheikh, in response to the general question. 'He was a missionary at Jerusalem, with a wife and six children, and, like most missionaries, he was poor. His children took some infantile epidemic—I think it was the measles. When they were convalescent the doctor recommended him to take them somewhere for a change of air. With the help of a small grant which he received for the purpose from the missionary society which he represented, he managed to scrape together sufficient money to take his family for a few weeks to the Lebanon. On his homeward journey from Beyrout, when the ship arrived off Jaffa, the weather was so stormy that the captain absolutely refused to allow any of the passengers to land. Consequently, the missionary, with his wife and six children and a servant whom they had taken with them, was carried on to Port Said. There they were compelled to put up at a hotel for five days, before the weather had moderated sufficiently to make the captain of any steamer hold out any prospect of a disembarkation at Jaffa. When they again arrived off this port, it was still too stormy to attempt a landing, and they were taken back to Beyrout, which they had left more than a week before. Here they had to wait as patiently as they could in another hotel for several days longer, until it was practicable to

make another attempt to reach their destination. Finally they did succeed in landing, but they were all drenched to the skin in shooting between the rocks.'

'Poor things!' exclaimed several of the tribe in unison; 'what a terrible chapter of accidents!'

'But that was not all,' resumed the Sheikh: 'the boat which followed immediately behind them with all their luggage was capsized, and their belongings went to the bottom of the sea.'

'I should not think the poor fellow forgot his holiday in a hurry,' laughed Monte Carlo.

'I don't see anything to laugh at,' snapped the General Nuisance, fixing her Argus eye more steadfastly than ever upon the luggage, as if it were in danger of disappearing beneath the waves.

'It is indeed a sad story,' sighed the Angel. 'Did they never recover any of their luggage?'

'They got a portion of it back, but not all. And even that which was recovered was almost hopelessly ruined by the sea.'

'Of course, he obtained compensation from the company,' observed the Matter-of-fact Man.

'None whatever,' replied the Sheikh; 'all the lines of steamers which ply upon this coast guard themselves expressly against any risk of that sort. A clause is printed on every passage-ticket to the effect that they will not guarantee that any passenger shall be able to land at Jaffa. All that they will do, or that anyone could expect them to do, is to carry the passengers back to Jaffa from the port to which they were carried on free of charge.'

'But isn't this state of things too shocking and dreadful?' exclaimed the Gusher. 'Surely the dear kind authorities might find some remedy for it!'

‘ I am afraid that the “ dear kind authorities,” as you call them, will not bother themselves about the matter,’ replied the Sheikh, smiling, ‘ if by them you mean the Turkish Government or officials. And, of course, you must remember that it is only at one particular season of the year—that is to say, in the depth of winter—that such accidents as I have described are likely to occur. For nine months at least the landing is perfectly easy and safe.’

‘ At any rate, no lives were lost, and that was a blessing,’ observed the Archbishop, who had listened with great sympathy to the tale of the sufferings and trials of his brother priest.

‘ I wish that I could say the same for another accident which came very close home to me,’ said the Sheikh, with unusual gravity and sadness in the tone of his voice. ‘ A far more tragic event occurred only a few winters ago. A steamer arrived from Beyrout and Haifa, with a large number of passengers on board for Jaffa. The weather was decidedly rough, but one boat ventured out from the inner harbour in order to fetch the passengers to the shore. The captain hesitated a long time before giving permission to anyone to leave the ship. There were, however, so many clamouring to get off that at last he reluctantly consented. No sooner was the boat alongside the vessel than it was filled to overflowing with men, women, and children, all eager to disembark. Including the native boatmen, over forty people crowded into the boat. The captain, seeing it overcrowded, shouted to his sailors not to let them depart. But it was too late ; they had already pushed off from the vessel, and, heedless of his expostulations, they made for the shore. On shooting the narrow passage between the rocks the boat was struck by a terrific wave, which completely swamped it,

and caused it to overturn. Twenty-eight of the passengers were drowned, and amongst them were five dear friends of my own.'

A shudder of horror passed through the forms of all of the tribe as they listened to this tragic story, and one or two of the more timid among them began to repent that they had come so far. The Sheikh, however, reassured them by once more pointing out the absolutely calm surface of the sea ; and in due course of time, without any incident to cause any alarm, the whole tribe were landed on the quay at Jaffa, and thus set foot on the actual shores of the Holy Land.



## CHAPTER III

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THE HOLY LAND

The Jerusalem Hotel, Jaffa—Biblical bedrooms—The house of Simon the Tanner—Camels and their loads—Jonah and the whale—The Book of Jonah and its interpretation—The English Hospital—Miss Walker—Arnott's school for native children—'Bible Pills.'

THE first impressions of the Holy Land produced variously characteristic effects on the different members of the tribe, as they followed the Sheikh through the steep, dirty, narrow, yet withal quaintly picturesque and fascinating streets of Jaffa to the Jerusalem Hotel, in the middle of the German colony.

The Pessimist scarcely once removed his fingers from his nose, vowing that the stenches were beyond all human conception or endurance. The Enthusiast, on the other hand, was almost wild with excitement, uttering loud exclamations of delight at every novel spectacle which greeted his eyes.

The Matter-of-fact Man astonished several of the natives by endeavouring to point out to them in English how, in his opinion, they ought to conduct their business. One muleteer in particular was completely overwhelmed with bewilderment when his animal was suddenly stopped by this European stranger, who proceeded leisurely to examine its bit and bridle, discoursing meanwhile in an unknown tongue on the abominations and the shortcomings



of the mule's native accoutrements. The Gusher was literally bubbling over with superlatives, whilst the General Nuisance, for her part, was itching to her fingertips to inaugurate radical measures of reform with regard to the habits and customs of daily life which scandalized her at every step of her path. As for the Malaprop, so bewildered was she by all that she saw and heard that the memoranda which she jotted down in her notebook became hopelessly confused and involved; and when she came to transcribe them to her diary in the evening they were absolutely unintelligible even to herself.

The Archbishop and the Fossil walked through the streets of Jaffa, one on either side of the Sheikh, plying him with innumerable questions and arguments. Behind them came Monte Carlo, regaling the Angel with amusing anecdotes and reminiscences suggested by the scenes through which they passed.

The whole procession was brought up in the rear by a body of stalwart native porters with the baggage, each bearing a burden which would have crushed the sturdiest railway porter in England. In this manner the whole tribe at length arrived at the entrance of the Jerusalem Hotel. Here they were received in the most reverential and courteous manner by the German landlord, Herr Hardegg by name, an old and esteemed acquaintance of the Sheikh. A most excellent fellow, thoroughly honest and straightforward in all his ways, carefully attentive to the comfort of his customers, deeply religious and serious by nature, with a grave and almost austere demeanour, Herr Hardegg was, nevertheless, though utterly unconscious of it himself, a profound humorist. Everything in his hotel bore eloquent testimony to this fact. His very name in the circumstances was irresistibly funny.

'Fancy stopping at a hotel managed by a Hard Egg!' Monte Carlo dryly remarked to the Enthusiast.

Nor was this by any means all. The worthy landlord was wont with much gravity to inform his customers that when quite a small boy, living in his native village of Swabia, he had felt a strong spiritual yearning to live in the Holy Land, and that finally, feeling it impossible any longer to repress this internal impulse, he had migrated with his family and settled in Palestine.

How far that same internal spiritual yearning had influenced him in setting up a hotel in the Holy Land he did not precisely explain. But however that may have been, having established his hotel, he felt it incumbent upon him to make it harmonize in every way with the sacred associations of the land of his adoption. Consequently, he had divided his hotel into two wings, each containing twelve bedrooms; and in the most serious spirit he had distinguished them by the names of 'The Old Testament Wing' and 'The New Testament Wing' respectively. The twelve bedrooms in the Old Testament wing were named after the twelve tribes of Israel, and those in the latter wing after the twelve Apostles. This arrangement of the pious landlord was calculated to give rise to some curious misunderstandings on the part of those who were not acquainted with the facts. For example, the General Nuisance, who had elbowed her way to the very front of the party, and had been the first to attract the attention of Herr Hardegg, was overwhelmed with amazement when the landlord handed her over to one of his domestics, saying:

'Take this lady up to Peter.'

Indignantly turning round to the Sheikh, she demanded:

'What does the creature mean?'

Even when the situation was explained to her she was but little mollified, and she followed the domestic to the bedroom assigned to her muttering something about 'indecent profanity.'

The Archbishop, again, was at first painfully shocked when he was drafted off to St. John the Evangelist ; but, after he had had a long conversation with Herr Hardegg, he became convinced of his religious principles, and then the naming of the bedrooms after the tribes and the Apostles appeared to him a very beautiful and appropriate arrangement.

The Fossil smiled with contemptuous disdain at what he considered 'mere puerile nonsense' when he found himself assigned to Simon Zelotes ; but the Gusher went into raptures of delight when expatiating on the comfort and excellence of what she called her 'dear sweet Benjamin.'

The Angel and the Malaprop shared between them Judah, which was a double-bedded room, and the former was kept awake till late in the night endeavouring to make the latter understand the difference between Judah and Judas, and between Simeon and Simon.

In his eagerness to make the best use of all his opportunities, the Enthusiast went up to Herr Hardegg, and said :

'Now, look here, my friend, I want you to give me a room which commands the best prospect over the surrounding country.'

'Sir,' replied the worthy host, 'you cannot do better than look out of the windows of Nathaniel.'

To Nathaniel in due course the Enthusiast was, to his great delight, conducted.

As soon as they had all settled down in their respective quarters breakfast was announced, and the whole tribe,

after their early rising and the exciting experiences through which they had already passed, were quite prepared to do full justice to the well-cooked viands served up by the daughters and nieces of their courteous host. The Jaffa wine, from the landlord's own vineyards, and the beautiful oranges freshly gathered from his garden, added greatly to the interest and enjoyment of the repast.

Immediately afterwards they sallied forth in a body to see the principal sights of the city, and in course of time, under the guidance of the Sheikh, they arrived at the so-called 'House of Simon the Tanner,' the great show-place *par excellence* of Jaffa. The native guides and dragomans inform the tourists that it was in this identical house that St. Peter lodged nearly nineteen hundred years ago. As a matter of fact, the house itself is scarcely eighty years old, but that is a mere detail. What is of genuine interest about it is that it stands in the midst of the quarter of modern Jaffa which is still devoted to the industry of tanning; and as few changes ever take place in that wonderful land of the past, it is tolerably certain that the tanneries of ancient Joppa were situated in the same locality. Therefore, if the flat-roofed house of the present day does not stand on the actual site of old Simon's abode, it must be somewhere in the immediate neighbourhood; and, as one stands on the roof and gazes over the bright blue Mediterranean, and allows one's eyes to range along the coast, northwards towards the ruins of Cæsarea, or southwards as far as the solitary mounds of Askalon, one feels that, at any rate, the sea and the sky, the mountains and the plains, have not materially altered since the Apostle's time, and that one is looking on much the same scene as St. Peter himself must have witnessed on that memorable day when he saw that mystic vision which led to the first preaching of

the Gospel to the Gentiles, in the person of Cornelius, the Roman centurion of Cæsarea.

As the Sheikh and his tribe stood on the roof gazing on the historic scene, the events connected with the ancient seaport naturally formed the subject for conversation. The Matter-of-fact Man was the unconscious means of introducing the theme, by drawing the attention of his companions to a couple of camels which were leisurely walking along the shores of a small bay lying below them on the left.

‘Good gracious!’ he exclaimed suddenly, ‘what on earth have those camels got upon their backs? They look like huge blocks of timber, but surely no living animal could carry such weights as those would be if they were solid wood.’

‘They are baulks of timber,’ replied the Sheikh, looking in the direction indicated, ‘and really those burdens are by no means excessively heavy for camels; it is astonishing what loads they can carry, as you will have many opportunities of judging for yourself before our journey through Palestine is completed. And, by the way, the sight which you are looking at reminds me to tell you that it was to this very port of Joppa that the timber was floated down in rafts from the Phœnician ports of Tyre and Sidon, after it had been hewn down from the cedar groves of Lebanon, for the building of Solomon’s temple. No doubt, if we had been standing here in the time of Solomon, we should have seen crowds of camels lining that bay, being laden with the timber as it was washed ashore, and starting off in long strings along that path which you see climbing the hill towards the inland; for there is no doubt that the wood was carried up on the backs of camels such as those from Joppa to Jerusalem.’

'I should think the poor animals must have a pretty hard time of it,' remarked the Angel. 'I noticed that many of the camels seemed to be terribly overladen as we passed them through the streets of Jaffa this morning.'

'The brutes of drivers seemed to be treating them very cruelly,' said the Matter-of-fact Man.

'And many of them looked so thin and miserable,' replied the Archbishop, 'that I should think that they get barely enough food to keep them alive.'

'Your observations remind me of a very amusing and characteristic fable which was once related to me over a Bedouin camp-fire,' observed the Sheikh. 'I was traveling at the time in Eastern Palestine, and on that particular evening I was enjoying the hospitality of an Arab Sheikh. After our evening meal we were sitting on the ground in front of his hut, smoking our nargilehs previously to retiring to rest, and our conversation had drifted on to the subject of the Sultan of Turkey and the Ottoman Government in general. You must know that the genuine Arabs of the desert, though they nominally profess allegiance to the Sultan, in reality hate and abhor the Turks; and if they could only become sufficiently united in themselves, they would not hesitate to throw off the Ottoman yoke. They regard the Sultan himself as an unwarrantable usurper, since he can claim no lineal descent from the prophet Mohamed, and therefore, as they say, he has no right to assume sovereign sway over the Mohamedan world. You must clearly understand this before you can properly appreciate the force of the fable which my Arab host related to me.'

'One thing you may have noticed is that every string of camels, as they proceed along their journey in single file, is headed by a donkey. One of the camel-drivers rides the donkey, and holds over his shoulder in one hand

the rope which is attached to the halter of the leading camel. Each camel is united to the one in front of him by a similar rope through his halter, the other end of which is tied either to the saddle or to the tail of the camel before him. This also it is necessary to explain, or you would miss the whole point of the fable. Here it is :

‘Once upon a time a camel-driver lay at the point of death at the door of his tent. His camels crowded round him, embittering his dying moments with terrible curses. “Master,” they said, “we curse thee. Not because thou hast laden us with grievous burdens too heavy to be borne, though, as thou knowest full well, this has often been our lot. Not because thou hast beaten us with merciless blows, though, as thou thyself can see, we still bear on our bodies the marks of thy cruelty. Not because thou hast half-starved us, though, as thou must confess, we never have had sufficient to eat. Not for any of these injuries do we curse thee now ; these we might have pardoned thee. But there is one insult which is beyond forgiveness, and for this we send thee into the next world with our undying curses. The gross iniquity for which we curse thee is that thou hast never let us go forth except at the tail of a donkey.” Thereupon the dying camel-driver’s features became illuminated with an unutterable expression of relief, satisfaction, and peace, as, raising himself with difficulty on his elbow, he replied : “ If that is the only reason why you curse me, then I die happy and blessed indeed, for, so far from insulting you, I have been conferring upon you the greatest honour ; in making you follow the lead of a donkey, I have only been likening you to the Turkish Ministers at Constantinople, who are all of them led by that donkey the Sultan.” And, breathing a sigh of placid tranquillity, he laid himself down and died.’

'By Jove! that's a capital fable!' exclaimed Monte Carlo; 'I must book that for my store of reminiscences.'

'But why?' interjected the Matter-of-fact Man, who had evidently been pondering over the camel's burdens whilst the Sheikh had been relating the fable; 'it must have been precious hard work for those camels, carrying all that heavy lumber you spoke of just now up into the mountains of Jerusalem.'

'How far is it from here to Jerusalem by the road which they would have taken?' asked the Archbishop.

'And how high is Jerusalem above the level of the sea?' asked the Angel.

'The distance by the old bridle-track is a little over forty-five miles,' replied the Sheikh; 'and Jerusalem stands nearly two thousand six hundred feet above the sea-level.'

'And how long did they take in accomplishing that journey?' inquired the Enthusiast.

'About two days, I suppose,' answered the Sheikh. 'Orientals frequently take matters very leisurely. But if the camel-drivers were pressed for time, they could have got their animals over the ground in little more than a day.'

'They wanted the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in those days,' growled the General Nuisance.

'I am sorry to say there is plenty of scope for their work in Palestine at the present day,' sadly answered the Sheikh. 'Before we have finished our journey through this country you will have seen many evidences of heartless cruelty which the natives display towards the dumb creatures.'

'Oh, please don't talk of such horrors!' impetuously exclaimed the Gusher. 'It is really too dreadful to think about.'



'I guess you will have plenty of opportunities of venting your disgust,' chimed in Monte Carlo—'that is to say, unless these people are very different from most Orientals. I tell you, there is nothing which makes a fellow's blood boil with indignation like the brutal manner in which most Orientals treat their animals.'

'Just let me catch one of them at it, and he'll remember it for some time,' quietly remarked the Matter-of-fact Man; and it was evident that he meant what he said.

'To return to Joppa,' interposed the Archbishop. 'It was from this port, was it not, that Jonah embarked on his disastrous voyage when he tried to escape from his mission to Nineveh?'

'Oh, come, come!' snapped the Fossil, 'you are not going to rake up that exploded story, are you?'

Several of the tribe looked at the old don with expressions of outraged sentiment and surprise as the Archbishop hastily rejoined:

'Exploded story indeed, when it is solemnly recorded in the Bible! You really must respect the feelings of your fellow-travellers, if you please.'

'I should rather think so,' muttered the General Nuisance.

'But, my dear Archbishop,' exclaimed Monte Carlo, laughing, 'do you seriously mean to say that you believe that the whale swallowed Jonah, and that Jonah survived the three days' lodging inside of his capacious stomach notwithstanding the effects of his gastric juice, to say nothing of suffocation for want of air, or drowning from the water?'

'Certainly I do,' replied the devout parson meekly. 'I find it in my Bible, and that is sufficient for me. It is no business of mine to question the how or the why.'

'And if the Bible said that Jonah swallowed the

whale, and belched him up alive three days after, I suppose you would have believed that equally ?' sneered the Fossil.

'As the Holy Bible does not make any such statement, I am not called upon to consider any hypothesis so profane and ridiculous as you have stated,' replied the Archbishop haughtily, and in a tone which implied that he thought his answer irresistibly crushing.

'For the life of me,' returned Monte Carlo, 'I cannot see why the one hypothesis should be more profane and ridiculous than the other, with all due respect to your Reverence. Indeed, the only plausible explanation I ever heard of the story is that there was a public-house on the seashore with the sign of the Whale, and that after Jonah had been soaking there for three days and three nights he was summarily ejected by the landlord, having expended all his cash.'

The poor Archbishop nearly fainted at this profane levity, and the General Nuisance threw up her hands in pious horror ; even the Angel turned her head aside to hide the blushes caused by this rude shock to her instincts of reverence and propriety. The Malaprop, however, gravely proceeded to make a note of the explanation in her memorandum book, not in the least realizing that it was merely a joke on the part of Monte Carlo at the narrowness of the Archbishop's ideas.

The Enthusiast, somewhat bewildered by the turn the conversation had taken, looked towards the Sheikh with an inquiring expression on his face, saying :

'Perhaps you will be able to throw some light upon this strange and mysterious incident.'

The Sheikh had been listening silently to the foregoing discussion with a smile upon his lips, and he now said, in response to the Enthusiast's appeal :

‘It seems to me that far too much has been made of the so-called mystery surrounding the incident in question. The real explanation is very simple. All the difficulties which have arisen on the one side or the other have been due to a misapprehension of the nature of the record. Both the devout believer and the sceptical objector have taken it for granted that the Book of Jonah is a prosaic narration of history. As a matter of fact, the Book of Jonah is simply a dramatic poem, and I am sure that our learned friend here will corroborate me in this.’

‘Quite so, quite so,’ nodded the Fossil approvingly, as the Sheikh turned to him whilst saying these words.

‘I would go further, however,’ continued the Sheikh, ‘and describe it as an inspired drama.’

‘Inspired most certainly, and beyond all doubt,’ murmured the Archbishop.

‘Well, now,’ pursued the Sheikh, ‘like most dramatic poems with a moral and didactic purpose, the Book of Jonah has introduced a figurative incident or series of incidents, just such as, for example, we find in such dramas as “Faust” and the “Merchant of Venice,” or in such a dramatic poem as Browning’s “Pied Piper of Hamelin.” In these and similar compositions we do not pause to inquire whether the persons or the events therein depicted were actual historical realities; we know that that is entirely beside the question. The moral purpose of the poem or drama is not in the least degree affected by such a consideration as to whether such people as Faust, Mephistopheles, Shylock, Portia, and the like ever lived or no, or as to whether any old man was ever supernaturally transformed into a youth; whether a pound of flesh was really ever demanded from a human breast, or whether a mysterious stranger really ever charmed by the magic of his music the rats and the children of a German city into the

supernaturally open bowels of a German mountain. We understand in each and every case that the only matter worth our study and consideration is the moral purpose which the author had in view in the composition of his drama or poem, and the moral lesson we are intended to derive from its perusal. Apply this principle to the Book of Jonah, and all difficulty vanishes at once. The moral purpose, or, in other words, the genuineness of its inspiration, is not in the least affected by the question as to whether a human being was ever swallowed by a whale, and after a certain time was really belched up from the depths of his belly on to the seashore, or whether a huge gourd really ever sprang up miraculously in a single night in the literal sense implied by a superficial study of the events described in the Book of Jonah. The important point is the moral and doctrinal teaching imparted by the poem. If a person deliberately opposes his own will and inclination to the dictates of God, as clearly revealed to him by the external law or by the promptings of his conscience, that person is certain to find himself sooner or later in circumstances as desperate and disagreeable as Jonah would have been in the whale's belly. If the Divine mercy and forbearance is so wonderful as is pictured by the incident of the gourd, man must be merciful and forbearing too. This is briefly, as I take it, the true purpose of the Book of Jonah in the canon of the inspired Word of God.'

A general murmur of gratified conviction passed through the circle of the Sheikh's earnest listeners, and the Angel was the first to express her thanks audibly for the explanation which had just been given. Even the Fossil said :

'You are certainly right. I am ashamed that this has never occurred to me before.'

Monte Carlo at the same time cried out in enthusiasm :

‘ Bravo ! bravo ! I withdraw my public-house in favour of your dramatic poem.’

‘ But stay, my friend,’ objected the Archbishop, who alone of the tribe appeared still unconvinced ; ‘ this ingenious explanation of yours will hardly hold water, for our blessed Lord has deliberately stamped His seal on the actual fact. He distinctly said : “ As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” ’

‘ Pardon me,’ replied the Sheikh, ‘ I fully expected that you would put forward that objection, but there is really no force in that argument at all. The poem of Jonah was well known to those whom Christ was addressing, and He merely used the familiar dramatic episode as an illustration of the great truth which He desired to enunciate. By so doing He in no way implied that He regarded that episode as an actual fact of history. If I were expostulating with a hard-hearted and relentless creditor who was demanding his utmost dues from some poor miserable wretch of a debtor, I should probably say to him : “ You are as bad as Shylock. As he demanded his pound of flesh, so you are demanding yours.” By so doing I should not be understood to be asserting my belief that Shylock was really an actual character of history. If I liken a tempter to Mephistopheles, I do not claim the story of Mephistopheles and Faust as an actual historical event.’

‘ You are right,’ said the Archbishop after a moment’s reflection, frankly extending his right hand to him. ‘ I begin to see that there is a danger in looking at these records from too literal and narrow a point of view, and already I feel that my pilgrimage through this country will assist me to a broader and more intelligent attitude.’

This latter observation he made in a somewhat confidentially low tone to the Sheikh as they descended together the stone staircase from the roof of the tanner's house in the rear of the general body of the tribe.

Having visited the excellent English hospital dedicated to the memory of a lady named Miss Mangan, who literally sacrificed her life to its foundation and erection, they called for a few minutes at the equally beneficent institution known as Miss Walker-Arnott's school for native children, and then they returned to the Jerusalem Hotel, whence they started the following morning for Jerusalem. As their courteous host bade them one and all farewell he put into the hands of each member of the tribe a little printed pamphlet of his own composition, consisting of some moral reflections on a text of Scripture for every morning and every evening of the year. On examining this pamphlet they found the following inscription on the title-page :

## BIBLE PILLS

BY HERR HARDEGG.

ONE TO BE TAKEN EVERY MORNING AND EVERY EVENING,  
TO ASSIST YOUR SPIRITUAL DIGESTION.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE INVASION OF THE IRON HORSE

Fifteen miles an hour versus four—The good old days—Cruelty to animals—Spurious holy places—Lydda—Ramleh—Ekron—Bethshemesh—Gezer—The Valley of Aijalon—Intelligent study of the Bible—‘Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon’—The cave of Makkedah—The Valley of Sorek—Ebenezer—A slight misunderstanding.

‘I MUST say I think this is rather a prosaic way of going up to Jerusalem,’ observed the Enthusiast to the Gusher as the train slowly moved away from the station at Jaffa. ‘I almost wish that I had taken the carriage road instead.’

‘Oh dear, oh dear,’ answered his companion, fanning herself vigorously, for the day was very warm, ‘I hardly know which I should like best ; it is all so truly, truly delightful. I scarcely know whether I am awake or dreaming. Everything is so deliciously new and strange to me.’

‘Would it not have been better to have gone by carriage?’ said the Enthusiast again, addressing himself this time to the Sheikh. ‘I should have thought it would have been so much more romantic, and that we should have seen the country so much better.’

‘I can quite appreciate your feelings,’ replied the Sheikh, ‘though I do not entirely agree with your conclusions. When the railroad was being constructed I

was one of the strongest in my objections against the project, for it seemed to me, as to so many other people, to be such an act of vandalism, and to run so entirely counter to all one's natural and religious sentiments upon the subject.'

'I entirely agree with you,' said the Angel, 'and I feel almost as if we were committing a profanity in travelling in the Holy Land in a common railway train.'

'On the other hand, we are very comfortable, and we get over the ground much faster,' remarked the Matter-of-fact Man.

'Do you remember Thackeray's cynical prophecy?' observed the Fossil; 'I have been thinking of it ever since we arrived at the station, and trying to imagine his feelings if he were with us now.'

'What was that prophecy?' asked the Gusher. 'Oh, do please, please tell us. Anything that Thackeray said must be lovely; I adore Thackeray.'

'It was somewhere about the middle of the last century,' replied the Fossil, 'just at the time when the great railway mania was at its height in England—the palmy days of the famous railway king, Hudson, though I dare say most of you have never even heard of his name—such is fame! Thackeray indited a sparkling satire in the pages of *Punch* against what he and many other people considered a senseless and temporary craze, for there were few persons in those days who ever dreamt that railway locomotion would have developed to its present proportions.'

'That I remember well,' interposed the Archbishop. 'When I was a young boy——'

'If you will excuse me I will finish my story first,' said the Fossil, glaring at his old antagonist for interrupting him. 'As I was saying, Thackeray wrote the satire, and in it he said, as nearly as I can at this moment recollect,



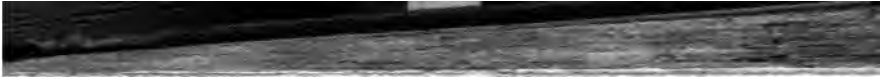
something to this effect : " If this state of things goes on much longer even the Holy Land itself will not be safe from the invasion of the Iron Horse. The shrill whistle of the engine will resound over the Plain of Sharon, and the stentorian voice of the guard will be heard shouting : "Ease her, stop her! Change for Joppa!" Poor Thackeray! what would he say now ?

' He would probably say that his prophecy had been fulfilled,' observed the Matter-of-fact Man.

' He certainly would,' assented the Sheikh, ' for here are we, just emerging from this sandy cutting on to the Plain of Sharon itself.'

' You have not yet told me why you disagree with my conclusions as to the carriage road being the better way of travelling,' said the Enthusiast, who had not by any means become reconciled up to the present with the prosaic train.

' There are two reasons why I am free to confess that I am by no means sorry that the railway has come into existence, and why I should always advise my friends to travel by it. In the first place, there is the material and practical reason. Here we are, gliding smoothly and comfortably along at the rate of about fifteen miles an hour, not too fast to observe the country on either side out of these large and convenient windows, and we shall arrive at our destination comparatively fresh and un-fatigued in about three hours and a half from the time of our departure from Jaffa. Formerly we were jolted along for more than thirteen weary hours over a rough, uneven, stony road in a wretched old ramshackle conveyance drawn by three miserable, half-starved horses, and driven by a native Jehu, whose one and sole idea of horsemanship was to let the reins loose over the animals' backs, take the whip in both his hands, and thrash



unmercifully into the poor beasts from the beginning to the end of the way.'

'I'd have thrashed unmercifully into the brute himself,' exclaimed the General Nuisance, and for once in a way she had the sympathies of the whole tribe with her.

'But I suppose you could stop him from doing it, couldn't you?' said the Matter-of-fact Man.

'It was not so easy as you would think,' replied the Sheikh. 'In the first place, the passengers were generally inside this conveyance, which would have curtains all round, to be raised or lowered according to the weather, and one of the curtains would be between the passengers and the driver, so that they would not see what was going on. Then, again, these drivers were the most stubborn and obstinate beasts in the world, and they paid not the slightest heed to all your remonstrances and expostulations. If you proceeded to extremities and took their whip away from them they would as soon as not drive the whole thing into a ditch or over a precipice. I tried it on myself on one occasion when driving from Jerusalem to Hebron with a couple of friends, and we had no less than nineteen accidents on the road before we returned to our quarters in safety. Every one of these accidents, we were perfectly certain, was the result of deliberate malice on the driver's part. He pretended that the horses had become unmanageable owing to his no longer having the whip with which to control them. Another pleasant little episode that would vary and enliven the proceedings about every quarter of an hour, in the good old days when we used to drive from Jaffa to Jerusalem, would be the snapping of a trace, or the breakage of some portion or another of the rotten harness and tackle. The driver would then descend from his perch in the most leisurely fashion, and calmly proceed to produce sundry

pieces of twine from various recesses and folds of his garment, and, whistling or singing to himself some lugubrious Arabic ditty, would commence to tie up the disjointed fragments in the most casual manner in the world, paying no more heed to your objurgations as to the delay or your entreaties to him to hurry up than if you had never spoken at all. Altogether it is not a change very much for the worse, speaking from the point of material comfort, that we have now a railway from Jaffa to Jerusalem.'

Most of the tribe saw the matter in the same light, and even the Enthusiast began to think that the glamour of romance might sometimes be purchased too dearly.

'Really it seems very disgraceful that these people should be allowed to treat their animals so cruelly, does it not?' said the Angel. 'One would think that their own instincts would teach them to be more humane.'

'Cruelty to animals is ingrained in them from their earliest childhood,' replied the Sheikh. 'The first toy which a mother gives her infant is a little live bird for the child to play with by plucking out its feathers, and it is the commonest thing in the world, if you go into any Oriental house, to see a child amusing itself by holding in its hand a piece of string, the other end of which is fastened tightly round the leg of a chicken, the amusement being to allow the chicken to get to the end of its tether, and then to jerk it back again with all the force that the child can exert. Now and then, by way of variation, the child will stand up and deliberately whirl the unfortunate chicken over its head, having shortened the string in its hand. With a training like this one cannot be surprised at the cruelties which are so rampant all over the country. Indeed, I believe that in many of the cases the people do not realize that the animals have any feeling, for

the common mass of Orientals are a desperately ignorant lot.'

'Brutes!' exclaimed the Enthusiast. 'I should like to flay them alive, and see how they would like it!'

'Yes,' replied Monte Carlo, 'they would offer a most appropriate subject for the experiment of Gilbert's "Mikado," and of making the punishment fit the crime.'

'You said just now that there were two reasons why the railway is preferable to the carriage road,' remarked the Archbishop to the Sheikh, as though he felt it were time to change the subject of conversation. 'What is the second reason?'

'Simply this,' replied the Sheikh: 'the railway traverses a far more interesting tract of country than is the case with the old carriage road. Indeed, by the latter route there is scarcely one single spot of genuinely sacred interest the whole way from Jaffa to Jerusalem.'

'What do you mean by that?' exclaimed the General Nuisance. 'I have with me a volume of sermons by an eminent American preacher who travelled in this country a few years ago, and those sermons are entirely devoted to the different sacred sites and scenes which he had visited on the carriage road to Jerusalem from Jaffa. They were preached to enthusiastic and crowded congregations on his return to New York, and I frequently study them myself with the greatest pleasure and profit. Indeed, only last evening before retiring to rest I read a most interesting discourse upon the conflict between David and Goliath, which included a graphic and glowing description of the very scene where the memorable incident occurred, and which the preacher expressly states that he visited himself a few hours before he reached Jerusalem.'

'And surely,' added the Archbishop, 'I have read in books written by travellers that, amongst other places,

Arimathæa, Kirjath Jearim, and Emmaus all lie upon this road.'

'What you state is perfectly true,' replied the Sheikh, smiling. 'Such statements do occur in many books. And as for the volume of sermons by the American preacher, I am well aware of it myself. No doubt they were very eloquently delivered, and the moral lessons derived from them are unimpeachable. The only drawback is that not one single spot upon which the preacher expatiates is in reality genuine or authentic. Every one of the so-called sacred spots are spurious, including those which have been mentioned.'

The General Nuisance gave a grunt of offended incredulity, and the Archbishop said :

'But how could these errors which you assert have arisen ?'

'Simply enough,' responded the Sheikh. 'Several causes have contributed to the gradual introduction of fictitious sites. The ignorance of geographical and historical matters in the times of the Crusades is responsible for many of the errors which have crept in. Then, again, the rapacity of the mediæval monks, and their anxiety to extort as many votive offerings as possible from the devout and superstitious pilgrims, led them to invent all sorts of imaginary sites and relics at the most convenient and frequented spots. So that it is no wonder that along so common a pilgrim-road as that from Jaffa to Jerusalem these spurious holy places should have sprung up.'

'So like those grasping ecclesiastics,' murmured the Fossil, whose remark was fortunately unheard by the Archbishop.

'But, after all, many of the inventions are of comparatively modern growth,' added the Sheikh, 'and they

are merely instances of the law of supply and demand. You see, the traveller through the Holy Land was until lately almost at the mercy of a native dragoman or native guide. Well, the dragoman class has considerably altered for the better during the last few years, and many of those native guides are now well informed, intelligent, and reliable. But twenty or thirty years ago the ordinary dragoman was a self-educated Syrian, who had picked up a little smattering of English at one of the missionary schools, and who, therefore, thought himself perfectly qualified to become a personal conductor of English-speaking tourists through the country. He had learned his lesson like a parrot, and took his travellers over the beaten track of the ordinary tourist. If he found himself a mile or two to the right or left of this track he did not know where he was. Well, then the British or American tourist came to Palestine, fulfilling the dream of a lifetime, and spending a lot of money. Naturally, he wished to see as much as he could for his money. In the course of his ride through the country he came, we will say, to some village or town. He inquired of the dragoman what had happened there. If the innocent reply came, "Nothing happened here that I know of," the immediate answer was: "Then something ought to have happened here. What is the use of wasting my time and money bringing me to a place where nothing happened?" The dragoman made a mental note of this, and the next time he brought a party to the spot he took care that something had happened there. That is literally the way in which many of the holy sites of Palestine have been manufactured.'

'It must be very unsatisfactory travelling through the Holy Land under such auspices,' remarked the Angel. 'One must be constantly at a loss to know what is true and what is false.'

‘Oh, things are much better now,’ said the Sheikh. ‘The Palestine Exploration Survey has cleared away many misconceptions and errors, and what with the latest edition of handbooks, which have incorporated the most trustworthy and up-to-date information, and what with the superior training of many of the dragomans, it is in a great measure the fault of the traveller himself if he fails to acquire reliable intelligence.’

By this time the train was drawing near to a railway station, and the tribe caught sight of a picturesque village surrounded by extensive olive groves.

‘What is the name of this place?’ inquired the Enthusiast.

‘It is now called Ludd,’ replied the Sheikh, ‘but most people would be better acquainted with it under its scriptural name of Lydda.’

‘Lydda!’ exclaimed the Archbishop, as everyone looked eagerly out of the windows at the mention of the name. ‘Why, this, then, is the place where St. Peter raised Æneas from his sick bed. This is intensely interesting.’

‘The Romans, I believe, called this town Diospolis, or the city of Jupiter,’ remarked the Fossil.

‘That is so,’ assented the Sheikh, ‘and several of the early Christian Fathers, Jerome and Eusebius amongst the rest, mention it under that name.’

‘Is there any reference to it in the Old Testament?’ inquired the General Nuisance.

‘It is incidentally mentioned three times under the name of Lod in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah and the first Book of Chronicles, but all we gather from these is that it originally belonged to the tribe of Benjamin,’ replied the Sheikh. ‘But from the second century of our era it has been the seat of an Episcopal diocese.’

‘I fancy that I have read somewhere that Lydda was the birthplace of the English patron saint, George,’ remarked the Angel.

‘Your memory is quite correct,’ answered the Sheikh, ‘and if you look well away there to the left you can just see a ruined church beyond those trees. That church is named after St. George ; it is a fine specimen of Crusading architecture, and dates from the middle of the twelfth century. Underneath the church is a crypt in which the tomb of St. George is still shown.’

Their route now took them through the midst of the dense olive groves for nearly two miles, and almost immediately after emerging from these groves they found themselves at the next station, on the outskirts of a large and flourishing town, of a very attractive appearance. A carriage road crossed the line immediately beyond the station.

‘This town is called Ramleh, and, as you see, it stands on the old highway from Jaffa to Jerusalem. This road which we are now crossing is the identical carriage road of which we have been talking,’ said the Sheikh.

‘Then here we are at another sacred place,’ observed the Archbishop, ‘for, if I mistake not, this is the birthplace of Joseph of Arimathæa.’


‘No, you are quite wrong there,’ replied the Sheikh ; ‘you have got hold of one of those fictitious sites to which I have alluded. This is the third of such places which would have been pointed out to you by the ordinary dragoman if you had gone with him along the old carriage road. The first would have been a house just outside Jaffa, which, for no apparent reason, except that it stands on the highway of the pilgrims, has been fixed upon as the original home of Tabitha, or Dorcas. The second is a dirty mud-village called Yazûr, where, for no



reason whatever, you would have been gravely assured that Samson set the foxes' tails on fire. The third spurious holy place, as I have just said, is this pretty modern little town of Ramleh. Owing to some imaginary resemblance between the words "Ramleh" and "Ramah," the mediæval monks pitched upon this place as the site of Arimathæa, the Greek representative of the Hebrew Ramah. But the monks only showed their ignorance in so doing, for Ramleh and Ramah have nothing whatever to do with one another. Ramah signifies "a hill," and is a very common name throughout the country; Ramleh means "sandy," and is so called from the nature of the soil which you see around you here. So far as we know, this place is not mentioned at all in the Bible, though it played a very important part during the time of the Crusades, chiefly because it stood at the junction of what were then the two principal roads in Palestine—the one from Jaffa to Jerusalem, and the other from Egypt to Damascus.'

The line now struck in a south-easterly direction across the Plain of Sharon, and myriads of wild-flowers, principally scarlet anemones, delighted the eyes of the travellers. Presently, directing their attention to a village surrounded by trees, which was clearly visible about a mile and a half to the right of the line, the Sheikh informed them that that was undoubtedly the site of the ancient Philistine city of Ekron, whither the Ark of the Covenant was brought from Gath, and whence it was carried up to Bethshemesh. This latter place is now represented by a small village called Ain Shems, close to the next station where the train stopped. Bethshemesh signified 'the House of the Sun,' and Ain Shems meant 'the Fountain of the Sun.'

Before they reached this spot, however, they passed



immediately round the base of a prominent and solitary hill on their left, the upper portion of which had been artificially levelled, so as to afford an even plateau on which to build a village or town. The Sheikh pointed this out to his companions, and explained to them that that was the custom of forming settlements in olden days in order to render them safer from attack. Three sides of the hill were made as precipitous as possible, the only approach to the village on the summit being up the steep gradient on the fourth side.

‘These hills are now called Tells,’ he said, ‘and this particular one is known as Tell Jazar. There, on that broad, level expanse on the top stood the once important Canaanitish city of Gezer.’

‘Let me see, what happened there?’ asked the Enthusiast.

‘We do not know of any especial event that happened on the spot,’ replied the Sheikh, ‘but we read that when Joshua and the Israelites were conquering the country, Horam, King of Gezer, came up to help Lachish, and Joshua utterly annihilated him and his forces. The name of Gezer occurs several times during the wars between David and the Philistines, and it was afterwards captured by one of the Pharaohs of Egypt, who gave it as a dowry to his daughter when she married Solomon.’

‘I suppose that Gezer must have been the capital of a large tract of country around here,’ said the Archbishop, ‘for the Bible speaks of the King of Gezer.’

‘Oh no, not at all,’ replied the Sheikh. ‘When you read of these Kings—as, for example, the King of Gezer, the King of Lachish, the King of Eglon, and so forth—you must only understand the chiefs of the respective villages or small towns; in fact, what we should call nowadays the Sheikhs of the various places.’

'Then I suppose that they were not very mighty folks after all,' observed the Fossil.

'Oh dear no; Bible readers in general get a very exaggerated idea of the size of everything connected with this country. Those enormous battles about which the Jewish writers made such a fuss were after all but very puny affairs—little more than affrays between the neighbouring villages of African savages of which we so often read in the pages of travellers' records.'

'Was not the Cave of Makkedah, where the five Kings, or Sheikhs, as I suppose I must call them in future, hid themselves after the Battle of Aijalon, somewhere near Gezer?' asked the Archbishop.

'Yes, and we are not far off it now. It lies about four miles away to the right yonder, but we cannot see it from this point. But if you wait till we get from behind this hill you will be able to see the valley of Aijalon quite plainly in the distance to the north-east of us.'

'That was where Joshua is supposed to have ordered the sun to stand still, was it not?' said Monte Carlo, who had hitherto been in the smoking compartment, and who had only joined the party a minute or two before. 'Now, I should like to know what you make out of that arrangement.'

'A ridiculous fable, fit only for children, which ought to be expunged from the Bible or any sensible book,' opined the Fossil.

'Well, it does seem bosh, I must confess,' remarked the Matter-of-fact Man.

The Archbishop said nothing, and probably he was beginning to be diffident about asserting his unqualified belief in the very literal interpretation of these old records. The General Nuisance, who was always ready to chime in with the Archbishop, and back him up in his

expressions of literal acceptance, seemed on this occasion to be nonplussed by his silence, for even she also held her tongue. Monte Carlo, however, turned to the Sheikh, and remarked :

‘ You seem to have an explanation ready for most of these Bible stories. Perhaps you may be able to enlighten us upon this ? ’

‘ Well, one thing is certain,’ replied the Sheikh ; ‘ the record as we have it now cannot possibly be literally true in the sense in which it is usually understood. We need not expect to be tortured in these days if we say, like poor Galileo in the Dark Ages, that the earth moves round the sun, and not the sun round the earth ; therefore we must look for some other explanation. Now, I have no doubt whatever that the main facts as recorded in the Bible are historically correct ; for, as I have already more than once told you, every research and investigation that I make convinces me more and more of the historical accuracy of the Bible from the point of view of the original writers. All we have to do if we would understand these records intelligently, then, is to try as far as we can to grasp the writers’ point of view. In doing this there are one or two fundamental principles which it is necessary for us diligently to remember. I will tick them off on my fingers first, and afterwards I will explain myself more fully. Here are the fundamental principles :

‘ 1. The Bible was written by Hebrews, from the point of view of Hebrews.

‘ 2. The writers for the most part knew little or nothing of the natural and scientific laws of cause and effect.

‘ 3. The Hebrews, like all Orientals, attributed everything that they could not understand to the direct intervention of the Deity.

‘ 4. The Hebrews as a nation did not understand that

there was only one God, to the exclusion of other gods and goddesses.

'5. Jehovah was, in the eyes of the Hebrews, their own particular tribal and national God, just exactly as Baal was the national God of the Phœnicians, Chemosh the national God of the Moabites, and Milcom the national God of the Ammonites.

'6. Consequently, when the Hebrews fought against any other nation, it was, in their idea, Jehovah fighting against the national God of that opposing nation.

'Keep these fundamental principles in view in the study of the Old Testament, and many of your difficulties will disappear.'

'But surely the Hebrews must have understood that there was only one God, for look at the First Commandment,' objected the General Nuisance.

'The First Commandment precisely proves my point,' answered the Sheikh, 'for when Moses makes Jehovah say, "Thou shalt have none other gods but Me," he distinctly implies that there were other gods, but that the Hebrews were not to have any of them as their tribal or national gods.'

'I never thought of it in that light before,' remarked the Archbishop.

'But look at it in that light now, and you will see how simple everything is,' said the Sheikh. 'It is, to my mind, a most unfortunate thing that in our translation of the Bible the Hebrew word "Jehovah" is almost always rendered "the Lord." With us the term "the Lord" is so thoroughly understood to be the one only God that we lose the force of the word as it was presented to the minds of the Hebrews of old—namely, as that of their own national Deity. If you will take my advice, and read the word "Jehovah" wherever you find "the

Lord" in the Old Testament, bearing in mind the idea of Jehovah as I have explained it to you, you will find how vastly more intelligible very many passages will become to you.'

'Of course, now I see how simple it is,' exclaimed the Angel. 'Instead of being, "I am the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt," it is really, "I am Jehovah, *thy* God, who brought thee out," and so forth. How much clearer and more intelligible that is!'

'Yes,' responded the Sheikh; 'and then, again, "I, Jehovah, *thy* God, am a jealous God." Do you not see how plain that is, Jehovah being jealous of the introduction of any other god into the Hebrew hierarchy?'

'You will soon convert me into being a devout Bible student if you go on like this much longer,' said the Fossil; 'you really are making me begin to feel that there is some thread of intelligence running through its pages.'

'I shall be grievously disappointed if you have not discovered how magnificently intelligent and interesting the Bible is from every point of view by the time that we reach Damascus,' replied the Sheikh. 'I know of nothing like a tour through the country, under proper auspices, to open the eyes both of those who disbelieve in the Bible and of those who give it a blind and unreasoning allegiance.'

'Meaning me by the first, I presume,' smiled the Fossil.

'And me by the second, I suppose,' added the Archbishop.

'But where is Joshua and the sun all this time?' interposed the Enthusiast.

'Standing still over the Plain of Aijalon, of course,' said Monte Carlo, laughing.

'It is about time that it moved on, then,' dryly remarked the Matter-of-fact Man.

'Yes, I am dying to know the explanation of that incident, so please enlighten us, dear Mr. Sheikh,' added the Gusher.

'The explanation is not difficult,' replied the Sheikh, 'if you bear in mind all that I have just been saying. I am sorry to have kept you so long with these introductory remarks, but they were of the utmost importance, and I should have had to bring them before you when we commenced our explorations of the land, so that I thought that this would be as good an opportunity as any. Now as to that hackneyed story of Joshua and the sun. Read the narrative carefully, and discriminate between the actual facts, the poetical passages, and the ideas of the Jewish writers, and you will soon bring order and intelligence out of what seems an almost hopeless tangle. First as to the facts. Joshua and his army were fighting against the allied forces of five Amorite Sheikhs from Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. The battle commenced at Gibeon, where Joshua put the allied forces to flight, and the fugitives endeavoured to escape down the mountain pass of Beth-horon to the Plain of Sharon, and so across the level country to their respective homes. Now, I will point out to you presently where all these places are situated, for their identifications are complete, and you can see from the train at least the direction where most of them lie. As the Amorites were fleeing down the pass, pursued by the Israelites, suddenly a terrific hailstorm burst upon them, and the size and weight of the hailstones killed a vast number of them. The five Sheikhs managed to escape, and hid themselves in a great cave at Makkedah. Meanwhile Joshua, seeing the effects of the terrific hailstorm, had ordered his army to desist from the pursuit, and doubtless they sheltered themselves from the storm on the heights of the mountain

range, the fugitives, in their headlong flight and blinded by the storm, imagining that they were still being pursued by them. When Joshua saw the terrific storm burst upon the hosts of his enemies, and recognised that the forces of Nature were doing the work of destruction even more effectually than he and his army could do, he naturally imagined, with his ideas about Jehovah, that this hailstorm had been directly sent by Jehovah himself, and in the excitement and triumph of his emotion he burst out into an old Hebrew war-song which was in a collection of songs known at the time as "The Book of Jasher," paraphrasing it to suit the place where he was. The war-song commenced, "Sun, stand thou still . . . and thou, moon," so the song as uttered by Joshua ran thus :

"Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon;  
And thou, moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.  
And the sun stood still,  
And the moon stayed,  
Until the people had avenged themselves  
Upon their enemies."

'The expression "Stand thou still" is really "Be thou silent," an equivalent in Hebrew for "Do not let thyself be seen." Joshua hoped and prayed that the storm would last long enough to enable them to complete the discomfiture of the enemy. This is simply the plain solution of what has been exaggerated into a mysterious miracle merely from the want of an intelligent understanding of the modes of thought, ideas, and expressions which prevailed in the days of the Hebrew writers. Now if you will come to this left-hand side of the carriage and look out of these windows, I will point out to you the scenes of that historical event.

' You notice a slight gap in the hillside away over there



beyond the valley, where there is a slight depression in the mountain ridge. That gap is the pass of Beth-Horon, and beyond it, on the other side of the crest of the mountains, stands Gibeon, hidden, of course, from our view. You will see it, however, later on when we ride from Jerusalem to Bethel. Just on the brow of the hill at the head of the pass stood Beth-Horon the Upper, for there were two villages of the same name, the Lower Beth-Horon being situated just at the foot of the pass. They are there still with virtually the same names. The Valley of Ajalon is that upon which you are now looking between us and the foot of the pass. Now come to the other side of the carriage, and look out of these windows. Away to the south-west of us, or, rather, more nearly to the south, is situated, near the entrance to a mountain gorge, similar to this which we are now approaching, and up which we are about to ascend, the well-known mound called Tell-el-Hesy, which has been identified with Lachish beyond the shadow of a doubt. A little more than three miles to the south of that site, and in the same valley, is another mound called Tell Nejleh, which is equally certainly the position of Eglon. Jarmuth lay somewhat further to the west, whilst you are already acquainted with the positions of Jerusalem and Hebron amongst the mountains. So there you have the lay of all the places mentioned in that narrative. The modern name of Makkedah is Mughâr, which literally signifies "caves," because of the remarkable caves which are situated in the side of a low naked ridge behind the village, and, curiously enough, in one of these caves Conder discovered five ancient *loculi* or graves roughly hewn in its sides, the number suggesting the possibility that they were the tombs of the five Sheikhs whom Joshua killed and buried there. see ?

The interesting explanation and accounts which the Sheikh had been giving formed the subject of discussion amongst the tribe as they slowly wound their way up the wild, majestic, and romantic mountain gorge along which the railway track gradually ascends to Jerusalem. This gorge is known in the Bible as the Valley of Sorek, and many of the scenes in the life of Samson and Delilah occurred in its immediate neighbourhood. Zorah, the birthplace of Samson, stands conspicuously on the summit of a lofty hill which rises directly above the railway track on the left, and not far off from it is the railway station of Deir Eben, which is none other than the site of 'Ebenezer' itself, where the Philistines defeated the Israelites and captured the Ark in the time of Eli, and where Samuel afterwards set up the 'Stone of Help.'

In due course of time, and without any further incident worthy of note, the tribe arrived safely at the end of their journey, and found themselves nearly torn to pieces by a noisy and excited rabble of natives clamouring to relieve them of their baggage, and to show them the way to their hotel at the modern railway station which the invasion of the iron horse has brought into existence on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

Shortly before their arrival at their destination the Malaprop sat down by the side of the Fossil, notebook in hand, and said :

'Can you tell me how long Thackeray has been dead?'

'Some forty years or so, madam, I should say, speaking from memory,' he replied.

'How long has this railway been built?' he called out to the Sheikh, who was at the other end of the carriage.

'It is rather more than ten years since it was opened,' he answered.

'Now, that's something that I don't understand,' she

said, scratching her forehead with the tip of her pencil. 'How could Thackeray have helped build this line if he has been dead so many years ?'

'Thackeray help to build this line, madam!' exclaimed the Fossil. 'What can you be talking about?'

'But you said so just when we were starting from Jaffa,' persisted the Malaprop. 'At least, I have got it so in my notebook.'

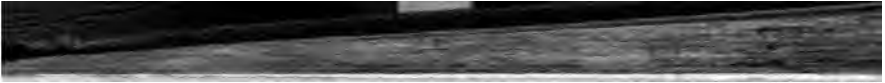
'I beg your pardon, madam, I said nothing of the kind,' replied the Fossil indignantly. 'I hope I never shall be guilty of such historical anachronisms.'

'What did you say, then?' asked the poor lady in confusion.

'I said that fifty years ago or more Thackeray prophesied in cynical derision that, if the railway mania lasted, the iron horse would invade the Holy Land, and that a railway would spring up between Joppa and Jerusalem. That is what I said, madam.'

And he coiled himself up as if to forbid any further misconstruction of his valuable observations, whilst the Malaprop retired, having humbly apologized by saying :

'Oh, I am so sorry; I beg your pardon; I must have misunderstood you. I am afraid that I must have been paying attention to something else when you were talking.'



## CHAPTER V

### THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING

The road to Jerusalem—The Montefiore Asylum—The British Ophthalmic Hospital—Missionary Methods—The Valley of Hinnom—Bishop Gobat's Schools—Lepers—The Tower of David—The Jaffa Gate—The Grand New Hotel—The view at sunset—The effect of associations.

THE railway has at least one sense of decency—it does not actually penetrate within the Holy City, its termination being nearly a mile distant from the time-honoured walls of Jerusalem.

On alighting at the station, the Sheikh was accosted by a tall, broad-shouldered, handsome Syrian, with a full moustache and a pleasant face, full of good-nature. He greeted the whole tribe with hospitable warmth, and was introduced to them by the Sheikh as the manager of the Grand New Hotel, whither they were bound.

He at once took charge of all the arrangements for the transport of the baggage to the hotel, and then conducted the tribe to carriages which he had provided for them at the entrance to the station. Most of the tribe, however, preferred to walk, though the General Nuisance, the Malaprop, the Fossil, the Pessimist, and the Matter-of-fact Man decided to adopt the easier, if less energetic, mode of transit.

The Archbishop, the Angel, and Monte Carlo had already started on their way, and they were soon after

joined by the Enthusiast and the Gusher, who had remained a few minutes behind to gaze on the busy and novel scene presented on the station platform. The Sheikh, having seen the carriage party safely off, was not long before he overtook the pedestrians.

'I am glad you have come up,' laughed Monte Carlo in his cheery voice, when the Sheikh joined the merry party; 'I was just trying to persuade his Reverence to divest himself of his boots, socks, and hat so that he might enter the city like a true pilgrim, barefoot and bareheaded, as so many of his devout brethren have done in the days of old. But he does not seem to see it, I am afraid.'

'No, no,' said the Archbishop good-humouredly; 'I have the greatest respect for those holy pilgrims, and I am truly sensible that I am treading on holy ground, but this wretched road is really too stony and rough for me to venture to take my shoes from my feet.'

'Oh dear, oh dear!' ejaculated the Gusher, as she trotted along by the side of the Enthusiast, endeavouring vainly to keep pace with his long and rapid strides. 'I feel as if I could take off my boots or do anything eccentric at this moment, it is all so delightful.'

'Why, I do believe I can see the actual walls of Jerusalem itself!' exclaimed the Enthusiast in rapture.

'You would be very blind or short-sighted if you did not,' replied the Sheikh, laughing, 'for there they are, immediately in front of us.'

At this moment they turned out of the new road which has been made to the railway terminus, and passed on to a comparatively broad highway leading directly to the Jaffa Gate of Jerusalem.

'This is the identical road to Bethlehem and Hebron which the patriarchs travelled in the days of old,' ex-



WATER-CARRIER.



plained the Sheikh in response to a query of the Angel, 'though it is probably in a better condition now than it was in their day.'

'And was it, then, along this road that the Wise Men trudged after their fruitless search for the King of the Jews in Jerusalem?' inquired the Archbishop.

'The very road,' responded the Sheikh. 'If you look behind, you can see it winding along the plain to the south. That is the Plain of Rephaim, or the Valley of the Giants, where David fought more than one successful engagement with the Philistines.'

The Gusher sighed at the mention of these sacred associations, and protested more than once that she could not believe that she was awake, she really couldn't, whilst all the party, not including Monte Carlo, were more or less affected by the spirit of the surroundings.

'How gloriously blue and purple those mountains look in the distance!' exclaimed the Enthusiast, pointing far off to the eastern horizon.

'Those are the Mountains of Moab,' explained the Sheikh. 'Though they look so clear and distinct, they are in reality about twenty-five miles from this spot.'

'Twenty-five miles!' cried Monte Carlo; 'I would have bet a sovereign that they were not more than ten miles away.'

'What a wonderful climate this must be!' remarked the Angel.

'And those mountains, are they really beyond the Dead Sea and the Jordan?' exclaimed the Archbishop, shading his eyes with his hand in order to get a better view.

'They are, of course,' replied the Sheikh. 'And stay,' he added, halting suddenly, and directing the attention of his companions to a small patch of deep blue down



in a deep hollow several miles away ; ' there is actually a glimpse of the Dead Sea itself.'

The Gusher gave a little scream of delight, and the Enthusiast clapped his hands in excitement as his eyes rested on the famous sea, which had hitherto been to him nothing more than a vague name of romance.

' I had no idea that the Dead Sea was visible from Jerusalem,' exclaimed the Angel ; ' and how close it seems to be !'

' Yet in reality it is about eighteen miles away as the crow flies,' observed the Sheikh, ' and nearly four thousand feet below our level.'

' Truly the atmosphere is wonderfully clear in this climate, and distances are very deceptive,' remarked the Archbishop as the party proceeded upon its way.

As they began to descend a short but rather steep hill, the Enthusiast pointed to a long row of neat, modern-looking houses which were standing on a terrace on the left-hand side of the road.

' There doesn't appear to be anything ancient about those buildings,' he remarked. ' What are they ?'

' Those are almshouses for poor and aged Jews,' replied the Sheikh. ' They are known as the Montefiore Asylum, since they were erected at the expense of the philanthropic centenarian, the late Sir Moses Montefiore.'

' And what is this very modern and substantial building which we are now passing on our right ?' asked the Archbishop.

That is one of the most admirable institutions in or around Jerusalem,' was the Sheikh's reply. ' It is the British Ophthalmic Hospital, built and endowed by the Grand Priory of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. The Order is under the direct patronage of our King, who takes the greatest personal interest in the working

of this hospital. An English medical officer resides here, and his wife acts as superintendent of the hospital.'

'Would it be possible to visit it during our stay in Jerusalem?' asked the Angel. 'I always take a deep interest in hospital work, and it would delight me more than I can tell you to see the work which is carried on in such sacred surroundings as these.'

'By all means,' answered the Sheikh. 'I will certainly take you there.'

'I suppose, being an English institution, this hospital is under the immediate direction of the Anglican Bishop?' said the Archbishop.

'Not officially,' replied the Sheikh, 'although Bishop Blyth is keenly interested in it, and himself pays for the endowment of one bed. Another is endowed by the Orthodox Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem. The institution, itself, however, is purely unsectarian.'

'Why is that?' asked the Archbishop, implying by the tone of his voice that he considered that a misfortune.

'The principles of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem are strictly unsectarian,' answered the Sheikh; 'and the medical officer and superintendent are strictly forbidden to allow the religion of the patients to be interfered with in any way.'

'But isn't that a pity!' said the Archbishop mournfully. 'It seems to me that so many admirable opportunities for missionary work must be lost.'

'On the contrary,' said the Sheikh, 'the principle and the practice has been found to produce the most beneficial results. The doctor and his wife have told me of many instances in which the prejudices of the natives against Christianity have been overcome by the simple fact that, whilst they received such comfort and blessing

to the physical eyes, no attempt had been made to tamper with the religious faith and convictions.'

'Now that seems to me to be the right plan upon which to proceed,' remarked Monte Carlo with enthusiasm. 'Do you know, in the course of my travels, I have often witnessed instances which have jarred terribly upon my British instincts of justice and fairness. We get these unfortunate creatures into our hospitals, we put them under a series of obligations to us, and then we take advantage of their physical condition, and we trade upon their sense of innate gratitude by preaching to them a doctrine contrary to that which they have held from their infancy, and endeavouring to persuade them to turn traitors to the faith of their fathers.'

'I don't in the least agree with you,' returned the Archbishop warmly. 'You have not stated the case fairly at all.'

'I think he has,' interposed the Sheikh gravely, 'and I must confess that I cordially agree with that view of the case. I have had a tolerably wide experience of missionary work and missionaries, not only here in Palestine, but all over the globe, and I must say that I thoroughly disapprove of the principles and methods which are so often adopted by our zealous and indiscreet people, with the best intentions in the world. Like the Pharisees of old, they compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and in too many cases they are not as particular as they might be about the methods they adopt to gain that proselyte, nor as to the genuineness of that proselyte's conversion.'

'Now, it has never occurred to me in that way before,' said the Angel; 'but when you mention it, I can see what a wonderful amount of truth and force there is in what you say.'



By this time the little band of pedestrians had crossed the valley at the bottom of the hill, and were beginning to ascend the incline which leads up to the Jaffa Gate.

‘This valley which we have just crossed,’ explained the Sheikh, ‘forms the boundary-line between the ancient tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The railway station was in Judah; the city itself is in Benjamin. The valley, which, as you see, comes down southward from up yonder, and here turns sharply round to the east, forms on this side the western boundary of Jerusalem, and behind this hill it bounds the city on the south. If you were to follow this path down the valley eastward, you would find yourself very rapidly descending, until at the further end you would be five hundred feet below the level of the city walls. This valley you are all familiar with, for it is called in the Bible the Valley of Hinnom. This hill which rises up to the right is Mount Zion itself, and that angle of the wall which you see immediately above us is the south-west corner of the city.’

‘What are those buildings in the angle?’ asked the Enthusiast.

‘They are known as Bishop Gobat’s Schools,’ replied the Sheikh; ‘and they are well worth a visit, not only on account of the admirable scholastic work that is accomplished there, but also from an antiquarian point of view. I shall take you all there, I hope, and in the grounds belonging to the school I shall be able to show you some wonderful remains of the old rock-fortress of the original city of the Jebusites, before the time of David himself.’

‘That must be, then, one of the most ancient relics in Jerusalem,’ said the Archbishop.

‘That is so,’ replied the Sheikh; ‘perhaps the most ancient of all.’

The attention of the travellers was now arrested by the

sound of piteous lamentations, accompanied by a whining cry of 'Librus, librus !' from many throats. Looking, in the direction whence the sounds proceeded, they saw, to their surprise and horror, a number of the most ghastly-looking specimens of humanity that they had ever seen in their lives. These wretched creatures were of both sexes, and their limbs and features were distorted and eaten away, so that they seemed almost to have lost their very humanity itself. They were, moreover, filthily dirty, and clad in the most repulsive rags. Each one had a small tin can, and, thrusting this forward in their eager anxiety to arrest attention, they were clamorously appealing for alms.

'Oh ! oh ! oh ! what are those hideous things ?' cried out the Gusher, running to the other side of the road ; 'surely they are not human beings, are they ?'

'Those are lepers, poor wretches !' replied the Sheikh. 'They haunt all the roads outside the city walls, but especially this road and the one to the east of Jerusalem, leading to the Mount of Olives, because the tourists are mostly to be encountered there. No,' he added suddenly, checking the Enthusiast, who was about to throw a handful of small coins amongst them, 'don't do that.'

'Why not ?' he asked in astonishment.

'I am sorry to restrain your impulses of charity,' replied the Sheikh, 'but it is for your own sake that I do so. Your life and that of us all would be rendered an intolerable nuisance to us during the whole time that we are here if you distributed your largesse amongst them in that profuse manner ; for they would recognise you every time you set foot outside the city walls, and they seem to have a sort of freemasonry amongst themselves by which they notify all their fellow-lepers in the neigh-

bourhood, so that, no matter where you went, you would be followed and pestered by them.'

'And shall we meet wretched beings like these everywhere in Jerusalem?' asked the Archbishop.

'No, thank goodness,' replied the Sheikh; 'they are not allowed inside the city walls.'

'Where do they live, then?' asked the Gusher.

'Mostly in the deserted old rock-cut tombs and caves in the Valley of Hinnom and elsewhere in the vicinity,' replied the Sheikh.

'Poor things! it seems a great shame that no better provision is made for them than that,' sighed the kind-hearted lady.

'Now, just fancy one of those creatures being cured by ducking his head in water!' said Monte Carlo. 'I say, Archbishop, that story of Naaman is rather a stickler, eh?'

'It was merely a question of faith,' replied the Archbishop piously; 'with God nothing is impossible.'

'The story of Naaman and his cure has nothing whatever remarkable about it, except the absurdly incorrect interpretation that has been put upon it,' observed the Sheikh; 'it is one of the simplest cases of disease and remedy that you could find on record anywhere.'

'By Jove! I should like to know how that could be,' said Monte Carlo.

'And so you shall, all in good season,' replied the Sheikh; 'but there is no time to discuss it now, for here we are at the Jaffa Gate, and in three minutes we shall be at our hotel.'

'Before we enter, I should like to know something about this handsome tower, standing on those massive foundations, just outside the gate,' said the Archbishop.



'I ought to have drawn your attention to it myself,' answered the Sheikh, 'but our conversation about the lepers made me forget it. That massive masonry is the lower portion of one of three great towers built by Herod the Great to fortify the walls of Jerusalem. These were called respectively the Tower of Hippicus, the Tower of Phasælus, and the Tower of Mariamne. The two latter have disappeared, but this is the foundation of the Tower of Hippicus.'

'And is that the original tower itself above?' asked the Fossil.

'No,' replied the Sheikh; 'that is comparatively modern. It was built by the Turks about three hundred years ago, and is now known generally as the Tower of David. It may be regarded as the citadel of modern Jerusalem, and serves as barracks for the Turkish soldiers.'

The Enthusiast and the Gusher were lost in wonder and delight at the strange and picturesque street scenes which met their eye as they passed through the Jaffa Gate, and found themselves for the first time inside the walls of the actual city of Jerusalem itself. But they had no time to linger then, for the Sheikh was anxious to get them on to their destination at the hotel.

It was close at hand, for in less than a hundred yards, after they had entered the city, they reached an open square, and, passing through an archway into a covered arcade, bounded on either side by shops full of all sorts of Oriental curiosities, they passed up a flight of stone steps on the left-hand side of the arcade, and found themselves welcomed by the manager and the rest of their tribe in the handsome and spacious drawing-room of the Grand New Hotel.

About half an hour before sunset the Sheikh took the



## THE VIEW AT SUNSET

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whole tribe up on to the roof of the hotel to show them the view of Jerusalem from that splendid point of vantage. It was, in truth, an ideal spectacle that burst upon their enraptured eyes, and the Gusher was not the only one who gave utterance to ecstatic exclamations of surprise and delight. Immediately in front of them stretched away the crowded and quaint-looking houses of the sacred city, in the midst of which stood out, like fairy spindles of stone pointing upwards to the liquid sky, the minarets of the mosques in the Moslem quarter. Beyond them glittered in the slanting rays of the setting sun the upper portion of the loveliest building on which their eyes had ever rested—the richly-coloured encaustic tiles which adorned its walls glowing with a deep blue hue, and its magnificent leaden dome shining like silver, whilst the gilded crescent which surmounted the summit appeared as burnished gold. Behind this grand and glorious shrine rose a steep and lofty hill, with a modern cathedral of many cupolas half-way up its slopes, and a tall and slender tower, of several stories in height, crowning its crest, and standing out clear and distinct against the gradually reddening sky. A village with white, flat-roofed houses and a picturesque minaret was situated near the summit of the hill.

To the right of this mount an undulating tract of country at a considerably lower level stretched away into the distance ; and beyond this, like a huge natural wall, a range of mountains, purple in hue, closed in the scene upon the far horizon. These were the Mountains of Moab.

The castellated walls of the city could be seen at intervals beyond the roofs of the closely compacted buildings, and here and there could be discerned the loftier battlements of the city gates. The rise and fall of the hills



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and valleys upon which Jerusalem is built revealed many glimpses of the Oriental architecture which would otherwise have been hidden from their view. Not far off them to the left stood a venerable pile, with two large black domes and a tower like that of some old English church ; and nearer still, in a hollow depression between the houses, lay an oblong pool or basin of water, which might easily be taken for a swimming-bath. This is known as ' Hezekiah's Pool.'

The heights to the right were covered with handsome erections, the scene being enlivened by luxuriant foliage, afforded by clusters of ancient and noble trees, chiefly cypress and evergreen oak, which evidently adorned the spacious gardens of one or more monastic establishments. A little to the left of these green groves, and in the midst of one of the most crowded portions of the city, two high and elaborate domes stood prominently up, betokening places of worship.

Having allowed his companions time to take in the principal features of this wondrous scene, the Sheikh began to enlighten them as to the identities of the various objects which were presented to their gaze.

' You will, of course, have already recognised the Mount of Olives,' he said, pointing to the lofty hill immediately facing them beyond the city ; ' that huge church halfway up its side has lately been erected by the Russians, and, though it is doubtless a splendid specimen of their particular style of ecclesiastical architecture, it has, in my opinion, completely spoiled the Mount, and robbed it of the beautiful primitive simplicity which was so charming a feature of the sacred hill until the church and its appurtenances were built.'

' And what is that unsightly tower at the top ?' asked the Fossil ; ' to my mind, that is a greater eyesore still.'

‘That also belongs to the Russians,’ replied the Sheikh; ‘and, although its modern appearance is certainly out of harmony with the ancient associations of the place, I must say that I prefer it to the church; for it acts as a magnificent landmark for all the district around for many miles, and enables one to identify the Mount of Olives in the midst of many a distant landscape. The view from its topmost story is also very extensive and magnificent, as those of you who choose to climb its steep and winding stairs will be able to judge for yourselves.’

‘So that is the scene of our blessed Lord’s Ascension!’ murmured the Archbishop in an undertone of reverence and devotion. ‘It seems hard to realize that mysterious event now that one is actually gazing upon the very spot where it occurred.’

‘Whereabouts is Bethany situated?’ asked the Angel.

‘Directly behind the Mount, a little more to the right, or south, of that portion which we are immediately facing,’ answered the Sheikh. ‘You can plainly see the road leading to it, as it gradually ascends the slopes of the hill and passes round that lower shoulder there to the right.’

‘And where stood the Temple of Solomon?’ asked the Enthusiast.

‘You see that glorious dome down there, below the Mount of Olives, which has already riveted your attention. That stands on the middle of the old Temple Area, and occupies as nearly as possible the site of Solomon’s and of Herod’s temples.’

‘Oh, then, that is the Mosque of Omar, is it?’ said the Archbishop. ‘I thought it could not be anything else.’

‘It is the so-called Mosque of Omar,’ replied the Sheikh, ‘though it is a mistake to give it that name; for, strictly speaking, it is not a mosque at all. The Arabic word

“mosque” signifies “a place of worship,” and that would not apply to that lovely building.’

‘What is it, then?’ inquired the Archbishop in astonishment; ‘I was always under the impression that that was its correct designation.’

‘It is merely a sacred Moslem shrine,’ replied the Sheikh; ‘the Moslems themselves call it “Kubbet-es-Sakhrah,” which means “Dome of the Rock,” and that is really its proper name, and the one by which it ought always to be known.’

‘But why has it got that rum name?’ asked Monte Carlo.

‘Because, in the first place, as you see, it is a dome, or, perhaps I should more accurately say, it has a dome; and, secondly, because that dome is built immediately over a bare surface of rock, that rock being the original summit of Mount Moriah itself.’

‘Do you mean to say that that is Mount Moriah there?’ exclaimed the General Nuisance, with a shade of contempt in her tone; ‘I cannot see any elevation at all, much less a mountain.’

‘Well, it is rather disappointing, is it not?’ answered the Sheikh; ‘but you will have a good many disillusionments of that sort before you have finished, especially in regard to the size of things. There is a tendency in most persons’ minds to imagine everything in connection with this land to be on a very much larger scale than it really is. For example, it would be much more in accordance with the fitness of things if we spoke of “Mound Moriah”; for really the hill on which Solomon built his temple was little more than a mound. From this present point of view it seems even to be in a hollow; for the level of the temple plateau is considerably lower than that of the ground on which this hotel stands—more than a hundred feet lower, in fact. But when you get down into the



THE RUSSIAN CHURCH AT GETHESEMANE.





Valley of Jehoshaphat, between the temple area and the Mount of Olives, you will see that from that position Moriah does present the appearance of quite an imposing hill. I hope to take you there to-morrow morning.'

'Whereabouts is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre?' inquired the Archbishop; 'that is the most interesting spot in Jerusalem to me.'

The Sheikh indicated the building to their left, with the two domes and the medieval tower, and said:

'There it is, or, rather, there is the so-called holy sepulchre, for it is really a fraud and a delusion.'

'Oh, don't say that,' replied the Archbishop sadly; 'that church has always been to me the central shrine of all my religious sentiments and devotion, and I cannot bear to hear you speak of it as a fraud and a delusion.'

'Nevertheless, I am afraid that regard to the interests of truth must compel me to speak of it thus,' answered the Sheikh—'at least, so far as its claims to stand on the site of Calvary and the tomb of Christ are concerned. Apart from these claims, I quite agree with you that the church itself is eminently deserving of our most reverent and devout affection, inasmuch as it has been the scene of innumerable pilgrimages, heartfelt devotions, and costly votive offerings of holy and self-sacrificing Christians for fifteen centuries and a half.'

'But how do you know that the site is not correct?' said the General Nuisance; 'I don't see how there could be any chance of a mistake about a thing like that.'

'We shall have occasion to discuss that point fully another time,' replied the Sheikh, 'and it is too long a matter to enter into now.'

'Now, all this elevated portion of the city to the right of us is Mount Zion, I presume,' said the Fossil. 'Where are all those trees?'



‘ They are principally in the grounds of the Armenian Convent,’ answered the Sheikh ; ‘ the Armenians are rich and powerful as an ecclesiastical force in Jerusalem, and their church on Mount Zion, dedicated to St. James, contains most costly and magnificent vestments and appurtenances, besides a collection of absolutely priceless old tiles and other decorations.’

‘ I hope we shall go there,’ said the Enthusiast.

‘ Yes,’ replied the Sheikh ; ‘ that will be one of the first places that we shall visit to-morrow.’

‘ And what are those two large churches to the left of the Armenian Convent ?’ inquired the Enthusiast.

‘ They are not churches, but Jewish synagogues ; they are comparatively new, and all that crowded district around them is the Jewish quarter of the city.’

‘ Oh, look at all those beautifully-dressed people coming up that curious narrow street with flat steps up it, and crowding in that open square !’ exclaimed the Gusher.

‘ I guess those dresses wouldn’t look so beautiful if you were near them,’ said Monte Carlo ; ‘ for they are only ordinary peasants, and those gay colours are on very dirty garments, I can assure you—at least, if the natives of Jerusalem are like other Orientals, as I should judge they were from what I saw as we were coming along from the station.’

‘ Horribly dirty and smelling !’ ejaculated the Pessimist, who now spoke for the first time since they had mounted the roof. ‘ Altogether, I must say that I cannot see what you people have to rave about in this prospect of Jerusalem, for to my eyes there seems nothing but filth and squalor visible on all sides.’

‘ And I must say,’ added the Matter-of-fact Man, ‘ that Jerusalem seems a precious small city to make such a fuss about.’

‘ They do say that the first impressions of Jerusalem

are generally disappointing,' rejoined the Angel, 'though I cannot say that it is so in my case, for I think this view is perfectly enchanting.'

'Yes, but wait till you get down into the streets, and are jostled about by the odoriferous crowd to-morrow,' said Monte Carlo, 'and then I shall be very much surprised if you are not woefully disenchanted.'

'Do you think Jerusalem disappointing?' asked the Angel, turning to the Sheikh.

'That all depends upon what the visitor expects to find,' he answered. 'If you ask me my candid opinion, I should say that to the majority of travellers Jerusalem is undoubtedly more or less disappointing at first. It is, as our friend here justly remarks, very much smaller than most people have pictured to themselves; it is emphatically dirty, its streets are narrow, and its inhabitants squalid and poverty-stricken. But, as I think you will agree with me before we leave this city, as one goes "round about Zion and tells the towers thereof"; as one wanders through its valleys and climbs its hills; as one ruminates upon Olivet or the green hill of Calvary; as one treads the courts of its temple area; as little by little the associations of the past become impressed upon one's heart and memory, so, gradually, Jerusalem twines itself around one's inmost affections in a manner quite distinct from that of any other place or city in the world with which I am acquainted, until at length one feels within one's self a strong re-echoing of that devout sentiment uttered by the Hebrew captive on the banks of the waters of Babylon: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning." Notwithstanding all its dirt, its misery, its squalor, and its fallen condition, Jerusalem is, and ever can be, nothing less than the "City of the Great King," the "Joy of the Whole Earth."'

## CHAPTER VI

### MOUNT ZION

Yusef—Bethlehem women—Christ Church—The Church and Convent of St. James—The Royal Tombs—The Cœnaculum—The Palace of Caiaphas—The house of St. John the Evangelist—King Solomon's gardens—The Pool of Siloam—The Last Supper in art and in reality.

NEXT morning, after breakfast, the Sheikh was in the vestibule of the hotel with the greater part of the tribe, waiting for one or two of the laggards to turn up previous to starting for a long morning ramble around the walls and outskirts of the city, when a handsome and athletic-looking native, seemingly about thirty years of age, entered with haste, and, gazing around him till his eyes rested on the Sheikh, hurried forward, with a look of happy delight upon his manly countenance, and, seizing hold of the Sheikh's right hand, saluted it with a kiss of homage and respect.

He was dressed in a long flowing cotton garment, called a *kombaz*, of a brilliant yellow colour with thin red stripes, which was girded round the waist with a sash of many hues. Over this he wore a striped *abbayeh*, as the outer robe or burnoose is called in Syria, and on his head was a handsome silk *koofiyeh*, or kerchief, with tassels flowing over his broad shoulders, and a fillet of black goat's wool across his forehead, to keep the *koofiyeh*

in its place. He had on his feet a pair of bright yellow riding-boots reaching up to his knees, which he had purchased some years past in the Damascus bazaars. He looked hot and travel-worn, and had evidently only that moment arrived.

‘Marhabah, ya Hawâjah,’ he said, as he bowed low before the Sheikh; ‘keef halak? Inshallah mabsoot.’

The meaning of this greeting in English was:

‘Welcome, honoured sir; how do you do? By the grace of God, I trust you are well.’

Having returned this respectful salutation in an equally warm and hearty manner, the Sheikh turned to his companions and said:

‘I must introduce you to Yusef, my faithful friend and body-servant. Yusef is indispensable to me and my friends when we are travelling through the country, and I have scarcely ever made a journey in Palestine without having him with me. I feel happy now that he has arrived, for everything is sure to go all right with his assistance.’

Yusef went round in turn to all the members of the tribe, and gave them the same graceful form of salute, in true Oriental fashion, by bending in front of them with the shoulders slightly bowed and placing his right hand successively on his forehead, his mouth, and his heart, whilst his left hand was resting on the folds of his girdle. By this symbolical action the Oriental implies that all his vital energies, brain, mouth, and heart, are at the service of the one he thus greets; or, since the brain is the seat of the thought, the mouth of the word, and the heart of the action, by this beautiful and expressive motion he virtually says: ‘In thought, and word, and deed, I am thy servant.’

In only too many cases this profession of service is

a mere idle form of politeness, and the person who performs it will probably cheat you the very first opportunity that he has ; but in Yusef's case it was thoroughly genuine, for a truer-hearted or more faithful fellow never breathed on God's earth. He had been attached to the Sheikh for many years, and the latter was delighted to see his faithful henchman appear, though he fully expected that he would that morning arrive. He had sent him notice of his coming several weeks beforehand, and Yusef never failed to put in an appearance on the morning of the arrival of the Sheikh at Jerusalem. It was the third day since his departure from his home on Mount Carmel, a Druse village named Dalieh, where the Sheikh had resided for some years with his beloved friend, the late Laurence Oliphant. Yusef was a Druse himself, and one of the best specimens of that exceedingly interesting and attractive race, certainly the finest and purest type of any of the native races of Syria.

The Sheikh sent him off immediately to have something to eat, and by the time that everyone was ready to start on the morning's excursion Yusef had finished his simple repast, and was quite prepared to enter upon his duties at once as general attendant, to minister to the needs and comfort of all. He immediately relieved the ladies of their wraps and parasols, and thus laden, he sallied forth at the head of the party to marshal their progress and to clear a way for them through the crowded and narrow streets and lanes of Jerusalem.

In straggling array they passed out of the arcade in which the entrance to the hotel is situated, and emerged into an open square, on the right-hand side of which stood the citadel known as the Tower of David. A narrow bridge across a dry moat connected the citadel with the square, which was the principal market-place of the city.

A Turkish soldier in well-worn uniform stood on sentry duty at the entrance to the citadel, and on the pavement in front were a crowd of native women and children squatting upon the ground, and chattering together in shrill voices over their huge baskets of vegetables.

'Where in the world have all these creatures come from?' exclaimed the General Nuisance, eyeing them as if she would like to pounce down upon them and either reform them to her own ideas or wipe them off the surface of the earth.

'They are peasants from the villages in the countryside around the city,' replied the Sheikh, 'and they have brought the produce of their gardens to the market.'

The Matter-of-fact Man went up to one of the women, and, utterly regardless of the clamouring which she set up, proceeded deliberately to overhaul the contents of her basket, examining the vegetables one by one, to compare them in his mind with those which he had seen so often exhibited for sale in the market-place of his own Midland home.

One of the children thrust an evil-smelling basket in the very face of the Pessimist in her eager efforts to enter into a bargain with him; and the poor man was so overcome by disgust and annoyance that he made as though he would at once have returned to the hotel if he had not been taken in hand by Monte Carlo and the Enthusiast.

'Oh, do look at those lovely, dear, quaint costumes!' exclaimed the Gusher, pointing to a group of picturesque women who were clad in a distinctive garment of their own

'Those are Bethlehem women,' explained the Sheikh 'Most travellers are struck with their fashion of dress which is, indeed, exceedingly becoming and graceful.'

The Archbishop now caught sight of a very English-

looking church, on the left-hand side of the square, and remarked on the pleasing familiarity of its architecture and appearance.

'That,' said the Sheikh, 'belongs to the London Jews Society, and is known as Christ Church. As you say, there is no mistaking the nationality of those who designed and erected it. It dates from the year 1842, the foundation being laid by Bishop Alexander, the first Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem.'

Crossing to the further or southern end of the square, the Sheikh led his tribe into a narrow lane, paved with rough cobbles, and bounded on either side by lofty walls.

'We are now approaching Mount Zion,' he said, 'and I am going to take you in the first place to the Armenian Convent and Church of St. James.'

As he spoke these words he passed through a broad arched doorway which stood on the left-hand side of the lane, and the whole tribe followed him into the precincts of a large and massively-built convent. Two long-bearded priests clad in the garb of the Armenian clergy came forward to meet them, and, having greeted the Sheikh in Arabic as an old acquaintance, one of them courteously waved to the others to follow him, and led the way across a paved courtway to the door of the ancient church belonging to the convent.

An exclamation of suppressed admiration and surprise escaped from more than one of the party as they entered the church, for the interior of the edifice was magnificently and elaborately decorated, and there was about the whole an air of barbaric splendour which rendered it very distinct in all its arrangements from any other churches or cathedrals with which they were acquainted. The floor was paved with large slabs of marble of various colours and shades, and the walls were covered with oil-

paintings in massive frames, the pictures being evidently extremely ancient, curious and quaint in their subject and composition, and the majority of them certainly more striking than beautiful. An enormous glass chandelier hung from the centre of the massive domed ceiling, and encircling it was a large framework of iron, from which was suspended a number of costly lamps, intermingled with innumerable ostrich eggs. The latter were purely for the purpose of ornament, and they are not unfrequently to be found in great abundance in Oriental places of worship, whether they be Christian churches or Moslem mosques.

The altar was laden with a profusion of vases containing huge bunches of artificial flowers, which had evidently been there for many years, and were for the most part incrustated with dust. A countless number of hanging lamps were suspended by chains from the roof of the altar sanctuary. In addition to these extensive, though somewhat tawdry, decorations, the church contained many works of art which were really beautiful and exquisite, most of them being of great antiquity, and some literally priceless in their value.

The rails which separated the sanctuary from the body of the church were of massive construction and of admirably-wrought workmanship ; and immediately within them to the left stood an elaborate throne, surmounted by a canopy of cedar-wood inlaid with ivory and tortoise-shell of a lovely design, the whole being most satisfying to the eye. A smaller throne without a canopy stood beside it, and this was appropriated to the use of the Armenian Patriarch in Jerusalem. The canopied throne is never used, being considered by the Armenians to be too sacred an object. According to Armenian tradition, their convent and church stand on the site of the building



in which the first Apostolic Council was held, and at which St. James the Less, first Bishop of Jerusalem, is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles to have presided. This is the reason why the church is dedicated to St. James, and the sacred throne within its sanctuary is supposed by the Armenians to be the identical chair on which the presiding Apostle sat at that first great council.

All this the Sheikh explained to his companions whilst they were examining with wonder and curiosity this ancient and interesting church.

‘Oh, how exquisitely delightful to think of that chair having been used by one of those dear old Apostles!’ exclaimed the Gusher. ‘Do you think I might be allowed to sit down on it?’

‘Please do not attempt anything of the sort,’ replied the Sheikh. ‘You would send this poor priest into a fit at once, and no one is allowed even to touch it; and the priest whose duty it is to dust it has to wash his hands first with holy water, and to repeat the operation when he has finished.’

‘You ought to be ashamed of yourself for suggesting such a thing,’ put in the General Nuisance.

‘You don’t imagine, madam, for a single moment, do you, that that chair was really used by the Apostle James?’ said the Fossil, with a smile of contempt at the Gusher’s credulity.

‘Of course. Why not?’ she exclaimed indignantly. ‘I don’t see that we ought to disbelieve these dear good people’s word.’

‘And how are these dear good people, as you call them, to know any better than ourselves what happened eighteen hundred years and more ago?’ he asked.

‘I am afraid that your faith in this ancient relic is rather misplaced,’ remarked the Sheikh, turning round

to the Gusher. 'There is not the slightest probability, or even possibility, of this being a genuine relic. In those very primitive days of simplicity, when those poor Galilean peasants and fishermen met to discuss the matters connected with their infant religion, they would hardly have had such an elaborate and costly article of furniture as that for the chair on which one of their number was to sit.'

'Perhaps they had the original chair converted into this gorgeous arrangement,' suggested the Enthusiast.

'Perhaps!' replied the Sheikh, smiling, 'but not in the remotest degree probable.'

The priest next conducted them to a chapel or recess in the northern wall of the church, on the marble floor of which was a carved cross with a lighted lamp suspended above it. The entrance to this chapel had for its doorway a couple of folding panels hung upon hinges, and made of the same inlaid woodwork as the canopy of the throne, but far more costly and beautiful. It is doubtful, indeed, whether any more exquisite specimen of Oriental inlaid work can be found anywhere, unless it be the pulpit of Saladin in the Mosque of Aksa, on the temple area in Jerusalem.

'This chapel is said by the Armenians to stand upon the spot where St. James was beheaded by Herod's orders,' explained the Sheikh, 'and the cross on the floor marks the supposed place where his head fell. But the Armenians have committed a strange error of confusion; for it was St. James the Great, the brother of St. John, who was beheaded by Herod, whilst the St. James who presided at the Apostolic Council, and to whom this church is dedicated, was St. James the Less, the son of Alphaeus.'

'That Alphaeus is believed to be identical with the Cleopas mentioned by St. Luke as being one of the two

disciples on the way to Emmaus,' observed the Archbishop in parenthesis.

'Oh, indeed!' remarked the Fossil curtly.

Before they left the church their Armenian guide, who seemed most anxious that they should miss nothing, took them to another side-chapel in the south aisle, the walls of which were covered with extremely ancient encaustic tiles of a rich deep blue and white, many of them representing Biblical scenes and characters, executed in the quaintest and most primitive manner possible. The Sheikh informed his hearers that each separate slab was almost worth its weight in gold. He also told them that the ecclesiastical and eucharistic vestments belonging to that church were probably the richest and most valuable in Christendom. Unfortunately, as the priest informed him in answer to his inquiry, the sacristan of the church was gone down to the market-place, and had taken the keys of the vestry with him, so that he was unable to show them these costly vestments.

As the tribe filed singly out of the church, the Armenian priest stood at the door with a phial of scented water in his hand, and with this he sprinkled their faces and handkerchiefs, by way of a parting salute and benediction. On their return across the courtyard to the entrance gateway, they were met by the other priest whom they had seen on their first arrival, and by him they were conducted along the road to another arched gate in the lofty walls. Having opened this, he ushered them into a deliciously cool and sheltered garden, with a romantic old-world air about it, and shaded by venerable trees of considerable height, with thick, branching foliage. These were some of those cypresses and evergreen oaks which they had observed the evening before from the roof of their hotel, and the garden belonged to the Armenian

Convent, being the favourite resort of retirement of the Patriarch himself, who delighted to wander in solitude amongst its shady walks, meditating on religious matters, or pondering over any difficult questions that he might have to decide.

‘This reminds me of that verse in the well-known hymn :

“Thy gardens and thy goodly walks,”

remarked the Archbishop to his daughter.

‘Yes,’ replied the Angel ; ‘one might almost fancy that one was in Paradise itself.’

‘In other words, we might now be in the New Jerusalem instead of in the Old,’ he answered, with a smile.

The Sheikh could not allow the tribe to wander long in this cool and shady retreat, for time was hastening on, and they had much to see that morning. Having bidden farewell to their courteous Armenian host, they proceeded southwards along the lane, till they reached a fine old gateway in the city walls.

‘This,’ explained the Sheikh as they passed through it, ‘is known to the natives as Bab-neby-Daood, or the gate of the prophet David, because the pathway along which we are now going leads to the traditional site of the royal sepulchres of David, Solomon, and nine of the Kings of Judah. You see that group of picturesque buildings in front of you—those are supposed to stand immediately above the tombs.’

‘But surely that question can be definitely decided by excavation,’ observed the Archbishop.

‘Unfortunately, that is just what is impossible at present,’ replied the Sheikh ; ‘for the place belongs to a very fanatical sect of Moslems, who are extremely jealous of anyone visiting the spot, and who absolutely refuse to allow any excavations to be made.’

‘But what is your own opinion on the subject ? asked the Enthusiast ; ‘do you think that the sepulchres are really there ?’

‘Perhaps it would be better to ask, “Do you think that there are any sepulchres there at all ?”’ remarked the Fossil.

‘There can be little doubt upon that point,’ replied the Sheikh, ignoring the veiled sarcasm of the Fossil’s observation. ‘The sepulchres were undoubtedly somewhere on Mount Zion, and excavations have failed to discover them elsewhere. Moreover, this site is regarded as genuine by all natives, Christians, Jews, and Moslems alike ; and whenever this is the case there is always a strong *prima facie* probability in favour of the tradition.’

‘We are on Mount Zion, then, are we ?’ asked the Enthusiast.

‘Yes ; the Bab-neby-Daood, through which we have just passed, is commonly called in English “Zion Gate,” because of a hill on which it stands.’

‘I always understood that the royal sepulchres were inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre,’ said the Angel — ‘at least, I fancy that I have read so in the “Memoirs of the Palestine Exploration Society.”’

‘Such a conjecture was certainly suggested by one of the explorers,’ replied the Sheikh ; ‘but there is nothing to support that theory, and the locality in no way agrees with the description given in the Old Testament records.’

‘But surely the tombs of the Kings are well known ?’ mildly interposed the Pessimist ; ‘I am sure that I have seen photographs of them.’

‘There are some remarkable rock-cut sepulchres which are commonly, though erroneously, called by that name,’ said the Sheikh ; ‘but they are entirely out of the question as regards David and his successors, for they are a long

way from Mount Zion, on the northern road from Jerusalem. We shall see them another day, and then I will tell you more about them.'

'Oh, dear Mr. Sheikh, what I want to know is whether any treasures would be found in these wonderful tombs if they were discovered and opened,' cried the Gusher.

'Not the slightest chance of that,' replied the Sheikh. 'Josephus tells us that the royal sepulchres were plundered by Hyrcanus in the second century before Christ, to provide funds for his pressing needs when he was being besieged by Antiochus. Herod the Great also afterwards opened the tombs with the object of obtaining treasure for himself, and was grievously disappointed to discover that the greater part of it had already disappeared.'

'You may bet your bottom dollar that precious little is left if that old scoundrel Herod had a go at them,' remarked Monte Carlo. 'From what I have read and heard about him, he was the wrong sort of fellow to leave anything behind him that he could carry away for his own royal coffers.'

'If there isn't any thing to see here,' snapped the General Nuisance, 'I don't see the use of our wasting our time here any longer. Let's get on to something else.'

'Oh, but there is something to see, quite independently of the royal tombs,' said the Sheikh, 'and I am going to take you to it now. If it were undoubtedly genuine, it would be one of the most interesting and sacred spots in or around Jerusalem, but I am bound to tell you that the tradition concerning it is by no means reliable.'

He therefore summoned Yusef, who had been standing a little way apart from the main body of the tribe endeavouring to satisfy the Matter-of-fact Man's curiosity as to the method of adjusting and fastening the various articles composing his Oriental costume.

‘Tell that man I want to speak to him,’ said the Sheikh to Yusef, indicating an unprepossessing-looking native who had all along been eyeing the party with jealous suspicion, tempered, probably, with the hope of baksheesh.

Yusef soon brought the man to the Sheikh’s side, and a short altercation ensued between them in Arabic, which resulted in the man’s moving forward, with apparent reluctance, to a stone staircase on the outside of a portion of the buildings. A doorway stood at the top of the staircase, and this the man proceeded with great deliberation to unlock and open. On passing through it, the tribe found themselves in a large vaulted chamber, divided into two aisles by a single row of columns.

‘This place is usually known as the Cœnaculum,’ the Sheikh explained to his followers, ‘and, according to medieval tradition, it is the very upper chamber where the Last Supper of the Lord was held. The tradition further goes on to say that it was in this same room that the disciples were gathered together on the day of Pentecost, when the outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place.’

‘How solemn and beautiful!’ murmured the Archbishop in low, reverential tones; ‘this is indeed a holy place.’

‘But that must be all rubbish,’ objected the Fossil in a hard, dry manner which jarred upon the ears of several members of the tribe; ‘this building is clearly not older than the fourteenth century, at the earliest, as the style of its architecture shows.’

‘That is true,’ replied the Sheikh, ‘as regards the actual edifice, for it is a portion of a church which was erected here by the Franciscan monks. But it is equally certain that it stands upon the site of a far earlier church; for Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, who lived in the fourth century A.D., makes mention of this site with considerable

reverence as being, even in his day, connected by tradition with the Last Supper and the Pentecostal incidents.'

'Then surely the tradition is probably true, if it is as early as that?' pleaded the Angel.

'That does not follow altogether, I am afraid,' replied the Sheikh; 'for, as you will see when we examine the question of the true position of Calvary, all certainty about the early Christian sites had been lost long before the time of Cyril.'

'I think it is very annoying that there should be so much doubt about all these places,' exclaimed the General Nuisance in a tone which seemed to imply that she considered these uncertainties to be a personal affront against herself.

'It is a pity, of course,' replied the Sheikh, smiling; 'but I am afraid there is no remedy for it at this late period of time.'

'Oh, but I think it so very, very nice, do you know, that we should have these lovely things to see and to hear about, even if they are not perfectly certain,' said the Gusher. 'I believe they are all true myself—I do, indeed—and that is quite enough for me.'

'Quite enough, my dear lady,' agreed Monte Carlo; 'you are very wise to believe them all, and I should certainly go on doing so, if it affords you any pleasure and gratification.'

'Now,' said the Enthusiast, moving towards the door, 'is there anything more for us to see in this neighbourhood? I vote that we go and see something else.'

'Oh, there is plenty more for those who don't mind about being very particular as to the genuineness of what they are shown,' remarked the Sheikh, as he placed a coin in the hand of the man who had opened the door for them. 'For example, if you will follow me a few yards, I will



show you a house which, according to the Armenians, to whom it belongs, was the scene of many remarkable incidents.'

He led them to the house of which he had spoken, and which was evidently of comparatively modern construction.

'Now, this,' he said, 'if we are to believe the Armenian tradition, 'is the actual palace of the High Priest Caiaphas; and in the grounds belonging to it, if you are credulous enough to believe it, they will show you the very spot where Peter stood when he denied Christ, and even the stone on which the cock was perched when he crowed.'

'What childish rubbish!' observed the Fossil.

'I don't exactly think that,' said the Archbishop, 'though I confess that such details as those do not appeal to me personally very much. Still, I can conceive that they are useful to many people as memorials of the sacred events.'

'Oh, but I assure you that there are thousands of devout pilgrims who visit these and similar so-called holy sites every year, believing from their heart that everything that is shown to them is literally true,' said the Sheikh.

'The world is full of fools,' sententiously remarked the Matter-of-fact Man.

'And knaves too,' warmly rejoined Monte Carlo; 'for one cannot suppose for a moment that the blessed monks believe in these things themselves. They only invent and keep up these fictitious impostures in order to extort offerings from the ignorant, deluded pilgrims.'

'How do you know?' exclaimed the General Nuisance. 'I consider that you have no right to make such gratuitous remarks.'

'I hope you won't think me very, very foolish,' said

the Gusher shyly, 'but I really should like very much to go and see the stone where the cock crew, and the place where Peter stood.'

'So should I,' exclaimed the Enthusiast. 'Can we go?'

'Yes; Yusef shall take you,' said the Sheikh good-humouredly; and Moqate Carlo accompanied them, followed by the Malapróp and the Pessimist.

Meanwhile the Sheikh pointed out to the rest of the tribe a smaller house adjoining the one at which they had been looking, and told them that pilgrims were informed that that was the house of St. John the Evangelist, to which the Virgin Mary was taken on the day of the Crucifixion.

'But we have had enough of these false sites for one day,' he concluded; 'so let us move on our way, and the others will soon overtake us.'

They turned towards the east, skirting the exterior of the city walls, and presently they came to a deep incline which formed the southern slope of Mount Zion. A remarkable prospect here opened to their view: a series of terraces led down to a deep valley below, and as far as the eye could reach this valley stretched between rows of undulating hills. On the horizon the mountains stood out, clothed with a rich purple hue. At the bottom of the garden terraces a pool of water glistened in the sunlight. The Sheikh halted his party at this spot, and, directing their attention to the landscape in front of them, he said:

'Those gardens which you see beneath us are known to the present day as the King's Gardens, and they undoubtedly were in ancient times the famous royal gardens, originally laid out by King Solomon himself. The valley stretching away in the distance is the Valley of the Kedron, which is formed by the junction of the

two great valleys of Hinnom and Jehoshaphat. You can see the mouth of the Valley of Hinnom down there to the south, whilst that of Jehoshaphat, which is at present hidden from our view, but which I shall show you by-and-by, runs behind the ridge on which those gardens stand, and between them and that native village which you see clambering up that hillside yonder to the east. That village is Siloam, and that body of water which you see down in the hollow, just where Hinnom and Jehoshaphat meet, is the Pool of Siloam itself.'

'How delightfully interesting!' exclaimed the Gusher. 'I hope you will take us down to the pool.'

'I have little thought,' said the Archbishop, 'when I have been joining in that glorious hymn,

"By cool Siloam's shady rill,"

that I should ever visit that sacred spot myself.'

'And if you take my advice,' said the Sheikh, 'you never will. I should recommend you to rest contented with gazing upon its waters from this elevated point of vantage. For if you ever were disillusioned in your life, you would be if you ventured in close proximity to the Pool of Siloam. The good Bishop Heber, who wrote that famous hymn, could certainly never have been there. Had he been he would have known that, in the first place, it is not cool; in the second, it is not shady; and in the third, it is not a rill at all. As you can see for yourselves now, it lies right down at the bottom of that deep valley, and being exposed to the scorching rays of the noontide sun in its aspect towards the south, it is almost the hottest place anywhere about Jerusalem. So far from being shady, it lies in a treeless, stony soil, and, instead of being a rill, it is a dirty stagnant pool, little better than a common cesspool. The sewage of the city pours down

the open ditches in the hillside, and congregates beside the pool, rendering it a horribly odoriferous, noxious, and pestilential nuisance.'

'And so ends another of our childhood's romances,' remarked the Matter-of-fact Man, as they proceeded on their way.

The afternoon of that, their first day in Jerusalem, was spent by the members of the tribe in various ways. The General Nuisance had a letter of introduction to an English lady who was doing amateur mission-work on her own account in Jerusalem, and was anxious to present herself to her without delay. She insisted upon the Angel accompanying her, which that unselfish creature consented to do, though much against her inclination; and the Matter-of-fact Man, seeing that it was an unwelcome task to her, good-naturedly offered to escort them. The Gusher, the Malaprop, the Enthusiast, and Monte Carlo sallied forth under the guidance of Yusef to explore the shops and bazaars of Jerusalem.

The Pessimist, on the plea of over-fatigue from the morning's ramble, retired to his chamber to rest, and the Sheikh remained in the smoking-saloon of the hotel to keep the Archbishop and the Fossil company. Their conversation naturally turned upon the scenes which they had visited that morning, and, speaking of the Upper Chamber, the Archbishop remarked:

'What a terrible pity it is that Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece at Milan should be fading so rapidly away. I have always regarded that fresco as being the most magnificent representation of the Last Supper that art has ever produced.'

'I quite agree with you in lamenting its decay,' said the Sheikh; 'for as a work of art it is supreme. But as regards its representation of the Last Supper I must

differ from you *in toto*, for I look upon it as having been the means of conveying to the modern mind in general an entirely erroneous and misleading conception of what actually took place.'

'Indeed!' exclaimed the Archbishop in surprise. 'I always thought it so very realistic and accurate.'

'Nothing could well be further from the truth as far as the physical conditions of the scene are concerned,' returned the Sheikh, 'though I readily admit that the devotional spirit of that solemn incident is admirably portrayed.'

'But how is it inaccurate?' urged the cleric.

'In the first place, the long trestle table with the flowing white cloth is utterly wrong,' replied the Sheikh; 'then the plates, knives, and forks are equally inaccurate; and finally, the attitudes and postures of our Lord and the Apostles are as far as possible from the original reality. If you had been present at that scene in the Upper Chamber, you would have observed no table, no cloth, no seats, none of the modern appliance of eating which are depicted by Leonardo da Vinci and the other famous painters. The whole party would have been sitting on the floor, either cross-legged or squatting on their haunches, round a large circular straw mat, upon which would have been placed two dishes, the one containing the principal article of food, probably a pile of lentils with scraps of cold meat around it, and the other containing the sop, which was a mixture resembling curds and whey, prepared from sour goat's milk.'

'But surely,' interposed the Fossil, 'you are forgetting that the Jews at that time were under Roman influence, and hence it is most probable that the triclinium and table had been introduced in Palestine then.'

'If the party in the Upper Chamber had belonged to the higher classes of society there would have been some

How can it explain 'Now there was leaning on Jesus's bosom' (Jn. 13. 23). Not one of them would "lean" if we sitting as described above.  
Van Lennep; Bible Customs. p. 600.

∴ MK use  
verb  
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force in your objection,' replied the Sheikh, 'but you must remember that, after all, they were but poor Galilean peasants, and that they would certainly have taken their meals like other peasants of their class. Now, there can be little doubt that as the peasants feed in this country at the present time, so they fed in the time of Christ; for in these matters and amongst that class scarcely anything changes as the ages pass by. Moreover, if there had been any change at all, it would certainly have been in the way of evolution rather than otherwise—that is to say, if there were any difference, the customs would have been even more primitive in those days than they are at present.'

'I follow you there,' said the Fossil, and the Archbishop also nodded his acquiescence.

'Well, then,' continued the Sheikh, 'whilst I was living on Mount Carmel I was determined to obtain a photograph of the way in which the peasants take their meals. I therefore invited the principal Sheikhs and farmers of my village to partake of a midday meal at my house. The meal was spread upon the floor of the verandah, immediately outside my principal sitting-room, exactly in accordance with the native custom. My servant Yusef, in obedience to my request, arranged the preparations and presided at the feast. Meanwhile I had a camera, carefully concealed from view by a curtain, adjusted in the window in my sitting-room, and whilst my guests were in the act of eating, the photographer took an instantaneous view of them, none of them being aware of what was done. In this way I secured a perfectly genuine picture of the scene, and here it is.'

The Sheikh at these words produced a photograph from his pocket-book, and handed it to his two companions, who examined it minutely and with great interest.

'You will notice how they are seated on the ground,' said the Sheikh, 'exactly in the postures which I have already described. You see the two dishes, and you will observe how they are dipping their hands together into the principal dish. That white thing on the ground by the side of the dish containing the sop is the bread. It is not in loaves, like our bread, but rather in the form of elongated pancakes. They tear off a strip of this, dexterously twirl it up like a ladle or spoon, dip it in the sop, which they thus convey to their mouths. If there is a specially honoured guest at the meal, the host will dip the piece of bread into the sop, and offer it to him, just as Christ offered the sop to Judas. There, again, you can recognise Yusef in the foreground to the left, and you will notice he holds a cup in his hand. Now they never drink whilst they are eating their meal; but when it is over, and not before, the host or his representative takes the cup in his hand, says reverently, "Nish Kar Allah; Hamdillah," which signifies, "Let us thank God; praise God," and then takes a draught himself. This is to show his guests that there is no poison in the cup. He then hands the cup to his neighbour, saying "Ishraib," which means "Drink," and turning to the whole company, he adds "Ishribum Kulu," which means, "Drink ye all." The cup is then passed round, each guest in turn giving thanks before he drinks. You will remember that we are expressly told that it was after supper that Christ took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to His disciples, saying, "Drink ye all of this." Here, then, you have the whole scene properly reproduced in this snapshot photograph of an actual meal.'

'How intensely interesting!' sighed the Archbishop; and the Fossil seemed scarcely less impressed.

look it twice.

11 17 - And  
 work the cup &  
 are thanks -  
 11 20. Followed  
 is the cup after  
 supper.

The Jews drink four times during the Passover meal, and each member of the family, to-day, has his own cup.

'What completes the realism of the picture,' concluded the Sheikh, 'is the curious coincidence that there are actually thirteen persons at this feast. That was quite an accident, and I did not realize it until afterwards. I can give you each a copy of this photograph; and thus you will be able to carry about with you as true a representation of that scene of the Last Supper as the mediæval pictures are inaccurate and misleading.'

To seat thirteen persons the table or mat must be a large one - not less than 10 to 11 yards circumference, & therefore  $3\frac{1}{2}$  yards or about that across. It would be a physical impossibility for the Master, when He had taken the bread, to hand it over personally to each of His disciples & still retain His seat.

The same objection - even more pronounced - can be made in the case of a triclinium



## CHAPTER VII

### THE TEMPLE AREA

The Consular Kawass—David Street—The Cotton Merchants' Bazaar  
—The Court of the Gentiles—What happened to St. Paul.

A LOUD knock came at the door of the Sheikh's bedroom on the following morning, just as he was finishing his toilet. He opened the door, and the Enthusiast entered.

'There is a magnificent and gorgeous fellow asking for you in the saloon,' he said; 'he may be anything from the Sultan's chief bottle-washer to the Mikado of Japan. To judge from his appearance, he seems to me a sort of half-breed between a Mansion-House flunkey on Lord Mayor's Show day and the Commander-in-Chief of the British army; only he is not a Britisher. And then, his raiment of divers colours of needlework! Most certainly, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like him. Who-ever can he be?'

'I know him,' laughed the Sheikh heartily; 'he is the Consular Kawass; I sent word to him to come this morning.'

'And what on earth may a Consular Kawass be?' asked the Enthusiast.

'He is the official servant of the British Consulate,' he replied; 'and a very important and valuable functionary I assure you he is.'

'There is no doubt about his importance,' replied the

Enthusiast ; ' he bears all that sufficiently conspicuously on his person and apparel ; nor is there much doubt either about his value, for I should think if he were put up to auction just as he stands, he would fetch—garments, sword, pistols, silver-topped wand, and all—at the very lowest estimate ten thousand pounds, without reckoning in his overwhelming military moustache. But, seriously, what is his practical use ?'

' You will very soon discover that for yourself,' was the reply ; ' for without his presence and patronage we should be absolutely unable to obtain admission to-day into the Haram-esh-Shereef.'

' The Harem what !' exclaimed the astonished Enthusiast ; ' you never told me that we were going to be taken into a harem. By Jove ! this is stunning ! I thought you had arranged for us to spend the greater part of the day at the Temple Area.'

' And so we shall,' answered the Sheikh, laughing again at his companion's mistake. ' The Haram-esh-Shereef is not the sanctum of some Turk's or Syrian's seraglio, as you appear to imagine. It is merely the native name for the Temple enclosure.'

' And why, by all that's holy, do they call it by that outlandish name ?'

' It may sound outlandish to you, but probably not more so than the words " Temple Area " would sound to them ; " Haram-esh-Shereef " simply signifies " The Noble Sanctuary," which is the very excellent and appropriate title given by the Moslems to the sacred enclosure upon which now stands the Dome of the Rock, and where formerly stood the Jewish Temple.'

' Well, but why could we not be admitted there, unless we had the presence and patronage of this gorgeous swell ?'

' Simply because it is the noble sanctuary. That is to

say, the Moslems consider the enclosure so noble and so sacred that, if they dared, they would not allow anyone except a Moslem to enter within its precincts ; and, indeed, until comparatively a few years ago, everyone else was rigorously excluded from it. Nowadays, owing to the pressure put upon the Sultan by the Christian Powers, this rigid exclusiveness is so far relaxed that Christian visitors are permitted to penetrate within its precincts, provided that they are attended by the Kawass of the Consulate of the country to which they belong. He becomes the outward symbol of the protection afforded by the Government he represents to its subjects, and any insult or violence offered to visitors under his charge would be considered as tantamount to insult and violence offered by the Ottoman Empire to the Government represented by the Kawass. Now you see what I meant when I said that your pompous and highly-decorated friend is an important and valuable personage.'

As soon as possible after breakfast—though this was not as soon as might be expected, and as the Enthusiast and some others desired, for one or two kept the rest waiting for over a quarter of an hour—the Sheikh led forth his tribe from the hotel, headed by the Kawass and followed by Yusef, to capture the noble sanctuary from the hands of the infidel Moslems.

They turned to the left on emerging from the arcade, and soon began to descend the most curious street that most of them had ever seen. It was very narrow, and had no side-walks ; in fact, the whole street might be said to be merely a footpath, for it was impossible for any vehicles to pass along it, though it was, as a matter of fact, the principal street of Jerusalem. It is commonly known as David Street, and it traverses the whole length of the city, from the Jaffa Gate on the west to the Temple

Area on the east. During the first part of the way it descends a somewhat steep incline by means of broad, flat steps or terraces, up and down which camels and donkeys, overladen with burdens, pass and re-pass with the ease which comes from habit, jostling with the utmost unconcern in the world the dense crowds of people which frequent the street.

Amongst this mob of human beings and animals the Kawass cleared a way for the Sheikh and his tribe with the most consummate ease, his official uniform, his sword, and his silver-headed staff acting like magic upon the natives. When they had proceeded a certain distance, they turned off from David Street into a still narrower and dirtier lane, which was, however, a little less crowded, and presently they stopped in front of a Turkish military guard-house. Into this the Kawass entered, and presently reappeared, accompanied by a Turkish soldier, whose bedraggled uniform rendered him a very inferior object in comparison with the magnificent representative of His Gracious Majesty King Edward VII. He was, nevertheless, an equally indispensable appanage to the tribe, for his presence betokened the Sultan's guarantee that no molestation should be offered to them.

After threading their way through one or two more narrow and quaint-looking lanes, they arrived at a street considerably wider than any of those along which they had come, and entirely arched over from end to end. On both sides of this street ran rows of old shops, constructed of stone, and each having an arched doorway of medieval design; but all these shops were entirely deserted. In fact, the whole street was silent and solitary, presenting a striking contrast to the rest of the city.

'This place was once one of the most important and busy resorts in Jerusalem,' said the Sheikh to his com-

panions as they entered the street. Its name is Sook-el-Cotonin, which means "The Cotton-Merchants' Bazaar."

7 All through the Middle Ages it was one of the great  
1 emporiums of trade and commerce between the shores of  
' the Mediterranean and the distant countries of Asia ; but  
it is now just four hundred years since its doom was sealed.'

'How was that ?' inquired the Fossil.

'By the discovery of the passage to India round the Cape of Good Hope,' replied the Sheikh. 'From that time the traffic gradually dwindled away, and this street or bazaar lost its importance. But you can see from the richness of the arches and other indications that the merchants who once traded here were men of wealth and taste.'

At the further end of this covered street they passed through a handsome gateway, and found themselves inside the enclosure of the Noble Sanctuary. The exquisite building commonly called the Mosque of Omar—but, as has already been intimated, more correctly known to the natives as the Dome of the Rock—now burst upon the enraptured gaze of the party in all its glory and splendour. They would have made their way direct to this building, but the Sheikh guided them to the left, until they arrived at the north-west corner of the vast and magnificent enclosure.

'It will be better,' said he, 'to make our inspection of all that is to be seen in a methodical manner, so that you may be able to carry off with you a clear and intelligent impression of the whole. Now, in the first place, you notice that a very extensive level platform stretches before you, and that it is surrounded by high walls on all sides. Of course, you are well aware that no traces whatever remain of either Solomon's or Herod's temple. Literally

and truly, so far as the actual temples themselves are concerned, our Lord's prophecy has been fulfilled, and down to the lowest foundation not one stone has been left standing upon another. Indeed, until the last few years the very site of the temples has been a matter of doubt and dispute. That doubt has been satisfactorily removed by the excavations and researches of the Palestine Explorers, and I shall be able to show you presently where, almost of a certainty, the temples stood.

'But, though the temples themselves have disappeared, the Temple Area still remains, and on that we are gazing now. This Mount Moriah, upon which, as you know, we are standing, was before the time of Solomon simply a low, bare, irregular, rocky elevation. In order to provide a level platform or terrace upon which to build the Temple, it was necessary in some parts to cut away the solid rock, and in others to erect massive and substantial walls with arches, so as to support the terrace on a level with the other portions. And, in order to make the approaches to the Temple as imposing and convenient as possible, Solomon laid out the hill in a series of terraces, rising one above the other, and connected with each other by flights of broad stone steps. These terraces are what we read of as the "Courts of the Temple." The lowest and largest of all was that on which we are now standing, and which was known as the "Court of the Gentiles." It was so called because anybody, whether Jew or Gentile, was allowed to roam at will over its area. It was on this terrace that the seats of the money-changers and of the sellers of doves, etc., stood; and some portions of the court were planted with trees, just as you see them here now. In these trees the birds built their nests, and to this custom we find frequent references in the Bible. At this end of the terrace, or

court, you will notice that the flooring is all of the solid rock, which has been artificially levelled by cutting away vast masses of the original hill ; for it was at this end that the inequalities of Moriah showed themselves in a rising hillock, a portion of which had to be removed bodily in order to continue the level of the court.'

'And was all this enormous work done during those few years when Solomon was building his Temple ?' asked the Angel.

'No ; this particular work of levelling at the northern end was performed at a much later date—not until the time of the Maccabees, in fact ; and it was done more for strategical purposes than for anything else. The original court of Solomon's Temple was considerably smaller than the enclosure which you see at present, and at this northern end it was dominated by a hill, which, whilst it acted as a citadel to it as long as it was in possession of the friends and guardians of the Temple, was, on the other hand, a source of great danger to the sacred edifice during the time of civil wars and disturbances. This danger was very practically demonstrated during the wars of the Maccabees, and, in consequence, when the country became pacified under the sway of their dynasty, a large section of the crown of rock was cut away to the level of the court, so as to remove the elevated ground as far as possible from the Temple buildings. Now, if you will turn round and look in this direction towards the north, you will see that the boundary wall of the Temple Area is at this point formed by a vertical face or scarp of solid rock. This is the face left by the Maccabean workmen when they removed the other portion of the hill.'

'Then I suppose that this solid rocky terrace upon which we are now walking is virtually the same as it was in our Lord's time, is it not ?' said the Archbishop.

‘Precisely so,’ replied the Sheikh; ‘He must often have walked over this rocky floor for Himself, so that we may be said to be treading here in the very footsteps of our Lord.’

‘Oh! oh! just think of that!’ exclaimed the Gusher; ‘I feel that I should like to kneel down and kiss the very ground upon which I am standing.’

‘You had better do it, then, if you want to make yourself look ridiculous,’ rejoined the General Nuisance.

‘You notice that there are some buildings on the summit of the scarp rock,’ continued the Sheikh; ‘those are barracks for the Turkish soldiers; and immediately behind them, though hidden from view, is the Serai, or official residence of the Turkish Governor of Jerusalem. You will observe those steps cut into the face of the rock, leading up from this terrace to an entrance gateway at the top which opens into the barracks. You can go up them, if you like, and from the top you will get a very commanding view over the whole of the Temple Area. Now, in the days of our Lord and of the Apostles a large and important castle stood upon the very spot where those barracks are, and, curiously enough, like them, it served partly as barracks for the Roman soldiers, and partly as the official residence of the Roman Governor. It was in that portion, which stood almost on the site of the modern Serai, that our Lord was tried before Pontius Pilate.’

‘This is a remarkable illustration of the way in which history repeats itself,’ observed the Fossil. ‘In those days the natives of this country were under the dominion of a foreign Power, just exactly as they are at the present time. Substitute Turk for Roman, and everything is the same. The Turkish Serai occupies the position of the Roman Governor’s palace; the Turkish barracks overlook



the Haram of the Moslems, just as the Roman barracks overlooked the Temple Area of the Jews.'

'That is so,' answered the Sheikh ; ' and this gives me the opportunity of helping you to realize from this spot one of the dramatic incidents in St. Paul's life, as it is related in the Acts of the Apostles. You will remember that we are told that on one occasion St. Paul was accused by the Jews of bringing certain Gentiles into the Temple enclosure, and that they set upon him and would have killed him, had he not been rescued by a Roman captain and a band of soldiers under his command. Now, by the aid of the description which I am about to give you, you will be able to imagine the whole scene almost as clearly as if you saw it passing before your eyes at this present moment. You notice where the higher terrace, or platform, on which now stands the Dome of the Rock, rises above the Court of the Gentiles, and you can see very plainly from here the flights of stone steps leading up from this court to the other. That elevated terrace was known in the time of the New Testament as the " Court of the Israelites," as it was reserved entirely for them. One portion of this court was railed off and covered in for the accommodation of the female members of the Jewish Communion, as they were not allowed to mingle with the men. This was called the " Court of the Women." Between the Court of the Gentiles and that of the Israelites there ran a stone balustrade, except where the steps passed up. This balustrade was about four feet high, and was very beautifully carved and decorated. At certain intervals along it there were large stone tablets, with notices or inscriptions in Greek and Latin, and probably in Hebrew. In the year 1871 one of these identical tablets was discovered by M. Clermont Ganneau, and the inscription, which was in Greek, was still per-



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fectly legible and distinct. As this notice illustrates very remarkably the incident happening to St. Paul which we are now discussing, I may as well tell you the translation of it. It was as follows :

“No stranger may enter within the balustrade round the Sacred Enclosure. Whosoever shall be caught will be responsible to himself on account of the death which will follow his act.”

‘Is that tablet still in existence?’ asked the Fossil.

‘Certainly it is,’ replied the Sheikh; ‘so interesting and ancient a relic would not be suffered to be destroyed. Several facsimiles of it have been made, and you can see the inscription for yourself on your return to England, if you choose to go to the offices of the Palestine Exploration Fund, in London.’

‘And do you mean to say that one can actually see with one’s own eyes the very notice which was erected on the Temple Area in our Lord’s time?’ asked the Enthusiast.

‘The very same,’ replied the Sheikh.

‘Oh dear! oh dear!’ exclaimed the Gusher, ‘whatever I do, I must not forget to go and see that when I get back to London.’

‘I guess that a notice placarded on the walls of St. Paul’s Cathedral at the present day will scarcely be legible eighteen hundred years hence,’ said the Matter-of-fact Man.

‘Scarcely,’ acquiesced the Sheikh. ‘Well, as I was saying, this barrier passed all the way round. Within it, at the top of the flight of fourteen steps, ran a terrace thirteen feet wide, and this, again, had a wall running round it between it and the Court of the Israelites. Now, what happened to St. Paul was this: he went up one of these flights of steps into the Court of the Israelites, and at the head of the steps was an arched gateway, with iron gates, which were generally kept open, but which

could be closed at will. Accompanying St. Paul were one or two of his disciples, whom he had brought with him on his return to Jerusalem from his last missionary tour. The Jews took it for granted that these foreigners were Gentiles, and that therefore, having passed beyond the barrier of the balustrade, they and St. Paul himself had committed an act of sacrilege which could only be expiated by death. The Court of the Israelites was at that time crowded with Jews, who, outraged and infuriated, seized hold of the Apostle and his companions, dragged them out of the enclosure and down the steps into the Court of the Gentiles below—that is to say, this terrace on which we are now standing—and the iron gates at the top of the steps were immediately closed upon them.

‘As soon as this uproar commenced, the soldiers in the barracks on the top of this rock, seeing from their elevated post of observation an unusual disturbance on the Temple Area, reported the matter to the Roman officer on duty. Taking with him a company of soldiers, he left the castle barracks by the doorway at the top of this flight of stone steps immediately behind us, and, crossing this court, he arrived at the scene, and found St. Paul in the act of being mobbed, and with his very life in danger. He rescued him from his persecutors, and, having bound him with chains, he had him conducted to the castle. And so you can picture the whole scene to yourselves now : the Roman soldiers, with their prisoner in their midst, followed by the howling, raging mob of the Jews, from whom they had the greatest difficulty in protecting their charge. As they were ascending these steps leading up to the castle, St. Paul asked and obtained permission from the Roman officer in command to address the mob ; and it was whilst he was standing up there on those steps, and the crowd of Jews were congre-

gated on the very spot where you and I now are, that that memorable speech was delivered which is recorded in the twenty-second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.'

'I could scarcely have believed that an actual visit to the spot could have made that incident so much more real to one's mind,' observed the Angel, when the Sheikh had finished his graphic description.

'Well, now,' said the Sheikh, 'I think we have lingered long enough in the Outer Court, and as there are no longer any tablets or notices threatening us with death if we penetrate into the Inner Sanctuary, we will now make our way to those steps in front of us and ascend to the higher terrace, where once stood the Court of the Israelites, and which now serves as the platform from the midst of which rises our magnificent friend, the Dome of the Rock, misnamed the Mosque of Omar.'

'But where was the Court of the Priests?' asked the Archbishop.

'That Court stood on a yet higher terrace, which was reached from the Court of the Israelites by a flight of two or three steps only,' explained the Sheikh. 'It was so called because it supported the actual Temple itself; but when the Moslem architect who designed the Dome of the Rock was laying its foundations, he found that there was not sufficient space on this topmost terrace to accommodate his building, and it was accordingly lowered to the level of the Court of the Israelites. Hence there are now remaining only two terraces, instead of the three which were in existence in the days of the Hebrews.'

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE DOME OF THE ROCK

A triumph of Moslem art—Divers appreciations—History of the Shrine—The Dome of the Chain—A story with a moral—An elaborate interior—The Holy Rock—David's census and its results—The Altar of Burnt Offering.

'SURELY this must be the most exquisitely perfect building in the world!' exclaimed the Enthusiast, when the tribe had reached the upper terrace, and were gazing at the sublime Dome of the Rock from the south-east side, where the sun was shining full upon it and illuminating all its glories.

Truly it was a magnificent sight, and one well calculated to arouse the enthusiasm of even the least emotional among the tribe. Graceful and majestic before them rose the octagonal building with its crescent-crowned dome. Each of the eight sides was nearly seventy feet long, and was divided into seven bays, the lower portion being constructed of exquisite marble in square blocks of various grains, colours, and sizes, the blocks being arranged in picturesque geometrical designs, which greatly enhanced the beauty of their appearance. The upper portion of each bay was pierced with a stained-glass window of splendid brilliancy, the colours being fitted together in minute mosaic patterns, intricate as a Chinese puzzle. The windows were surmounted by pointed arches formed

of glazed tiles, and each bay was separated from its neighbours by a projecting pilaster, the lower portion of which was formed of plain blocks of marble, and the upper of mosaic work like the windows, but of polished encaustic tiles. Above the windowed portion of the building a course of square glazed tiles of the deepest and richest blue, ran all the way round the octagonal shrine, and above this, again, ran a frieze composed of passages from the Koran, most elaborately and skilfully executed in the form of illuminated Arabic manuscript characters, which from the distance appeared like delicate filigree.

The circular drum supporting the grand dome rose from the middle of the octagonal structure, and was divided into four quadrants by means of projecting buttresses facing the four points of the compass. Each quadrant was divided into five portions, of which the central and two outside portions were formed of mosaic marbles, the two other compartments being pierced with windows of the same character as those below. The dome itself was covered with lead, and was divided into a great number of partitions by means of projecting ribs, which radiated from the apex of the dome to the circumference of the circle which united it with the drum. Above all a gilded crescent on the top of a carved pole indicated the religion and nationality of the builders of this superb sanctuary. The symmetry of all the various parts of the shrine was perfect ; the patterns and designs of the marbles, the mosaics, and the stained-glass windows, were arranged with the most admirable regard to taste and splendour, whilst the infinite varieties of colour and shade blended together in incomparable harmony.

Long and earnestly the tribe gazed on this wondrous triumph of Moslem art, slowly passing from side to side and viewing it from every aspect. Many and varied



were the comments passed upon it, according to the different impressions produced upon the diverse temperaments of the members of the tribe.

The Gusher firmly protested her unwavering resolution to live and die beneath the shadow of the dome ; for she constantly averred, amid many ejaculations and sighs of rapture, that she was quite, quite sure that she could never, never tear herself away from this enchanted scene. The General Nuisance politely begged her not to make such an arrant fool of herself, and gave it as her opinion that, though the thing was certainly well worth looking at, she did not see what cause there was to go into raptures over a building which, after all, was un-Christian in its character. The Angel quietly begged to differ from the General Nuisance in that sentiment ; for, as she justly observed, she did not see why they should introduce any religious or controversial sentiment when they were considering it purely as a work of art. The Archbishop thought it a very great pity that such an exquisite shrine could not be taken from the Moslems and consecrated into a Christian church ; and he added that, if he had the direction of matters, he would assign it as a cathedral for the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem. The Fossil was of opinion, on the other hand, that it ought to be converted into a grand national museum for the accommodation of all the interesting archæological and antiquarian relics that might from time to time be discovered in the course of Palestine exploration. The Matter-of-fact Man remarked that, as the Moslems had gone to the trouble and expense of designing and building it, he supposed that they had as much right to it as anyone else—a sentiment which Monte Carlo heartily applauded, adding that he should be very sorry to see it perverted to any other uses than that for which it had originally been erected.

The Malaprop, clinging closely to the Sheikh, plied him incessantly with silly questions, which only tended to reveal her sublime ignorance of the first rudiments of history and of architecture. A shade of melancholy gloom on the Pessimist's countenance deeper than that which he habitually wore indicated that he was enjoying the scene to the very bottom of his soul, though Yusef confided to the Enthusiast his fears that the poor gentleman was going to be very ill. As for the Enthusiast himself, his impressions were summed up in the exclamation which he had made at first, and which he again repeated more than once :

'Surely this must be the most exquisitely perfect building in the world !'

On one occasion he made this observation direct to Monte Carlo, who replied :

'Well, I do not know that I am prepared to go quite so far as that. It is certainly a very perfect gem of art ; but I think I have seen some other buildings in the course of my travels which rival, if they do not excel, it. Take, for instance, the Taj Mahal at Agra in India.'

'Do you think that more beautiful than this, then ?' asked the Angel.

'Upon my word, I hardly know,' replied Monte Carlo. 'It is scarcely fair upon this building to pass a comparison at present, and I must beg to be allowed to suspend my verdict until after we have been inside and I have seen all that is to be seen there.'

'But, so far as the exterior is concerned, you prefer the other, do you ?' inquired the Sheikh.

'I almost think I do,' was the reply.

'I ask you this question,' said the Sheikh, 'because I find so many different opinions on that point. I have never seen the Taj Mahal myself ; but several friends

whom I have brought here have, and some say that they prefer this, others that they think the Taj the lovelier of the two. Almost all, however, are agreed that the Taj Mahal and the Dome of the Rock are the two most perfect specimens of artistic and architectural taste that they have ever seen.'

'I don't think this building comes up to many of our cathedrals in England,' remarked the General Nuisance.

'It is absurd to think of comparing this with them, madam,' rejoined the Fossil; 'the style of architecture is so entirely different.'

The Fossil invariably addressed the lady members of the tribe as 'madam' whenever he spoke directly to them, which was as seldom as he could possibly help. He was not a ladies' man, poor old fellow! and he stood in special dread of the General Nuisance. The only exception that he made was in favour of the Angel; in fact, he seemed at times actually to court her society.

'Still,' observed the Archbishop, who never lost an opportunity of arguing a point with the Fossil, 'I think it is quite reasonable to compare one's impressions as to buildings of totally different styles of architecture. For example, I would say that, whilst I regard Lincoln Minster as the grandest edifice which I have ever seen, and Salisbury Cathedral as the most elegant and well-proportioned, I should be inclined to give my vote in favour of this Dome of the Rock in regard to harmony of colour and expression, so far as my somewhat limited experience of the world's famous structures goes.'

'At any rate,' observed the Enthusiast, 'one could scarcely wish or expect to find anything more satisfying to the eye than this.'

'Who was this Omar, whose name you have so often been mentioning?' asked the Malaprop of the Sheikh.

'He was one of the bravest and most devoted of Mohamed's personal friends and followers,' was the reply; 'and he was the second Khalif.'

'What do you mean by a Khalif?' asked the Enthusiast.

'It is an Arabic word signifying "successor," answered the Sheikh; 'and it was the title which was assumed on Mohamed's death by Abu Bekr, who was elected as the head of the Moslems in immediate succession to the prophet himself. He only reigned a short time, and, after his death, he was succeeded by Omar. During the latter's reign Syria and Palestine were conquered by the Moslems, and in the year 637 A.D. Jerusalem was captured. The seat of the Moslem Empire was at that time at Medina, in Arabia, and Omar resided there, leaving the conquest of Syria to two brave and illustrious generals, Khaled and Abu Obeidah; but he made an express journey from Medina himself in order to assist at the capture of Jerusalem, as this was considered the most important prize which the Moslems had up to that time secured. He came in state to the old Temple Area, which he found encumbered with vast masses of débris. On clearing these away, the bare rock which formed the original summit of Mount Moriah, and on which had formerly stood the Altar of Burnt Offering, was exposed to view. On this he determined to build a sacred shrine, as a lasting memorial of the sanctity which he attached to the spot; but it does not appear that this shrine was actually completed until just fifty years afterwards. An inscription, which is still to be seen on the interior of the dome, gives the date of its erection as the year 686 A.D., when the Khalif Abd-el-Melek was reigning, so that to the latter must be accorded the principal honour of this glorious shrine. It was not, however, until one hundred

and fifty years after that these outer walls were added by a Sultan called Mamún, in 831 A.D. Nor did it even then present the same elaborate and beautiful appearance that it does now, for several additions and improvements were made to it from time to time. The principal of these is not much more than three hundred and fifty years old ; for the most illustrious of all the Sultans that have reigned upon the Ottoman throne, Soleiman the Magnificent, adorned the exterior with those lovely porcelain tiles which you see on the upper portion of the body of the Shrine, and he also added the mosaic windows between 1520 and 1560 A.D. The dome itself was partially destroyed by an earthquake in the early part of the eleventh century, but it was soon after restored, and has been frequently repaired since, the latest of these reparations being executed in 1875 by the Sultan Abdul Aziz.'

'What a tragic end was his!' remarked the Fossil. 'You remember that he was found dead in his palace at Constantinople with the veins of his left arm cut open by a pair of scissors, which were lying at his side.'

'He committed suicide, did he not?' said the Archbishop.

'So it was officially stated at the time,' replied the Sheikh ; 'but it is now known that he was really assassinated by two of his principal Ministers.'

'And so,' added Monte Carlo, 'in the words of *Punch*, "The Sultan Abdul Aziz became the Sultan Abdul As Was."'

This sally was received with a general laugh, and then the Sheikh said :

'We will now go inside the Dome of the Rock, and I think you will agree with me that the interior is, if possible, even finer than what you have seen outside.'

He led the way to the eastern entrance, accompanied by one of the Moslem Sheikhs or officials, whose business it is to guard the noble sanctuary and to escort visitors over its sacred precincts. The Consular Kawass and the Turkish soldier still continued in attendance, and altogether the tribe had a picturesque and imposing retinue.

Immediately outside the eastern doorway there stands another domed erection, of the same octagonal shape as the Shrine itself, but of very much smaller dimensions and without any exterior walls. It is supported by two concentric rows of pillars, and is also of very beautiful design.

The Sheikh paused to draw the attention of the tribe to this small dome.

'There is no doubt,' he said, 'that this was originally erected by the Arab architect who designed the Dome of the Rock, and that it was merely intended as a model for the guidance of the builders of the Shrine itself. If the outer walls of the latter were removed—and, as I have already told you, they were an addition of later times—the inner skeleton, as you will see for yourselves presently, would be found to be of the same pattern as this, the only difference being in the size of the dimensions. But the Moslems have another tradition with respect to the matter. They call this "The Dome of the Chain," and sometimes "The Dome of Judgment." According to their account, the spot over which this dome is erected was divinely indicated to King David as the place where he was to sit when he tried the causes of his subjects. Being thus divinely selected as the place of judgment, divine measures were taken that there never should be any miscarriage of justice, and a chain was suspended from heaven, which came down to within three feet of the ground, immediately where the

centre of this dome at present is. When a trial was being held, each witness was required to take hold of the chain with both his hands as he was giving his evidence. If he testified to the truth, nothing happened ; if, however, he was giving false evidence, one link dropped off the chain, and so everyone knew that he was telling a lie.'

'Oh, what a clever and wonderful plan!' exclaimed the Gusher. 'I think those dear old Jews were such marvellous people. Fancy it being impossible to tell a lie without being found out.'

'But you do not imagine that that story is true, do you, madam?' said the Fossil, with a cynical smile.

'Oh, you dear, nasty, disagreeable old man!' she ejaculated; 'why do you spoil all these delightful and romantic tales? Of course I believe it. I believe anything that is told me about these charming old people.'

'More fool you, then!' muttered the General Nuisance.

'But it was not always possible, even with those precautions,' continued the Sheikh, 'for a liar to be detected, as you shall hear. It so happened that, on one occasion, there was a lawsuit between a Moslem and a Jew.'

'I'll bet the Jew was in the wrong,' observed the Matter-of-fact Man casually.

'I'll bet the Jew gained his case,' added Monte Carlo.

'You shall hear,' said the Sheikh. 'The Moslem had been on the Haj, as the sacred Mohamedan pilgrimage to Mecca is called. Before he had started he had entrusted a sum of money to the Jew to keep for him until his return, instructing him what to do with it in the event of his death. His case was that the Jew had neglected or refused to hand over to him the money which he had entrusted to his care. They were both brought to this spot, and ordered to give their evidence on oath, each taking hold of the chain in turn. The

Jew was called upon first by the judge to state his version of the case. He was an old man, with a long gray beard and stooping shoulders, and he had a thick and heavy staff, on which he leaned. The Moslem was standing beside him, and, in order to take hold of the chain with both his hands, he gave the stick to the Moslem to hold for him. Then, taking hold of the chain, he said : " I solemnly swear that I have repaid the money to the Moslem, and that he has it in his possession at this present moment." Nothing happened to the chain. Then it came to the turn of the Moslem, who, handing back the stick to the Jew, took hold of the chain, and said : " I solemnly swear that I have never received the money from the Jew." Thereupon the chain suddenly disappeared up to heaven, and has never been seen since.'

'What a stupid story !' remarked the Malaprop, who for once in a way had been listening attentively ; ' I don't see anything in it, and you haven't said who was right and who was wrong.'

'I had not finished the story,' quietly replied the Sheikh ; ' the whole point is yet to come. The crafty old Jew had concealed the money in the hollow of his thick and heavy staff, and therefore, when he handed the stick to the Moslem to hold for him, he did literally repay him the money which he owed him. But, inasmuch as he meant to deceive, he was virtually telling a lie, whilst at the same time his actual testimony was so entirely in accordance with facts that the chain could not openly protest against it. On the other hand, the Moslem swore to what he honestly believed to be the truth, and yet he was unconsciously stating something which was not strictly the fact. And the moral of all this is, that not even a chain let down from heaven can always tell whether a man is telling the truth or not.'



'That is a capital story!' exclaimed Monte Carlo, 'and I must try to remember it for future use.'

'But do you think it really happened?' asked the Gusher, addressing herself to the Sheikh; 'I do hope, I really do, that it did; for I cannot bear to hear these things, which I always believe, and then to have some naughty, disagreeable man tell me that they are all rubbish.'

She looked at the Fossil as she spoke, and shook the forefinger of her right hand at him as if to show her displeasure. But she was not a very vindictive or formidable antagonist, and the Fossil did not look much alarmed.

'I am afraid that you will have to take the story for what it is worth,' answered the Sheikh; 'but, at any rate, the moral is instructive.'

With these words, he led the way towards the door of the Shrine, where they were stopped by another grandly-dressed Moslem official, who was surrounded by a mass of shabby Oriental slippers, large enough, apparently, for the feet of a giant.

'Hulloa!' exclaimed the Enthusiast, as the Sheikh informed the tribe that each of them would be obliged to put on a pair of the slippers over their own boots or shoes; 'what awful rot it seems to have to stick these things on every time we go inside one of these blessed Mohamedan buildings!'

'I suppose it does not seem any more rot to us than it does to a Moslem to have to take off his hat when he goes inside a Christian building,' replied the Fossil.

'Only he does not do so,' remarked Monte Carlo; 'that's just the difference. I have seen many Moslems go into Christian churches, and I have never seen them remove their fezzes or kuffiyehs.'

'Then they should be made to do so,' replied the

General Nuisance ; ' I should like to see a Moslem or any other man venture to come into our church in England without taking off his hat. I make bold to say he would not do it a second time.'

' That I can quite believe,' quietly observed the Matter-of-fact Man.

They had by this time satisfactorily passed through the ordeal of having the huge down-heeled slippers tied on over their own shoes, and as they entered the interior of the Dome of the Rock they could at first discern nothing clearly at all, so great was the contrast between the dazzling glare of the sun outside and the ' dim, religious light ' of the sacred Shrine. By degrees, however, their eyes became accustomed to the subdued semi-darkness, and they began to realize that they were within a building of extraordinary beauty and richness.

A corridor of from twelve to fifteen feet in width ran round the eight sides, between the outer walls and a row of columns and piers which supported the roof of the main building, but not the dome itself. There were on each side two pillars between the piers, which formed the angles of the octagon, so that altogether there were sixteen columns and eight piers. All these were apparently constructed of marble, and they belonged to the Corinthian order of architecture. Above the capitals ran a horizontal architrave, and above this again were pointed arches. This was originally the outer portion of the Shrine, corresponding to the exterior row in the Dome of the Chain, which the Sheikh had already explained to have been the pattern upon which this larger Shrine was modelled. Within these columns and piers there ran a second corridor, more than twice as wide as the outer one, and beyond it were other columns and piers arranged in a circle, and employed to support the dome. There

were four piers of very massive construction, and composed of white marble. Between each of these piers there were three splendid columns with Corinthian capitals, most of them being of a green shade. These supported substantial semicircular arches, composed of alternate stones of black and white marble, and the spaces between the arches were filled in with highly decorated marble masonry. A lovely screen of wrought-iron work ran all the way round this circle of arches, and reached to the height of about twelve feet from the floor of the edifice. The drum and dome were covered with the most magnificent and costly mosaic work, arranged in arabesques, with long inscriptions and quotations from the Koran. The whole was gilded throughout from crown to base.

As the tribe gradually took in all the details of the entrancing scene, the Sheikh pointed out to them the chief features of interest and beauty, and then, leading the way through one of the doors in the wrought-iron screen, he caused them to mount a stone slab which goes round the interior of the screen at the height of about two feet from the ground. Then they saw for the first time the sacred object to enshrine which the glorious dome had been built.

Guarded on all sides by a carved wooden railing, so that no one should profane it by setting hand or foot upon it, was the actual, original summit of Mount Moriah, commonly called 'The Holy Rock.' It was perfectly smooth, but very ragged and uneven. In some places there were cuts upon its surface, evidently made artificially and for some set purpose. In others there were curious holes and indentations, clearly natural, and around these the Moslems have woven fantastic and ridiculous legends. The whole surface of rock exposed



**THE DOME OF THE ROCK.**  
SHOWING THE STONE ON WHICH ABRAHAM OFFERED UP ISAAC.



was about sixty feet long from north to south, and about three-quarters as wide from east to west. It was not, however, rectangular in shape, being considerably wider towards the south than towards the north ; and, whilst the west side was as nearly as possible a straight line, the east was an irregular curve. The artificial holes were principally near the south-east corner, most of them being of an oblong shape and small ; but there was one hole much larger than the others, and of a circular form. On the western side the rock had been cut down into three descending steps. The whole surface of the rock was kept scrupulously clean.

‘ Now, here we are in the presence of one of the most sacred and interesting objects in the world,’ said the Sheikh, when the tribe had had sufficient time to make themselves familiar with the rock and its distinctive features. ‘ It was probably on this very rock that Abraham offered up Isaac. Here was certainly the threshing-floor of Ornan, or Araunah, the Jebusite. On this very rock David reared the altar to Jehovah when he desired to pacify Him, because he imagined that He had sent a pestilence which had broken out in the land. Here he offered the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, which were soon after followed by a cessation of the plague—which circumstance confirmed David in the belief that Jehovah had smitten the people in His wrath, and that He had removed the pestilence because He was pleased at the oxen being sacrificed to Him.’

‘ You speak as if you did not regard the plague as really a judgment from God,’ said the Archbishop, interrupting him ; ‘ I do not see what warrant you have for your assumption that the Bible is incorrect in its statements or its conclusions.’

‘ I purposely worded my remarks as I did,’ replied the

Sheikh ; ' for this incident is an admirable illustration of the principles which I have already enumerated as necessary for a right understanding and interpretation of the Bible. With David's conscience accusing him of having done something that savoured of distrust in the power and protection of Jehovah, in numbering his people to see what human force he had at his disposal, he would at once conclude, when the epidemic broke out in the land, that this was the direct work of the offended Jehovah ; and this conviction would be confirmed by the reproofs and assertions of the prophet Gad, who, no doubt in perfect honesty, persuaded him that there was no way of propitiating the vengeance of the national Deity, except by offering a sacrifice to Him. The epidemic passed away in the natural course of events, almost immediately after the sacrifice had been offered ; for it had already virtually ceased, as the Bible narrative expressly states. In accordance with his frame of mind and with the ideas which prevailed about Jehovah, David believed that Jehovah had removed the plague because He had been satisfied with the sacrifice on the threshing-floor. But you cannot take the narrative in its bald, literal sense without violating all your instincts of common-sense and all your respect for the just and holy God. For, if you do take it thus, see what it amounts to. It makes God a most deceitful, tyrannical, unjust, and bloodthirsty demon. This is strong language, but not one whit too strong, if we are to take the story as mathematically exact in all its details.

' In that case, this is what happened : God became angry with the Israelites for some cause which is not told us, and, in order to have an excuse for destroying a vast number of them, He deliberately put it into the mind of David to have a census taken of his subjects. Why it should be such a terrible sin to take a census, by

the way, is not very apparent, but we will let that pass. David acts upon God's suggestions, and takes the census, whereupon God rises up in vindictive wrath, and proceeds to kill seventy thousand people, because David has so grievously offended Him by carrying out His own instructions. How many thousand more would have been killed it is impossible to say, if David had not then appeased the thirst of the avengeful God by slaying a lot of innocent oxen and offering them up for sacrifice to the Deity. Most mercifully, God graciously deigned to be satisfied with this holocaust, and stayed His hand from slaughtering the thousands.'

'Whereupon,' added Monte Carlo, 'David returns to his palace, and composes a hymn to Jehovah, extolling His goodness, His justice, and His loving-kindness, for His mercy endureth for ever.'

'But it seems to me,' objected the Archbishop, 'that somehow you have not stated the case quite fairly.'

'Show me any construction which I have put unfairly on the story, if we are to take it literally,' answered the Sheikh, 'and I will retract it. I have honestly tried to do it perfect justice, and I have done so in the utmost spirit of reverence; for, from the point of view in which I read the narrative, there is nothing but an excellent moral lesson in the whole incident, whereas in the generally accepted interpretation it is, to my mind, a blasphemous insult upon the good and holy God.'

'Well, in the first place,' replied the Archbishop, 'unless my memory plays me false, you have made a misstatement at the very beginning. You said that God moved David to number the people, and the main part of your argument was based upon that fact. Now, so far as I recollect, the Bible says distinctly that it was Satan, and not God, that tempted David.'



‘You are right in one way, but wrong in another,’ replied the Sheikh. ‘The writer of the Book of Chronicles does put down the suggestion as proceeding from Satan ; but this is a later version of the original story, which is to be found in the last chapter of the Second Book of Samuel. There you will find that it is stated that “the anger of the Lord—that is, Jehovah—was kindled against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.” Evidently the later writer saw the incongruity and appreciated the dilemma, and he therefore changed Jehovah into Satan. Not that it really made so very much difference, because, if the narrative were an actual record of God’s dealings, and not of David’s ideas and impressions, the act would have been equally diabolical on God’s part.’

‘I understand the moral lesson, then, of that story is that David committed an action which was, with his ideas about Jehovah, an act of sin in his case,’ said the Angel, ‘and that, being afterwards seized with a remorse of conscience for what he felt to have been a want of trust in Jehovah, he thought that the plague which broke out was a direct punishment for his sin.’

‘That is the way in which I look at the matter,’ answered the Sheikh ; ‘and viewed thus it is a beautiful and instructive record of the extremely human liability to error and the delicate tenderness of conscience, combined with religious devotion and faith, which David possessed according to his lights.’

‘To return to this rock, from which the discussion has strayed,’ said the Fossil : ‘what did you say stood upon it in the time of Solomon’s Temple ?’

‘The Altar of Burnt Offering,’ replied the Sheikh ; ‘and I have little doubt that the small artificial holes which you see on its surface were made by Solomon’s

workmen, to be the sockets into which were fitted the stone pedestals which supported the altar.'

'Was this altar inside the Temple or in the open air?' asked the Angel.

'In the open air, and immediately outside the Temple, which stood to the west of it.'

'What is that big round hole?' asked the Enthusiast.

'It goes right through the rock into the hollow cave beneath,' replied the Sheikh; 'and we will now descend into that cave, if you will follow me. I shall then be able to show you more plainly what was the purpose of that round hole.'

They passed to the south-eastern corner of the rock, where they found a flight of steps descending into the cave. It was not very large, and some portions of its walls were covered with old plaster. There were three small altars in it, which, as the Sheikh explained, were dedicated by the Moslems to David, Solomon, and Elijah respectively. In the top of the roof could be seen the hole to which the Enthusiast had referred. Immediately beneath it, in the floor of the cave, was a marble slab.

'Lie down on the ground, and apply your ear to that slab,' said the Sheikh to him. 'Can you hear anything?'

'Yes,' exclaimed the Enthusiast, 'there is a lot of water rushing by.'

'Oh, let me listen to it,' cried the Gusher, going down on her knees and applying her ear to the floor of the cave in a very undignified and by no means graceful attitude. 'Oh yes, oh yes, I hear it distinctly. Oh, it is so curious; there must be quite a cascade.'

'And yet, though everyone fancies that they can hear water, it is all imagination,' said the Sheikh; 'there is no water at all there.'

'What is it, then?' asked the Enthusiast in astonishment.

'If you were to ask the Moslems,' replied the Sheikh, 'you would get several kinds of answers. Some will tell you that the sound proceeds from the wailing of lost souls, who come hither to pray for pardon. Others assert that the river of Paradise flows beneath this spot ; whilst others, again, declare that this slab covers the gate of hell, and that what you can hear are the distant echoes of the noises in the infernal regions.'

'Which of these is correct ?' asked the Malaprop.

'Why, none at all, of course,' answered the Sheikh. 'The sound simply comes from the currents of air in a hollow rock-cut passage. If this slab were removed, you would see that there is another large hole in the floor of this cave, corresponding to this one in the roof immediately above it, and from this lower hole there runs a remarkable passage or channel, which has been bored right through the solid rock, and which goes southward under the Temple Area, and through the heart of Mount Moriah, coming out over the Valley of Hinnom, near to the Pool of Siloam. There is little doubt that these two holes and that rock-cut passage or sewer were made by Solomon's workmen, in order to carry off the blood and refuse of the innumerable sacrifices which were offered up on the Altar of Burnt Offering ; and it is the existence of these holes and of this secret sewer which effectually settles the disputed question as to the actual site of the original Temple. They prove that the Altar of Burnt Offering must have stood upon the Rock, which you have seen above. This point thus satisfactorily established, the starting-point has been obtained for recovering the position of all the other portions of the Temple buildings and surroundings by the simple process of accurate measurements.'

He led the way up out of the cave into the interior

of the Dome of the Rock once more, and, proceeding with the tribe to the west door of the Shrine, he said :

‘ The two pillars, Jachin and Boaz, which stood at the entrance to the Holy Place, must have been situated as nearly as possible where these two columns stand now, immediately inside this western door, and dividing the two corridors which run round the Shrine. We are, therefore, standing at this present moment on a spot which was inside the Holy Place in the Jewish Temple, and, as we emerge from this door into the open court, we see before us that broad flight of steps leading down to the terrace below. That flight of steps coincides in position almost exactly with the site of the Holy of Holies ; and as the natural rock itself has been cut away here by the Moslem builders for the construction of these steps, you will see that all traces of the Jewish sanctuary have for ever disappeared. Literally and truly, as regards the Temple itself, not one single stone has been left standing upon another.’

## CHAPTER IX

### THE MOSQUE EL-AKSA

Further traces of Solomon's Temple—The water-supply of Jerusalem—Justinian's Basilica—Saladin's Pulpit—A judicious Immaum.

NOTHING would satisfy the Enthusiast but that he must purchase from the Moslem guardian of the slippers the pair which he had worn inside the Dome of the Rock—'Just as a memento, you know,' he said, 'of this memorable visit.' And so Yusef remained behind with him to assist him in the bargaining, whilst the rest of the tribe followed the Sheikh along the handsome paved courtyard which stretches to the south of the glorious building which they had just quitted. They descended a broad flight of stone steps to the pavement below, thus passing, as the Sheikh explained to them, once more to the Court of the Gentiles.

'You will notice,' he said, 'that the court presents a very different appearance on this southern end from that at the northern. There is no longer any rock terrace artificially levelled, as in the former case; but here we have a regular paved platform, which is supported from below by enormously massive and extensive ranges of columns and arches. Of course, you can't see them now, but I will take you to them some other time, and you will be able to judge for yourselves what an enormous amount of labour and expense the construction of them

must have involved. The whole substructural portion is commonly known as "Solomon's Stables," but there is nothing to justify this name in connection with them. A great number of solid masonry cisterns also lie beneath our feet, and you will notice that there are several holes dotted about here and there all over this paved surface. Those holes are for the purpose of conveying the water that falls upon this terrace into the cisterns below.'

'What a magnificent view one has from this terrace of the Dome of the Rock!' observed the Archbishop, pausing to look back along the direction by which they had come.

'By Jove, you're right!' exclaimed Monte Carlo; 'and really I think this edifice now is more beautiful even than the Taj Mahal of Agra. It is hardly fair, though, after all, to compare the two, for their excellences are of different natures. The loveliness of the Taj Mahal consists of the pure cream whiteness of its marble material, making it look like a gigantic piece of exquisite china; whilst the most striking feature of this building, to my mind, is the wondrous harmony of the innumerable colours and shades of hue with which it dazzles yet delights the eye.'

'That is certainly the case here,' said the Angel; 'and see how gloriously the sun illuminates every portion on this side. Yes, this is undoubtedly the best aspect from which to view it.'

'Oh! do come here,' cried out the Matter-of-fact Man, who had been examining a large round enclosure, which looked like a basin or reservoir, standing in the centre of the platform, but which was entirely destitute of water. 'What are those two curious creatures which are crawling about on the other side of this tank?'

'Those are lizards,' said the Sheikh. 'They are very common in Palestine, and, though they look somewhat weird and forbidding, they are really perfectly harmless.'

' Oh, do you think you could catch one for me ?' called out the Gusher in ecstasy. ' How I should love to take home one of those darling ugly creatures with me !'

' I think I should let them alone,' remarked the Sheikh ; ' I am afraid they would be rather a nuisance than otherwise. And I think,' he added, turning to the Gusher, ' you would get rather tired of them before we had got to the end of our journey.'

' But what is this large round tank used for ?' asked the Angel.

' It occupies the site of what we read of in the Book of Kings as the " great sea " of Solomon's Temple,' replied the Sheikh. ' Originally it was fed by an aqueduct of masonry work which ran along the hillside from a spot about nine miles to the south of Jerusalem, where there are some magnificent reservoirs of very ancient construction, still known as " Solomon's Pools." We shall visit them in a few days, and you will be able to see them for yourselves.'

' I presume that the aqueduct has been destroyed,' observed the Fossil, ' inasmuch as no water appears to be brought to this spot now.'

' No, the aqueduct has not been actually destroyed,' replied the Sheikh ; ' but the water has been diverted by the inhabitants of Bethlehem, close to which town it passes, and the consequence is that, whilst that town is always supplied with an abundant quantity of pure fresh water, Jerusalem is at the present time virtually destitute of any proper water-supply whatever.'

' Where does the water come from, then, for the domestic purposes of the city ?' inquired the General Nuisance.

' The inhabitants of Jerusalem are always entirely dependent upon the water which they catch off the flat roofs of their houses during the rainy season,' replied

the Sheikh. 'And almost every house has an underground rock-cut cistern belonging to it, and the water is conducted into this cistern by means of artificial channels from the roofs of the houses or the surface of the paved courtyard.'

'But surely this water must be very impure?' remarked the Fossil.

'Rather so,' assented the Sheikh. 'When you consider that the great mass of the people virtually live upon their housetops for many months in the year, and when you take into account their utter ignorance and neglect of the very first principles of cleanliness and sanitation, you can imagine what the condition of the water must be which washes off the roof into the cisterns when the rainy season begins.'

'And how often do they clean their cisterns out?' asked the General Nuisance.

'The great majority of them have not been touched for hundreds of years, I should think,' replied the Sheikh.

'What an awful state of things!' exclaimed many of the tribe in unison; and the Matter-of-fact Man added:

'Now I can understand why there is a notice prominently posted up in every room of the hotel stating that every drop of water used there has been carefully boiled and filtered beforehand.'

'But surely Jerusalem must be a very unhealthy city to live in,' exclaimed the Fossil, 'if this is the state of affairs.'

'Well, a great friend of mine, who has been an English doctor here for nearly thirty years, has told me that he can never remember the time since he first began work here when he could have honestly certified that Jerusalem was entirely free either from small-pox or typhoid fever,' replied the Sheikh.



‘But what are the authorities about?’ indignantly exclaimed the General Nuisance. ‘Do you mean to say that they deliberately acquiesce in such an abomination and disgrace?’

‘One instance will suffice to enlighten you upon that point,’ replied the Sheikh. ‘Some years ago the Baroness Burdett-Coutts offered to spend £100,000 in order to have Jerusalem properly supplied with water; but the Turkish authorities refused to allow the work to be carried out.’

‘The idiots!’ ejaculated the Enthusiast in disgust.

‘But why did they refuse?’ asked the Archbishop in astonishment.

‘Simply because they were convinced that no one in London, whether male or female, would desire to spend all that money in Jerusalem, unless there was some secret, underhand, political motive behind. They judged other people by themselves, and suspected accordingly a sinister intrigue.’

‘Then, at the door of the Turkish authorities lies the guilt of murder for all the deaths that have occurred in Jerusalem since that time, owing to the defective nature of the water-supply,’ solemnly declared the General Nuisance.

‘And a precious lot they care for that,’ said Monte Carlo, laughing.

‘But,’ remarked the Matter-of-fact Man, who had taken the greatest interest in the discussion, for the practical nature of the subject appealed to him, ‘what I cannot understand is this: why do not the people of Jerusalem prevent the inhabitants of Bethlehem from tampering with their aqueducts?’

‘I can only answer by reminding you that these people are Orientals, living under the régime of the Ottoman Government,’ said the Sheikh. ‘As Orientals, they

are mostly fatalists, and universally indolent and careless, and, moreover, they are quite satisfied with the water which they have in their cisterns. In fact, they would rather object than otherwise to water which had neither taste nor smell.'

'De gustibus non est disputandum,' remarked the Fossil, as the tribe moved away from the cistern, which is called by the natives 'El Kas,' or 'The Cup.'

The Malaprop, who had all along been making voluminous entries in her note-book, concluded by the observation that the Fossil had said that the matter was 'disgusting beyond dispute.'

The Palestine Patrollers now found themselves face to face with a quaint and picturesque edifice, resembling a medieval church, which stands at the southern extremity of the Haram-esh-Sherif, or Temple Area.

'This noble building,' explained the Sheikh, 'was originally built by the Roman Emperor Justinian nearly one thousand four hundred years ago. He was, as you all doubtless know, a very eminent patron of Christian ecclesiastical architecture, and this church, or basilica, as it was called, was dedicated by him to the Blessed Virgin Mary.'

'I did not know that there was actually a Christian church on the Temple Area!' exclaimed the Archbishop in delighted surprise. This is indeed an unexpected pleasure which you have been reserving for us.'

'Unfortunately, I must nip your enthusiasm in the bud,' responded the Sheikh; 'this is no longer a Christian church. During the second Crusades in the twelfth century the famous Saracenic hero Saladin, of whom we have already heard in connection with Askalon, captured Jerusalem, and converted this building into a Mohamedan mosque. It remains so to the present day.'

‘ Oh, what a beastly shame !’ exclaimed the Enthusiast. ‘ And I’ll bet that those Mohamedan fellows do not appreciate it at its true worth.’

‘ Yes, they do,’ replied the Sheikh. ‘ With the single exception of their great central mosque at Mecca, where the prophet Mohamed himself was born, the Moslems consider this the most sacred building which they possess in the world. They have, therefore, given it the name of “ El-Aksa,” or “ The Distant Mosque,” in order to distinguish it from that at Mecca, which they call “ The Near Mosque,” because it adjoins the prophet’s birthplace.’

‘ Still, I don’t see what right they have to this church,’ urged the General Nuisance.

‘ Possession is nine points of the law,’ said Monte Carlo.

They entered the sacred edifice by the main door in the centre of the façade, and all were deeply impressed with the noble appearance of the grand old nave.

‘ Those are the identical pillars, capitals, and arches belonging to Justinian’s own time,’ said the Sheikh. ‘ The nave is scarcely altered at all from what it originally was.’

As they slowly wandered down the aisle and ruminated in the transepts, more than one of the tribe breathed a silent prayer that the time might not be far distant when Jerusalem should once more be wrested from the hands of the Moslems, and when this glorious old edifice should be consecrated for the Christian worship for which it was first designed.

At the further end of the building the Sheikh pointed out to the tribe an exquisite work of art, which he told them was known as ‘ Saladin’s Pulpit.’

It was constructed mainly of oak and cedar wood, inlaid with ivory and mother-of-pearl. A pair of elaborately chased folding-doors stood at the bottom of a

handsome staircase, which led up to the pulpit itself. This, again, was surmounted by a magnificent canopy entirely composed of enamelled work, the predominant colour of which was green, the sacred colour of the Moslems. This, however, was relieved by many other colours, harmoniously blended together. The whole erection was a thing of beauty, eminently satisfying to the eye.

'There is an interesting history attaching to this pulpit,' said the Sheikh. 'You know, of course, that the inhabitants of Damascus have been famed from time immemorial for their wonderful skill in the manufacture of this kind of inlaid wood-work. Saladin, who was a native of Damascus, was anxious to hand down to posterity some substantial and worthy memorial of the sense of dignity and honour in which he regarded this sacred place of worship which he had secured for the Moslem faith. He therefore ordered the artisans of Damascus to cease for awhile from their ordinary occupations, and to combine together to design and construct the most exquisite pulpit which had ever been made. When it was finished, it was brought to Jerusalem and placed on this spot in the Mosque El-Aksa, and here it has remained ever since.'

'All I can say,' remarked the Matter-of-fact Man, after most of the tribe had uttered their expressions of admiration, 'is this : if a man could not preach a good sermon from that pulpit, he could not preach a good sermon at all.'

'Don't talk rubbish !' growled the General Nuisance.

'The Moslems have a very amusing tradition to relate in connection with this pulpit,' said the Sheikh. 'Once upon a time, so the story goes, a famous Mohamedan preacher from Bagdad visited Jerusalem, and he was asked to deliver a series of sermons from this pulpit. Friday,

as you know, is the sacred day of the week for the Moslems, and it was accordingly arranged that this series of sermons should be preached on successive Fridays. Naturally, the fame of this Immaum, as he was called, being so great, there was a crowded congregation assembled to hear him when he mounted this pulpit on the first Friday of the course. Amidst breathless silence, he opened his lips to utter his first sentence. It was as follows : " I take it for granted that all here present are well-informed in the principles of our great and holy faith." Whereupon all present shouted out : " Yes, we are." " I am delighted to hear that," said the renowned preacher, " for it will save me the trouble of expounding them to you." Then, to the general dismay, he descended from the pulpit. The following Friday, on putting the same question, he was met with the cry, " No, we are not." " I am sorry to hear that," said the Immaum, " for I really cannot waste my valuable time in preaching to such a lot of ignorant people." And down he came from his pulpit. On the third Friday the congregation came together fully primed with their answers, and when, as they anticipated, they heard the same opening sentence from the venerable orator's lips, half of them cried out " Yes," and the other half " No." " That's capital," said the preacher, " for it will save me a lot of trouble. Those of you who do know can teach those who do not." And that was all the sermon that the noted Bagdad Immaum ever preached in Saladin's Pulpit.'

## CHAPTER X

### THE CENTRAL SHRINE OF CHRISTENDOM

The Pessimist and the smell—Guardians of the peace—‘ You will find Calvary on the first floor ’—The Chapel of the Mocking—The Chapel of St. Helena—The Chapel of the Invention of the Cross—St. Helena’s Chair.

‘ HULLOA, old boy ! what in the name of fortune is the matter with you ? Have you seen the bogie man, or have you taken a dose of poison ? You are as white as a sheet, and look frightened to death.’

It was Monte Carlo’s hearty voice that uttered these words, and it was the Pessimist who was thus addressed.

The former was crossing the open square in front of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in the company of the Enthusiast and Yusef, on their way to visit the church, when they met the Pessimist hurrying away from the sacred edifice, with a scared and woe-begone look upon his face, and holding his handkerchief to his nose. They had lingered behind the rest of the party at a shop in Christian Street, where the Enthusiast had seen some strings of amber beads of great size and beauty which had attracted his attention. Monte Carlo remained with him to assist him in his bargaining, whilst they kept Yusef with them to act as their interpreter. Thus, the others had arrived at the church about a quarter of an hour before them. It was with no little surprise, not unmingled with amuse-

ment, that they met the Pessimist apparently fleeing for his very life.

‘ Oh, horrible ! horrible ! ’ he gasped ; ‘ I fear I have caught a fever. The foulest stench I have ever encountered has assailed my nose within that dreadful place.’

There was certainly some excuse for the poor hypochondriac’s alarm and apprehension ; for of all the penetrating, fever-breeding smells that are to be met with, even in Jerusalem itself, those which are sometimes to be found pervading certain portions of the Central Shrine of Christendom, as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is often styled, are the worst. There is a large cesspool in a courtyard on the north side of the passage leading from the Rotunda to the Chapel of Helena ; and as this cesspool is generally in an extremely foul condition, the odours which permeate the church are inconceivably noxious and offensive. Many a person with far less delicate olfactory nerves than those of the Pessimist has been driven in disgust from the precincts of the sacred edifice, which is supposed to contain within its walls the sites of the Crucifixion and Burial of the Saviour of the world.

Monte Carlo and the Enthusiast left the Pessimist to pursue his way back to the Grand New Hotel, and continued their course to the door of the church, undaunted by the perils which had been depicted to them. No sooner had they entered the church than they saw on their left a raised Turkish divan, on which were reclining about half a dozen soldiers sipping coffee.

‘ That’s a fine sight to greet one’s eyes inside a Christian church ! ’ exclaimed Monte Carlo, laughing. ‘ What are those chaps there for, Yusef ? ’

‘ To keep the Christians from fighting,’ he said.

‘ Fighting whom ? ’ asked the Enthusiast.

‘Fighting one another,’ answered the Druse.

It is a melancholy fact that Yusef spoke but the simple truth. Several of the Christian sects have altars and chapels within the church, chief amongst these being the Orthodox Greeks, the Latins—as the Roman Catholics are called in Palestine—the Armenians, and the Copts. The result has been that, until the Turkish authorities intervened to keep the peace, scarcely a day used to pass without some scenes of strife, quarrelling, and even bloodshed, occurring between the votaries of the different religions. One would have thought that, of all places in the world, there, in the heart of the Holy City and in the Central Shrine of Christendom, surrounded as they are by the Moslem and Jewish despisers of their faith, the professed followers of the “Prince of Peace” would have been most careful to have preserved, outwardly, at least, the unity, peace, and concord which are among the first principles of the religion of Christ. In the pure and primitive days of early Christianity, when the disciples of the faith were drawn together by mutual sympathy and mutual danger, their harmony was so conspicuous as to draw from even the heathen themselves the exclamation of wonder and admiration: ‘See how these Christians love one another!’ Now in scorn and derision the Moslems and the Jews exclaim: ‘See how these Christians hate one another!’ Sad indeed it is, but only too true.

A man of dark complexion, and dressed in the Oriental garments of a Syrian Christian, accosted them as soon as they had entered, and proffered his services to conduct them over the church, and to show them all the sacred sites and relics. They told him that they belonged to a party who were already in the church, and that they had appointed to meet them in the Chapel of Calvary. They



asked the man where Calvary was, and the answer they received from him was short and to the point :

‘Turn to the right, go upstairs, and you will find Calvary on the first floor.’

Following these instructions, they reached on their right hand a flight of stone steps, and, passing up these, they entered a vaulted chamber with a marble floor, where the Sheikh and the rest of his tribe were awaiting their arrival. The chamber was fitted up as a church or chapel, and was divided into two portions, in each of which there was an altar, with all its appurtenances of vases, crosses, hanging-lamps, etc. The arrangements and decorations of these two altars showed at once that one of them belonged to the Latins and the other to the Greeks. No special religious functions were going on at either altar at the time, but the place was filled by a crowd of pilgrims, chiefly Russians, as was evident from their dress and aspect. These pilgrims approached the altars prostrate on their knees, kissing the floor at frequent intervals, and manifesting the most sincere and devout belief in the sanctity and genuineness of all the various ‘holy sites’ which were accumulated in the chamber. But their chief attention and devotion were concentrated on a hole in the marble slab under the altar in the Greek portion of the chapel. A long string of pilgrims were waiting to take their turn at adoring and kissing this hallowed spot ; and, as each person approached it, he or she fell full length on the floor, in an attitude of the most profound reverence and self-abasement, crossing himself or herself profusely, and in many cases actually shedding tears of devotion and holy grief. There was something very touching in the evident sincerity of their adoration, and in the unquestioning faith in which they one and all accepted everything which they had been told.

‘What is there particularly sacred about that hole?’ asked Monte Carlo of the Sheikh, as soon as he and the Enthusiast had rejoined the tribe, who were looking on at the solemn, and yet in some respects melancholy, scene which was passing before their eyes.

‘That is supposed by them to be the identical hole into which the cross of Christ was fixed,’ replied the Sheikh. ‘You see, we are here on the traditional site of Calvary.’

‘Well, but this seems to me to be merely the floor of a chamber on an upper story,’ said Monte Carlo in surprise.

‘And so it is, neither more nor less,’ answered the Sheikh.

‘How, then, can any sane person believe for one moment that Christ was crucified on that spot?’ he replied.

‘Oh, these persons are not sane,’ interposed the Fossil; ‘they are all hopeless imbeciles, driven mad by the witchcraft of sacerdotalism.’

‘That is rather strong language, I venture to assert, my dear sir,’ rejoined the Archbishop, ‘and, if I might be permitted to say so, it seems to me very uncharitable.’

‘At any rate, there goes one lunatic,’ sneered the Fossil, pointing to the Gusher, who had taken up her post in the line of pilgrims, and was now devoutly prostrating herself beneath the altar, and fervently kissing the sacred hole in the floor. ‘If these poor, ignorant Russian peasants cannot be expected to know any better, at least one might have hoped that no English lady, nor anyone in the same company with myself, would have been so utterly destitute of common-sense and self-respect as to make such an idiot of herself.’

He turned away in contempt and disdain, as though he would be demeaning himself by even watching such a spectacle; and he made his way to the steps, declaring

that he had seen enough tomfoolery there, and that if there was nothing better worth seeing in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, he should return to the hotel and write some letters. And so the Fossil was driven away by the scenes in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, just as the Pessimist had been driven away by its smells.

'Poor man!' sighed the Archbishop, as he watched his old antagonist depart; 'he talks about the narrow-mindedness and intolerance of the clergy, but he is very intolerant and narrow-minded himself.'

'But really,' said Monte Carlo, laughing at the Fossil's virtuous indignation, 'is it not a little too absurd to expect rational men to swallow such a story as this? How could the Crucifixion have taken place on an upper floor? for, as I understand it, there is another chamber beneath this one, is there not?'

'There is,' replied the Sheikh; 'and I will take you there when we have finished our visit to this chapel. In it you will be gravely shown the tombs of Adam and of Melchizedek. I have been assured that, if you choose to pay a little extra baksheesh, the priests are prepared to show you Adam's skull; but, as I have never been sufficiently curious in the matter to put my hand in my pocket over it, I cannot vouch for the truth of that statement.'

'But how do they account for the fact that Calvary is in a room?' asked the Angel.

'They have a most ingenious answer for you, if you ask them that question,' replied the Sheikh; 'they will tell you that this chapel was originally built upon a small hilly rock, but that the Empress Helena, who was the first in the long line of devout pilgrims to visit this shrine, took away a large portion of the rock beneath as a sacred relic to Rome, and the countless pilgrims who have suc-

ceeded in her train have each of them carried off a little bit as a private relic for themselves. The consequence is that Calvary has by this time entirely disappeared, but the hole in the floor occupies the same position in space as the original hole did, so that that is all right.'

'And do you not think that this may be the case?' asked the General Nuisance; 'I do not see anything very improbable in that.'

'There is one fatal objection to that excellent theory,' replied the Sheikh: 'it is now established, as nearly as anything can be established, beyond a doubt that this Church of the Holy Sepulchre stands nowhere near the true scene of the Crucifixion.'

'And is not the Holy Sepulchre itself genuine either?' asked the Angel.

'There is nothing whatever genuine about it,' answered the Sheikh; 'the whole church, and everything connected with it, from the blasphemous ceremony of the so-called Holy Fire downwards, is simply a fraud and a delusion.'

'But how could that possibly be?' objected the Archbishop, in a tone that showed that he thoroughly disapproved of the Sheikh's assertions; 'this site has been accepted by the universal voice of the Church and Christianity at large for nearly sixteen centuries.'

'That makes no difference in the matter,' answered the Sheikh; 'if a thing starts by being false at first, even the universal voice of the Church and Christianity at large for sixteen centuries cannot make it true at last.'

'Your arguments are ridiculous!' exclaimed the General Nuisance abruptly; 'how could sites so well known and important as those of the Crucifixion and Burial of our blessed Lord have ever been mistaken? It is perfectly absurd upon the face of it.'

'Nevertheless, however ridiculous and absurd it may

appear to you,' replied the Sheikh quietly, 'it is simply a matter of history that the sites were lost, and I will tell you when and how. After the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus in the year 70 A.D. the city lay in a state of ruined desolation, until it was rebuilt by the heathen Roman Emperor Adrian in 135 A.D., who effectually erased all traces of Jewish or Christian remains, converting the place into a purely heathen city, and changing its very name into that of Ælia Capitolina.'

'What on earth did he give it that outlandish name for?' asked the Matter-of-fact Man.

'His own first name was Ælius,' said the Sheikh, 'and so the title meant the Capitoline of Adrian. For three generations—that is to say, for close upon a hundred years—no Christian or Jew was allowed to enter the city. The consequence was that when they did return there was not a soul living who remembered the Jerusalem anterior to Adrian's reign; and so, as Eusebius himself says, "That illustrious monument of immortality, the Holy Sepulchre of Jesus Christ, had become lost in darkness and oblivion."'

'Why, then, was this spot selected, if no one knew of the real site?' inquired the Angel.

'You have doubtless heard of "Holy Cross Day," or the Day of the "Invention of the Cross," in the Roman Calendar,' replied the Sheikh, 'and you would find it also in the Calendar of the Greek Church. We will now leave this chapel, and descend the steps, and I will take you to another portion of this Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where I will explain to you both the origin of that day in the Roman and Greek Calendars, and also the reason why this church has been for fifteen centuries and a half the Central Shrine of Christendom.'

On arriving at the foot of the stairs, they turned to the

right, and passed along a dark passage, paved with marble. After proceeding a short distance, they came to an altar in a recess on the right-hand side. An oil-painting over the altar represented Jesus seated on a stone pedestal, crowned with thorns, and with a group of Jews around Him, scoffing at Him. Underneath the altar was a fragment of a gray marble column. The Sheikh pointed this out to the tribe, telling them that this was one of the numerous so-called sacred sites in the church, and that it was known as the 'Chapel of the Mocking.' The broken column below the altar is pointed out to faithful pilgrims as being the identical place on which Jesus sat when the Jews crowned Him with thorns. The Gusher was very anxious to go down on her knees and kiss this stone, and she was very loth to listen to the Sheikh when he assured her that this and all the other sites which she would see before they had finished their journey round the church were spurious and fictitious.

Immediately beyond this chapel they came to a broad flight of steps leading down to a large chamber considerably below the level of the rest of the church. This chamber looked like the crypt of some old cathedral, being lighted only by a small dome with four windows in it, situated in the centre of the roof. There were two rows of very short columns, with Byzantine capitals supporting the roof, which was rudely decorated by a groined ceiling. This crypt was thus divided into three aisles. At the further end of the centre and left aisle were altars, whilst at the further end of the right aisle was another staircase cut out of the solid rock, and leading down to a sort of vault. Near these steps was a very ancient-looking marble seat or chair. The Sheikh first of all conducted the tribe to the altar at the end of the left aisle.

‘This altar,’ said he, ‘is dedicated to the penitent thief, who, according to ecclesiastical tradition, was known as St. Dimas. But there is no need to linger here, for this other altar and the vault below those steps are the real objects of interest to occupy our attention here. This whole chapel is known as the Chapel of St. Helena, and the altar in the centre is dedicated to her. The vault, into which we will now descend, has, as you perceive, another altar and a crucifix. This vault is called the Chapel of the Invention of the Cross. We will reascend these steps into the larger chapel, where I will relate to you all the circumstances which have led to the erection of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and to its position through all these centuries as the Central Shrine of Christendom.’

‘Has that large stone chair got any history?’ asked the Enthusiast, as they were coming up the steps from the vault into the Chapel of St. Helena.

‘Yes,’ answered the Sheikh; ‘that is called Helena’s Chair, and you will presently hear why it has received that name. Helena, as you all probably know, was the mother of Constantine the Great, the first Christian Roman Emperor. She lived in the earlier part of the fourth century of the Christian era. She was a very devout, earnest, holy woman, but, like most people of that age, exceedingly superstitious and fanatical. It was essentially an age of credulity, ignorance, and relic-hunting. There was a mania for erecting shrines and churches on every imaginable holy site, and the Empress Helena herself was one of the most zealous and active devotees in this particular phase of religious fervour. An ardent desire fired her breast to make a pilgrimage to the Holy City, and to build a shrine over the site of Calvary and the tomb of Christ. This aspiration was sedulously fostered

by all who were interested in the matter. Those who were pious and devout, like herself, were naturally delighted at the prospect of such a sacred memorial being erected over the very scenes of the death and burial of their Lord. The less scrupulous of the priests and ecclesiastics in Jerusalem welcomed the undertaking; for they saw in it an increase to their importance and renown, as also a source of constant revenue to their spiritual coffers, through the offerings of the multitude of pilgrims who would henceforth crowd to the Holy Sepulchre. In addition to these, there were at the royal court of Helena a body of sycophantic followers, whose interest it was to see that all the good lady's aspirations were realized, and that all her pious designs were fulfilled. Under such circumstances, and with such attendants, the Empress set out on her pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

'When she arrived here, she found herself confronted at the very outset by a serious and unexpected difficulty. There was not a soul living who could tell her where Calvary and the Sepulchre were situated. In this dilemma she had one night a remarkable dream. She dreamed that if she dug in a certain place, which was pointed out to her in her vision, she would find three crosses buried there. These crosses, she was informed, were those of Christ and of the two thieves; and she further learned in her dream that they had been buried there by the first disciples, in order that they might be preserved as sacred relics, and that no one might discover where they were concealed until some faithful Christian, like herself, should come along to build a church over their hiding-place. She told her dream next day, of course, to her followers; and, under all the circumstances of the case, it is not very surprising that when they came to dig, a couple of days afterwards, in the spot of which



she had dreamed, three crosses were, sure enough, discovered a short distance below the surface of the ground. That dream was pronounced by the ecclesiastical authorities of the church to be miraculous ; nor could they well have adjudged it otherwise, seeing that the Empress was the mother of the all-powerful Emperor, Constantine. The day on which the crosses were unearthed was canonized under the name of "Holy Cross Day," and this chapel was erected at the scene of the discovery and named the "Chapel of the Invention of the Cross." From that time till the present century no one seems to have ventured to dispute or discuss the genuineness of the miracle ; and—such is the wonderful force of ecclesiastical tradition, especially when confirmed by the lapse of centuries—everybody has unhesitatingly accepted this spot as the divinely-revealed site of Calvary and the Tomb of Christ.'

'Nor do I see any reason why the dream should not have been a miraculous vision,' remarked the Archbishop ; 'for, seeing how pious and devout the good St. Helena was, and how well-pleasing to God her intentions must have been, I can readily understand that God would have adopted this plan to point out the true site of the most sacred events which have happened in the history of the world.'

'I am afraid that I do not see the matter in that light at all,' replied the Sheikh, 'and, moreover, a few simple considerations will, I think, convince any unprejudiced person at once that the whole story is absolutely unreliable as a basis of historical criticism.'

'Oh dear !' sighed the Gusher, 'why will you always bring in your unromantic historical criticisms ? I do love to think that all these things are true ; and it is very cruel of you, it is indeed, you naughty, naughty man ! to upset all these beautiful stories.'

‘You need not listen to the criticisms, if you do not like to hear them,’ observed the General Nuisance. ‘Now, I like to hear all sides of a question, though I always reserve to myself the right to hold my own opinion after having heard everything that is to be said on the matter.’

‘Quite right,’ ejaculated Monte Carlo; ‘mind you stick to your own opinion, whatever happens.’

‘Trust her for that!’ remarked the Matter-of-fact Man in an undertone to the Angel, who was standing beside him.

‘Now tell us, please,’ said the Enthusiast, ‘why you consider it so impossible that the ecclesiastical tradition about this site should be correct.’

‘In the first place,’ replied the Sheikh, ‘the very last thing in the world that the first disciples would have thought of doing, or would have wished to do, would be to cherish as a sacred relic the wooden instrument of death upon which their dear Friend and Master was innocently executed. The day for attention to sacred relics had not then arrived. It was the creation of an after age, an age of superstition and credulity—the very age, in fact, in which the Empress Helena lived. Indeed, she must be regarded as more responsible than any other human being for the introduction of the sentiment with regard to sacred relics, which has been fostered by the ecclesiastics of the Greek and Roman Churches for purposes of their own. There is not the slightest probability that the early disciples ever gave a thought at all to the actual cross upon which Christ died; but if they did, it is certain that it would have been with a feeling of abhorrence and repulsion that they would have regarded it, and not with any sentiment of reverence or devotion. Had they desired to do anything with it, their natural impulse would have been to have burnt it or destroyed it in some

way—anything to get rid of the accursed thing. It would have been as abhorrent to them as would be the gallows to us upon which any dear and venerated friend of ours should be innocently hanged.'

'But,' objected the Angel, 'that could hardly be, surely; for does not St. Paul expressly say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"? This seems to show that the Apostles did regard the cross as an object of veneration.'

'St. Paul was not alluding to the wooden instrument of death when he wrote those words,' replied the Sheikh, 'but to the act itself of the crucifixion, the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ in dying on the cross.'

'And even supposing that the first disciples did regard the cross of Christ as a sacred object, and therefore might have wished to preserve it as a sacred relic, I do not see what there could possibly have been sacred to them in the crosses of the two thieves,' suggested Monte Carlo.

'Exactly so,' said the Sheikh; 'I was just coming to that point. Finding three crosses proved too much, there would have been much greater plausibility in the discovery if only one cross had been found.'

'But do you think,' said the Matter-of-fact Man, 'that if the object of those disciples in burying the crosses—even supposing those discovered were genuine—had been to preserve them as sacred relics and to prevent them from being discovered, they would have buried them in the very place where the Crucifixion occurred, and where anyone would naturally look for them?'

'Of course not,' replied the Sheikh; 'and, even upon the hypothesis of those three crosses being the crosses of Christ and of the two thieves, as the ecclesiastical tradition would have us believe, the very fact of this being the place where they were concealed is a strong argument

against its being the true site of the Crucifixion. But the question has been almost entirely settled, as far as the claims of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre are concerned, by the discoveries of the last few years. It has long been thought by intelligent and unprejudiced explorers that the spot where we are now standing must have been inside the walls of Jerusalem in the time of Christ, just as it is at the present day. The wall which surrounded the city then is commonly known as the Second Wall, and its direction, between the present Jaffa Gate and Damascus Gate, was pretty clearly defined by the descriptions of Josephus. There was some doubt, however, about the construction of a passage in his account which enabled the advocates of the claims of this church to draw an imaginary plan of the direction of the wall by a very eccentric and unlikely course, so as to make this spot outside the city in the time of Christ. There have been discovered three distinct portions of the foundations of the Second Wall within the last few years, and these distinctly show that the walls circled round from near where the Grand New Hotel at present stands to the Modern Damascus Gate, which stands as nearly as possible on the very site of the gate through which the road to Damascus went out of Jerusalem in the time of our Lord. This places the site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre a long way inside the city in those days, and proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that Calvary and the Tomb of Christ could not by any possibility have been near this spot.'

'I do not follow you in that argument,' said the General Nuisance; 'please explain yourself more clearly.'

'Our Lord was undoubtedly crucified and buried outside the city walls,' replied the Sheikh. 'St. John expressly tells us that "the place where He was crucified

was nigh unto the city," but not in it ; whilst the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews states that " He suffered without the gate." Apart from these two testimonies, we know, moreover, that as an historical fact criminals were never executed, nor anyone buried, inside the city walls.'

' So much, then, for this church and all that it professes to contain !' exclaimed Monte Carlo. ' I should imagine that it would take the gold medal from all the world for being a humbug and a fraud.'

' But, if this is not the true site of Calvary, can you tell us where it is ?' said the Angel. ' For I can see but little object in overthrowing the devout tradition of so many centuries unless you are able satisfactorily to substitute for it the undoubtedly true scene of our Lord's crucifixion and burial.'

' I entirely agree with you,' answered the Sheikh, ' and unless I had been prepared to do so, I should never have mooted the question at all. I propose to take you this afternoon to the genuine spot, where I shall be able to point out to you the evidences in its favour. We will now, if you please, devote the rest of our morning to seeing the other objects of interest and reputed sacred spots within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Only I would again remind you that you must not accept as real facts the fictitious sites that are pointed out to you.'

' Before we leave this place,' remarked the Enthusiast, ' I should like to remind you that you have not told us the history of this stone chair.'

' Its history is told in a very few words,' replied the Sheikh. ' It is called St. Helena's chair because tradition reports that the aged Empress sat upon it whilst she was watching the operations connected with the Invention of the Cross.'

'Oh, I must go and sit in it!' exclaimed the Gusher, suiting the action to the word.

'I suppose that it is no more genuine than anything else here, is it?' said the Angel.

'Probably not,' answered the Sheikh. 'It is scarcely likely that this marble throne, for so it may be called, would have been forthcoming on the spot; and it is much more probable that it has been constructed and placed here by some of the mediæval monks, as an extra adornment to the moral of the tale. But we will now move on, and see all that remains to be seen.'

'Do you think it is worth while bothering ourselves to see anything else?' said the Matter-of-fact Man. 'For if there is nothing more genuine in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre than the rubbish which we have already inspected, it strikes me that our time might be much better employed in going and looking at something else.'

'Oh no, let's see everything!' exclaimed the Enthusiast. 'I don't much care whether a thing is genuine or not as long as I can say that I have seen it.'

'You remember what Lord Chesterfield said to his son when he wanted to go down a coal-mine,' said Monte Carlo. 'He asked him why on earth he wanted to ruin his clothes and dirty himself by going down a coal-mine; and the son replied that he wanted to be able to say that he had been down. "Well, then, my boy, say so," replied the cynical father. So I say to you, if you want to say that you have seen all these blessed sights, by all means, my dear fellow, say so.'

'If what you have told us is true, I think it a very sad and shocking thing that all these poor pilgrims should be so deluded, and made to believe that these places are genuine,' said the General Nuisance.

'I do not quite agree with you,' observed the Archbishop; 'for, apart altogether from the question of the genuineness and authenticity of the sacred spots to which they are taken, there seems to me to be a very useful purpose which these holy shrines serve in acting as visible memorials of the sacred events which they commemorate, and in impressing upon the minds of the pilgrims the various incidents in the life of our Lord in a more powerful and permanent manner than would otherwise be possible.'

'Besides,' added his daughter, 'there is something to my mind inexpressibly solemn and beautiful in the thought of the devout prayers and reverent worship which have been offered up by millions and millions of faithful Christians within the precincts of this church during all the centuries since Helena's time.'

'There is a great deal of force in that sentiment,' replied the Sheikh, 'and, persuaded as I am of the utter fictitiousness of everything connected with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre from the point of view of historical and geographical accuracy, I never enter the church without being filled with heartfelt devotion and reverent solemnity because of the innumerable company of saints who have worshipped within its walls. If I want to realize the doctrine of the Communion of Saints, I come to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; but if I want to realize the Crucifixion of our Blessed Lord, I go to the green hill outside the Damascus Gate, to which I purpose to take you this afternoon.'

## CHAPTER XI

### 'THERE IS A GREEN HILL FAR AWAY'

The Gusher annoys the Fossil—The Hospital of the Knights—The Ecce Homo Arch—Gabbatha—The Via Dolorosa—The Damascus Gate—The real Calvary—'The Place of a Skull'—Death by stoning—The scene of the Crucifixion.

'WHY did you run away this morning?' asked the Gusher of the Fossil, as she sat next to him at luncheon in the saloon of the Grand New Hotel. 'You don't know what you missed. There were such lots of beautiful things to see.'

She was in blissful ignorance of the fact that he had left in indignation at what he considered her idiotic enthusiasm.

'They were not the kind of things that I care to see, madam,' he replied curtly.

'Oh, but you should have seen them, you really should,' she rattled on, quite oblivious of his evident distaste for the subject. 'I can scarcely remember all there was, but I will try to tell you as well as I can.'

'Pray do not give yourself that trouble, madam,' he said in as freezing a tone as he could command. But she was too much wrapped up in her own ecstacy to notice his manner.

'Oh dear me! it is no trouble at all, I assure you,' she said innocently; 'in fact, I want to see if I can recall everything we saw. Let me see! First, there was the



lovely marble chair in which that darling old lady sat—what was her name? Helena, I think—at any rate, she was an Empress, I know; and then there were a lot of, oh! such lovely altars: there was one on the very spot where the soldiers cast lots to see who should get Christ's garment; then there was one on the exact spot where that centurion man stood at the Crucifixion, and another where our Lord was put into prison before His execution—though I had forgotten, by-the-by, that He was put into prison, but He must have been, because there are the very two holes in the ground where His feet were placed in the stocks, so, you see, it must have been true. And then there was a divine little church, belonging to the Latins, I think they call them, where our Lord was scourged, and that must be true, because the very pillar is there still to which He was bound, though we could not see it, because there is a sort of wall built all round it; but I know it was there, because the good kind priest who showed us the place told me to poke the tip of my parasol through a round hole in the wall, and I did so, and I could feel the pillar quite distinctly—at least, I felt something, and the priest said it was the pillar, so of course it was. And then there was the exact spot where our Lord appeared to Mary Magdalene after His resurrection, and, of course, that was true, because there is a marble slab with a cross upon it in the ground to show where it was, so that there could be no mistake. And then there was—oh dear! I quite forget what there was besides, but oh! lots and lots of other beautiful and wonderful things like these, and all so real and true.'

'And did you go down on your knees and kiss all these places, may I inquire, madam?' asked the Fossil in a tone which he intended to be so cuttingly sarcastic as to put a stop to her ceaseless chatter.

He might have saved himself the trouble, for she did not heed it in the least, and replied in as natural a manner as if he had asked her the most ordinary question in the world :

‘ Well, no, not exactly all. You see, the others were in such a terrible hurry to move on at times that they would not give me time to do so ; and then there was that nasty, unkind Sheikh telling them over and over again that all these things were false and not to be believed ; but I did kiss as many as I could, and I am going to ask that dear, delightful Druse man, Yusef, to take me back there one day all by myself, and then I can spend as much time as I like, and do the same as all those dear pilgrims, who are, I think, quite too lovely in their devotions. But I have not told you nearly all yet.’ (The poor Fossil heaved a deep sigh, and tried to turn to his other neighbour, but the Gusher pinned him to attention by plucking hold of his sleeve.) ‘ Well, there was a large round church with a great glassed dome at the top of it, and I think they said it was called the Rotunda, and in the middle of it there was, oh ! oh ! such a lovely yellow stone building, one of the most beautiful things I have ever seen in my life, and it had no end of silver lamps hung all over it, and some magnificent candlesticks all about it, and no wonder it was so grand, for it was the very Sepulchre where our Lord was buried. But the Bible must be wrong, because it is not cut out of the rock at all, but it has two rooms in it, and you have to stoop down to get into them because the doors are so low, and in the middle of the first room—which is so dark that you are obliged to carry a tallow candle in your hand, and the tallow has run all over my dress and spoilt it ; but I don’t mind that, because it was only an old dress, and, besides, I can easily get the grease out, because I always carry a bottle of benzine about with

me—and in the middle of this room there is the very stone on which the angel sat after it had been rolled away from the door of the Sepulchre—the stone, I mean, not the angel—though I don't quite see how a stone of the shape that that one was could have been used to block up a door ; but I don't pretend to be so wise as some people. And then there was another little low door into the second room, and I nearly broke my back stooping down to get through it. But oh ! it was so lovely when I got inside. It is only a little tiny place, and it has what looks like one of those old-fashioned big tomb-stones we see in our village churchyards, and it is covered with a white marble slab, and actually the slab is nearly worn through in one place by the lips of the pilgrims who have kissed it ; and there was such a lot of smoke from the lamps and the incense that I was nearly choked ; but I kissed the slab, and then went out backwards stooping through the door, because I found it easier to do so than to go forwards. Oh ! and I must not forget to tell you that we went into another such a curious place, where there were some long narrow holes, just like coffins, cut in the stone floor, and somebody said that they were old Jewish tombs, and that Nicodemus was buried in one of them. Fancy poor Nicodemus being put in a hollow box like that cut out of the rock ! I think they might have put him into a proper coffin and given him a decent funeral. I am sure I should not like to be buried in one of those holes ; I think I would rather be cremated first, I really think I should, would not you ?'

'Really, madam,' replied the Fossil, whose patience had long since been exhausted, and who had been trying in vain to get a word in edgeways—'really, madam, the whole subject interests me so little that I must beg you not to weary me with it any further.'

And this time he did succeed in turning round to the Angel, who was on his other side, and entering into a conversation with her. As soon as lunch was over he went up to the Sheikh, and said :

‘ I must beg you as a favour, if you please, so to arrange matters that I am not obliged to sit next to that gushing creature at my meals. She has entirely destroyed my appetite to-day.’

Their route in the afternoon took them a short way down David Street, out of which they turned to the left, along the same cobbled lane, called Christian Street, which they had traversed in the morning on their way to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Turning to the right, and descending the steps which led to the open courtyard in front of the church, they continued their way eastward through a narrow gateway at the south-eastern angle of the courtyard. Here they emerged on a broader street on the right hand of which was a handsome mass of buildings, evidently of considerable age, but recently restored.

‘ This,’ the Sheikh explained to his companions, ‘ is a very interesting relic of Crusading times. It was known as the *Muristân*, or “Hospital of the Knights,” and its grand old church, dedicated to Santa Maria Maggiora, was presented to the late Emperor Frederick of Germany by the Sultan of Turkey some years ago. As you see, it has been very carefully and finely restored to almost exactly its original form and appearance. It is now used as the Lutheran Church for the German residents of Jerusalem.’

‘ And what is this building on our left hand ?’ asked the Archbishop.

‘ That is a hospice belonging to the Russian Church,’ replied the Sheikh. ‘ In its grounds were discovered, a

few years ago, the foundations of very massive walls, and these were at once identified by the advocates of the claims of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as a portion of the old city walls, thus placing the church itself outside Jerusalem. There is, however, but little doubt that they were not the foundations of a city wall at all, but of one of the many towers which we know did once stand in several quarters of the city.'

Proceeding still further eastward, the tribe came at last to a narrow street which was spanned by a very ancient arch.

'Now here,' said the Sheikh, 'we are on genuine historic ground. This is known as the Ecce Homo Arch, and it is undoubtedly the remains of the gateway which opened into the grand quadrangle in front of the Roman governor's palace, in the audience chamber of which the trial of Christ before Pontius Pilate took place. Tradition says that our Lord was brought to the top of this arch and shown to the surging mob in the street and quadrangle below, in accordance with the Gospel narratives.'

'And you think that this tradition is correct?' inquired the Angel.

'I think it more than probable,' answered the Sheikh. 'This large building to our left is known as the Convent of the Sisters of Zion, and over the altar in its chapel is the smaller archway, which formed another portion of the quadrangle entrance of the gateway. In its precincts can be clearly seen the remains of the quadrangle itself, with a portion of the identical Gabbatha or pavement mentioned in the sacred narrative. On one of its stones there is still a carved chequered square, where the Roman soldiers used to amuse themselves by playing with the dice.'

‘ Oh, do let us see that ! ’ cried the Gusher and the Enthusiast in unison ; and several others of the tribe also expressed their desire to inspect, if possible, so interesting a spot.

Accordingly, the Sheikh knocked at the door of the convent, which was presently opened by one of the sisters, who received the company with quiet grace and courtesy. They were shown into a neat reception-room, and presently the Lady Superior came in to welcome them. Under her escort, they visited the well-kept chapel and other portions of the convent which were open to visitors. It is in reality an orphanage, where about eighty little native children are most lovingly kept, fed, and taught, and all the arrangements connected with the establishment gave evidence of a veritable labour of love.

The old pavement with its interesting remains was fully inspected, to the great delight of all ; and then, having bidden the kind hostess farewell, the tribe returned once more to the street.

‘ You will understand now, ’ said the Sheikh, ‘ from all that you have seen and heard, that it was almost of a certainty through this archway that Jesus came when He left the Prætorium for Calvary, bearing the cross. ’

‘ This, then, ’ said the Archbishop, uncovering his head reverently, ‘ must be the commencement of the Via Dolorosa. ’

‘ You are quite right, ’ replied the Sheikh ; ‘ and I am now going to conduct you as nearly as can be determined along the actual road to the Crucifixion itself. But, first of all, I must make you clearly understand that we shall not be treading the identical pathway ; for here, as elsewhere throughout Jerusalem, the present level of the street is considerably higher than it was in the time of Christ. ’

‘ How is that ? ’ asked the General Nuisance.

‘ It is owing to the enormous accumulation of rubbish and débris which has resulted from the destruction of the city itself by Titus, and by the numerous sieges and transformations to which Jerusalem has been exposed during the eighteen centuries which have elapsed since then.’

‘ I believe that I have read that some of the original streets have been discovered and in part examined by the Palestine Explorers,’ observed the Fossil ; ‘ is this the case ?’

‘ It is,’ replied the Sheikh, ‘ and I myself have seen some portions with my own eyes. For example, I shall indicate to you in a few minutes a spot where the original Via Dolorosa still exists nearly thirty feet below the present surface.’

Retracing their steps in a westerly direction for a few hundred yards from the Ecce Homo Arch, the Sheikh and his tribe presently arrived at a place where the road bifurcated in two directions.

‘ Here we come to the point of divergence in the two different theories concerning the actual route of the Via Dolorosa. If we take this left-hand path, we shall be returning along the very road which we have already traversed this morning on our way from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to the Ecce Homo Arch. In other words, that is the route which has for so many centuries been regarded by ecclesiastical tradition as the way to Calvary. This other path, on our right hand, along which I am about to conduct you, is, I believe, the correct direction, and I may add, in passing, that this theory is corroborated by the examination of the ancient street of which I have just spoken ; for it follows the main line of this narrow way, the portion of which I mentioned as having seen myself thirty feet below the surface, lying immediately below this

lane. It led in the days of Christ, as this now leads, to the principal gateway in the northern walls of the city, known as the Damascus Gate.'

'What is this large building at the corner here?' asked the Enthusiast; 'what high walls it has all round it!'

'That is another hospice, a very beneficent institution for Roman Catholic pilgrims to Jerusalem,' replied the Sheikh.

Pursuing their way along the quaint, gloomy, and narrow street indicated by the Sheikh, the obscurity of which was enhanced by many overhanging arches which stretched across it from wall to wall, the tribe in a few minutes reached the Damascus Gate.

'Before we pass out through the archway,' said the Sheikh, 'let me draw your attention to a very interesting and important relic of ancient Jerusalem.'

He indicated to them four large stones, wedge-shaped and massive, which evidently formed the crown of an old archway, the rest of which was hidden from sight beneath the surface. This crown was built into the modern walls, and only reached to three or four feet above the ground.

'Here you see,' remarked the Sheikh, 'the keystone and crown of the original Damascus Gate, which was standing in its present position in the time of our Lord. If we were to excavate here, to the depth of from twenty to thirty feet, we should doubtless uncover the whole of that gateway, probably in a well-nigh perfect condition. This will give you some idea of how the original level of the streets and ground of Jerusalem has been raised since the olden times, as I explained to you just now. We are here at least twenty-five feet higher than the level of the threshold of the gate in Christ's time. But the presence of this old gateway proves beyond all contradiction that,



except in the matter of levels, the modern Damascus Gate, out of which we now pass, is on the actual site of the old gateway. It was through this gate, as I shall prove to you presently, that Jesus came bearing His cross on His way to Calvary. In all probability it was just here that the procession encountered Simon of Cyrene, coming out of the country and about to enter the city, and along all the rest of the way that I am about to take you Simon was compelled to carry the cross.'

The Damascus Gate is the most picturesque and ornamental of all the gates of Jerusalem. The form of its turrets, battlements, and other decorations indicates the date of its construction in the Middle Ages. The road which passes out of the gate goes northwards through Palestine, by way of Bethel and Shechem, to Damascus, and hence the name of the Damascus Gate. About a hundred yards further on it is crossed by another road, which runs from west to east outside the northern walls of the city, and connects the Jaffa road on the one side with the road to Bethany, Jericho, and the Jordan on the other. These two cross-roads—the one from south to north, and the other from west to east—still are, as they always have been, the main roads of Jerusalem.

At the junction of the roads, and in the north-east angle formed by them, there stands a low grassy mound, with a gently sloping incline on the north, east, and west sides, but with a perpendicular rocky face towards the south—that is, looking in the direction of the city walls. This vertical side is about eighteen to twenty feet in height, and in its face is a remarkable natural formation, bearing the most striking likeness to a skull. On both sides of this skull the rock has been rent asunder from top to bottom by the shock of some earthquake in former ages. The Sheikh conducted the tribe a short distance along the

cross-road in an easterly direction until they arrived at a rising spot, whence the skull formation could be very clearly perceived. Here he halted them, and addressed them thus :

'This mound at which we are now looking is, in my opinion, beyond a doubt, the true scene of the Crucifixion. Here is the real Calvary. The hill is known to the present day by the Jews of Jerusalem as the "Hill of Execution." It is also sometimes called "Beth-ha-Sekilah," or the "House of Stoning." The latter name is given to it because the punishment of death by stoning was carried out on this hill, and I will explain to you presently what the stoning really was. It was very different from what you have probably hitherto imagined. Now, it is not likely that there would be two places of execution in the immediate vicinity of the city. One such accursed spot would be quite enough ; and that this mound was held accursed from time immemorial is an ascertained historical fact. No Jew will under any consideration pass it after nightfall, for he holds it to be haunted on account of its abhorrent associations ; and even in the daytime every Jew that passes the hill mutters a curse as he does so. An old Rabbi once told me the words of the curse : "Cursed be He that destroyed our nation, by aspiring to be the King thereof !"'

'Why, that must surely refer to Christ !' exclaimed the Archbishop ; 'for, as we all know, one of the excuses made for His crucifixion was that He said He was the King of the Jews.'

'Precisely so,' responded the Sheikh ; 'and, so far as we know, it can refer to no one else. This constitutes a strong argument in favour of this being the real site of Calvary. But there are others stronger still. We all know that Jesus was crucified at a place called Golgotha,

which is explained in our Authorized Version of S. John's Gospel as meaning "the place of a skull." Some commentators have taken this to signify that Calvary was a cemetery, and even on this supposition this mound would exactly answer the description ; for, as you see, it is to the present day used as a burying-ground. It belongs to the Moslems now, but there is little doubt that it was a Jewish cemetery in ancient times. I do not, however, think that Golgotha derived its name from the fact that skulls were dug up there, but rather from the natural conformation of the place. As to this, again, there are two reasons why the place might have received its name : either from the shape of the mound itself, or from some peculiar appearance in a portion of it. General Gordon, the hero of Khartoum, who spent some considerable time in Jerusalem, and was an enthusiastic advocate of this site, took the trouble to survey and measure every part of the hill with the greatest care and accuracy. A German sculptor, then living here, made some plaster casts from Gordon's measurements, and one of these casts I have in my possession now. It is impossible to look at it, even in the most casual manner, without being struck by its remarkable likeness to a human skull.'

'I cannot see any resemblance to a skull in this mound,' observed the General Nuisance.

'From this point of view, probably not,' replied the Sheikh ; 'but from certain aspects—as, for example, from the top of that flat-roofed house which you see on the highest point of the city, immediately above the walls a little to the east of our present position, the resemblance is really very striking. But I do not consider myself that this hill was called "the place of a skull" from that fact, but rather from another peculiarity in its natural con-

formation. If you look up the Greek version of the passage in St. John to which I have already referred, you will find that the accurate translation would be that Jesus was brought to a place called "The Skull." Not that this makes any material difference, but it helps to define a little more clearly the nature of the Golgotha. Now look straight at the hill, and you will see that the face of the rock has been broken away, partly by natural influences, and partly by artificial means, leaving the surface nearly vertical. That huge cave which is immediately in front of us is generally known as "Jeremiah's Grotto," because that prophet is said to have hidden himself in it when King Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, sought to take his life. Whether that is so or not one cannot say, but it would be a very probable hiding-place, for it has within it some secluded recesses. Directly to the east of the mouth of this cave—that is to say, on our right as we are looking towards it—you will notice that the face of the rock has evidently been artificially cut into a smooth and vertical scarp. On the other side of the cave, however, the formation of the rock is purely natural. Now, fix your eyes on that, and gaze at it long and steadfastly. You know that if you were to take up a human skull in your hand and look at it, you would see the forehead, the eye-sockets, the hollow where the nose had been, the mouth, and the lower jaw. Can you not see all those appearances quite distinctly in the face of that rock ?

They all looked carefully in the direction which he indicated, and after a short time the Fossil declared that it was perfectly apparent to his eyes.

'By Jove, yes !' exclaimed Monte Carlo, in almost the same breath ; 'there it is, as clear as possible. Don't you see, a few feet below the ridge of the hill there are those two hollow caverns side by side, exactly like gigantic

empty eye-sockets, and the surface of the rock above them is rounded like the forehead of the skull.'

'Yes,' chimed in the Enthusiast, 'and just below them there is another hollow, which would correspond to the position of the nose.'

'And below that again,' said the Angel, 'there is a long slanting slit, which looks like a mouth very much awry; and at the bottom of all the rock looks just like a jaw. Oh yes, it is all quite clear.'

'Oh dear, oh dear!' exclaimed the Gusher, in excited agony, 'I can't see it; indeed, indeed, I can't—I really can't. Oh, do, please, someone, point it out to me. I mustn't lose my skull.'

'It would not be much loss, so far as the contents are concerned,' thought the Fossil to himself; and the General Nuisance uttered aloud a sentiment to the same effect, which, fortunately, the Gusher did not hear in her eager anxiety not to miss anything that was to be seen.

The Pessimist presently observed in a lugubrious voice that he had seen it all along, even before the Sheikh had pointed it out to them, and that it had pleased him much, for he was very fond of skulls.

'I believe you, old boy!' ejaculated Monte Carlo. 'No wonder you always wear the expression of an undertaker. I suppose you spend your whole time in meditating upon the shortness and uncertainty of life.'

Here the Gusher gave a little scream of delight, and exclaimed that at last she had been able to make out the dear, precious, ugly old skull. The Enthusiast had by this time climbed over a low, loose stone wall, in order to get a nearer view of it. The Archbishop, meanwhile, was gazing earnestly through his spectacles at the face of the hill; but, as he had looked at the wrong spot all

the time, he had not yet discerned the skull. The Angel, however, pointed it out to him at length ; and when he had quite satisfied himself as to the similarity of its aspect to a distorted human skull, he asked the Sheikh how he could account for the fact that it had preserved its clearness of outline through all the centuries since the time of Christ.

'That is not difficult to understand,' replied the Sheikh, 'for the rocky hill is formed of nummulitic limestone of the hardest and most imperishable quality ; and in this climate there would be no natural influences powerful enough to affect it seriously. Moreover, the very fact of the mound having been used all along as a cemetery would make it sacred in the eyes of the people ; and, therefore, no operations of quarrying and so forth, which might have disturbed the face of the rock, have taken place. Hence it is quite easy to account for its present appearance being much the same as in the time of our Lord.'

'Do you notice those curious splits in the rock, on either side of the skull ?' said the Angel. 'They look as if they had been caused by an earthquake.'

'And so they undoubtedly have,' answered the Sheikh ; 'and here we have probably a remarkable confirmation of the Gospel narrative as to the physical convulsions of Nature that occurred at the time of the Crucifixion, for we read that the rock was rent in twain from the top to the bottom by an earthquake ; and the effect would be precisely that which we see here.'

'How wonderfully interesting !' sighed the Angel, who always felt a keen delight in any corroboration of the sacred record.

'You said just now that you would explain to us about the punishment by stoning,' remarked the Archbishop.

'I shall be interested to learn if there is any new light that you have to throw upon that ceremony; for I was always under the impression that that was a very simple affair, and that nothing fresh could be told us about it.'

'Why, of course, everyone knows what happened,' said the General Nuisance; 'the smallest Sunday-school child could tell that.'

'And what do you imagine did happen?' asked the Sheikh.

'Imagine? Why, I *know*. There's no imagination in the matter at all,' she indignantly replied. 'Of course, they took the man who was to be stoned to the appointed place, and they simply stoned him to death.'

'But in what way exactly was the stoning carried out?' persisted the Sheikh.

'In what way was the stoning carried out?' she exclaimed impatiently. 'Why, in the usual way, of course. The man knelt down on the ground, and they gathered round him, and hurled great stones at him until he was killed. I should have thought everyone had seen enough pictures of the scene to know what it was like.'

'I thought that probably your impression of what occurred was more or less as you have described it,' replied the Sheikh quietly; 'but, with all due deference to the pictures of which you speak, they are for the most part as ridiculously inaccurate and misleading as are many other pictures upon sacred scenes and subjects which are to be found upon the walls of Sunday-schools and in the pages of Sunday-school books.'

The General Nuisance gave a snort of incredulous defiance, whilst the Sheikh continued:

'We will now fix our attention, if you please, upon that portion of the face of the hill which has been artificially made smooth and vertical—that, I mean, to the east of

Jeremiah's Grotto. The height from the level of the ground to the brow of the hill is from sixteen to eighteen feet ; and, when we go up, as we shall immediately, to the summit of the mound, and look over the brow, you will see that the ground itself at the base of that perpendicular scarp has also been artificially levelled, and made into a smooth horizontal floor of solid rock. Now, what happened in the process of stoning was as follows : The condemned criminal was taken up to the brow of the hill, above that vertical scarp ; his hands were tied behind his back, and the principal witness against him pushed him forcibly over the cliff. Falling headlong from that height on to the rocky floor, he would, in nine cases out of ten, be instantaneously killed, or at any rate many of his bones would be broken. The witnesses and others taking part in the execution then leaned over the brow of the hill and dropped large stones upon the unfortunate man, who was literally pounded to a jelly. That, you see, was a very different process from what is generally to be seen in the pictures of which you speak.'

'That is indeed a new light thrown upon the subject,' said the Archbishop, 'and I thank you for it. It explains what has often puzzled me—namely, why the people of Nazareth should have taken Jesus up to the brow of the hill on which their city was built in order that they might cast Him down headlong when they thought that He had spoken blasphemy.'

'Precisely so,' replied the Sheikh ; 'the punishment for blasphemy was stoning, and the Nazarenes were proceeding to carry out that punishment in a regular and formal manner. There is another passage in the Gospels, which is made intelligible when you understand what the process of stoning was. You will remember that our Lord on one occasion says : "Whosoever shall fall on



the stone shall be broken ; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder." Here you see both parts of the process referred to, the falling on the stone so that the bones are broken, and the stone falling on the person and grinding him into powder. There is no doubt that, when Christ spoke those words, He was alluding to the official punishment of stoning.'

'But, surely,' said the Angel, 'we are told on one occasion that the people took up stones to cast at Him, which seems to indicate that our pictures are sometimes right.'

'That to which you refer was merely the spontaneous action of an infuriated mob,' answered the Sheikh ; 'it was not the formal execution of a judicial sentence.'

They now ascended the green mound by a pathway from the eastern end, and soon were all assembled on the top. They first made their way to the brow of the hill, and examined the scene of the stoning from above. After that, the Sheikh bade them all look around, and take in with their eyes the principal objects presented to their view in Jerusalem and its vicinity.

'There is one special point to which I wish to direct your attention,' he said. 'We are probably standing now as nearly as possible close to the spot where the cross was erected. Imagine the Saviour of the world hanging here, with His face, as it would almost certainly be, turned towards the city. Along those two roads which skirt the base of this hill there would be crowds of people passing to and fro, at that busy Passover season, and so we read : "All they that passed by wagged their heads at Him in scorn and derision." But, apart from the actual suffering and persecution which He was then enduring, all the scenes of His passion would be hidden from His view. Gethsemane is out of sight, down in the

hollow of the valley beyond the city to the south-east of us. The palaces of Caiaphas, of Herod, and of Pontius Pilate were concealed, behind the intervening heights with the crowded buildings upon them, in the foreground of Jerusalem, just behind the city walls in front of us. Even the Temple Area itself is invisible from this spot. But, as you must have noticed already, there is one prominent object which attracts the eye, and upon which the Saviour would look, as He hung upon the cross. That object is the Mount of Olives. It was from the heights of Olivet that His ascension to His Father's home was to take place, after He had endured the suffering, undergone the death, and risen a triumphant Victor from the grave.'

'What a grand and magnificent thought!' said the Angel reverently, as the Sheikh paused in his observations. 'If we believe—as we must—that our Divine Lord foreknew what was in store for Him after He had been faithful unto death, what a solace, comfort, and support it must have been to have had before His very eyes the scene of His final joy and glory, as He hung and suffered all the shame and agony of the cross!'

'Yes,' added the Archbishop, removing his hat as he spoke, as if the sacredness of the thought rendered the very spot a consecrated temple; 'and now, for the first time, I realize the full force and the literal meaning of that wonderful passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the sacred writer speaks of "Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." I never understood how literally He had the joy set before Him whilst He was enduring the cross, and how it must have helped Him to despise the shame.'

‘ I shall try to come here as often as I can during our stay in Jerusalem,’ quietly remarked the Angel ; ‘ for I feel as if I realize here the Crucifixion and its lessons more solemnly and truly than I could possibly do anywhere else.’

‘ This is indeed an ever-memorable day,’ exclaimed the Enthusiast, ‘ and, like you, I mean to come here again and again.’

‘ I confess to feeling the influence of this spot myself,’ observed the Fossil, in humbler and less dogmatic tones than he was wont generally to assume ; ‘ I have no doubt that this is the actual spot where Jesus of Nazareth was crucified.’

‘ And is it not, I ask you all, a most refreshing contrast to come on to this quiet and peaceful mound, after all the humbug which was shown us in that Church of the Holy Sepulchre this morning ?’ said Monte Carlo.

‘ Surely,’ said the Angel meditatively, as though communing aloud with her own thoughts, ‘ Mrs. Alexander could have been little less than inspired when she wrote that immortal hymn :

“ There is a green hill far away,  
Outside the city wall,  
Where our dear Lord was crucified,  
Who died to save us all ” ;

for this spot exactly answers her description, and that hymn must, I suppose, have been composed before the modern investigations had discovered this true site of Calvary.’

‘ Yes,’ chimed in the Archbishop ; ‘ and certainly the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in no way bears out the idea of that hymn.’

‘ You are quite right,’ observed the Sheikh ; ‘ Mrs. Alexander could not possibly have known of this hill,

which so admirably fits in with her words, as you so justly observed.'

They turned away with reluctance, for the Sheikh had other things yet to show them, and the afternoon was hastening on. As they descended the western side of the mound, Monte Carlo went up to the Enthusiast and said to him :

'I say, old fellow, when one visits a scene like this, and thinks of the directions which that fellow gave us, this morning in that church when we asked where Calvary was, it makes one feel quite sick that people should be so deluded. Bah! Do you remember the directions? "Turn to the right, go upstairs, and you'll find Calvary on the first floor!"'

## CHAPTER XII

### THE TOMB OF CHRIST

The Catacomb—The Church of St. Stephen—Sackcloth and ashes—  
Some important inscriptions—Joseph's Garden—The Sepulchre—  
The Story of the Resurrection.

ON reaching the base of the hill, the Sheikh turned to the left, followed by his tribe ; and, after proceeding a few paces along a narrow lane with a new wall about ten feet high on its western side, he stopped at a closed door in the wall, by the side of which was a bell-handle at the end of a chain. Having rung this bell, the door was almost immediately opened by a monk in the clean white garment of the Dominican Order, who courteously made way for the tribe to enter.

They found themselves inside a large enclosure, which looked like a garden, but the greater part of which was occupied by ruined fragments of columns, capitals, and other signs of an ancient church, which had fallen into complete decay and demolition, and which had evidently been but lately excavated from the mass of earth, stones, and débris which had covered it over for many centuries. The newly-discovered remains were arranged with great care, so as to occupy as nearly as possible their original positions in the old church, of which the foundations and lower portions of the walls, to the height of one or two feet above the ground, were in a tolerably perfect state

of preservation. At any rate, it was easy to see from them what was the size and form of the ancient church. Just inside the doorway in the outer walls, through which the tribe had entered, there was a level platform of cement, which had only been constructed of late years, and which was on the same level with the rest of the ground. At the further end of this platform, or court, a flight of stone steps ran down to a door about fifteen feet below, a hollow space which had been excavated in the ground on that side of the court revealing a wall, and showing that the platform was merely the roof of an underground crypt or vault. The Dominican monk led the way down the flight of steps and unlocked the door leading into the crypt.

The Sheikh and his tribe followed, and they entered a spacious vaulted chamber, the roof of which was supported by arches on columns of modern construction. A few memorial tablets were attached to the walls, and the chamber looked like a mausoleum, or like the vestibule to some old church. The monk produced several long tapers, which he lit, giving one to each of the visitors to hold, as the place which they were about to explore was quite dark.

‘This hall,’ said the Sheikh, addressing the tribe, ‘is the antechamber to a remarkable catacomb, or series of subterranean tombs, cut in the solid rock. They are all Christian tombs, and date from the early centuries of the Christian era. I have purposely brought you here to visit and examine them before taking you to the tomb of Christ Himself, because I consider them of great importance in their bearing upon the question of the identical sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathæa, in which our blessed Lord was buried. If you will now follow me, we will descend into the catacomb.’

He led the way into an inner chamber of the vestibule, and in the floor of this chamber there was a large square hole with a ladder inside it, leading down to the vaults below. With some considerable difficulty the whole party descended, and found themselves in a very confined and cramped space, among a great number of *loculi*, as the stone receptacles for the dead bodies in the rock-cut sepulchres are called. These *loculi* were crowded together, and at the head of most of them a raised embossed cross of primitive design was carved in the rock. These crosses proved that these tombs had been constructed in Christian times, and that they were sepulchres of early Christians. Beyond this, there was nothing of special interest to detain the company in the stuffy vault, and they soon returned up the ladder to the vestibule, and thence to the open air again.

'You will have observed,' said the Sheikh, when they had reached once more the level of the natural surface, and were walking across the enclosure to the ruined remains of the ancient church in the centre of it, 'that this property surrounded by these high walls belongs to the Dominican Order of Latin, or Roman Catholic, monks. When they purchased the land a few years ago, it was apparently an ordinary plot of ground, without anything very interesting about it, and it was being sold for building purposes. There were no signs of these remains which you now see scattered about in such profusion, nor was the existence of the catacombs which we have just visited known or suspected. All these discoveries have been made by the Dominican brothers in the course of their most intelligent and thorough researches. This fine old early Christian church which they have now recovered, and of which the foundations are so perfect, is called by them the "Church of St. Stephen," and

they believe that the first Christian martyr was killed and buried here. It is quite possible that they are correct in one part of their belief, and that the remains of St. Stephen were laid to rest somewhere on this enclosure—even, it may be, in the very catacomb from which we have now emerged. About this we have no certain data, but its very proximity to what I believe to be the Tomb of Christ renders it highly probable that St. Stephen was buried in this immediate neighbourhood. But he certainly was not martyred here ; for I have already pointed out and explained to you the Place of Stoning, and there is no doubt that that was really the place where that dastardly deed took place. This church here I believe to have been dedicated to the Resurrection of our Lord ; for there were some stone slabs discovered in the catacomb by the Dominicans, and these slabs had been used to cover the *loculi*. They had Greek inscriptions on them in a more or less mutilated and illegible condition ; but some of these inscriptions have been tolerably well deciphered. I am now about to take you to that modern building which you see across the enclosure, and which the Dominicans have erected as a museum for the antiquities and relics which they have discovered here. In that museum you will see these slabs or tombstones ; and I will point out one or two of the most interesting and important. You will then see why I connect this old church with the resurrection of our Blessed Lord.'

'How would you like to sleep for a night or two down amongst those tombs, old fellow ?' said Monte Carlo to the Pessimist, as they were crossing the enclosure to the museum. 'You said a little while ago that you liked skulls ; you would have a good opportunity of ruminating over them there, in a most appropriate place.'



'Oh, please do not talk of such an idea,' replied the melancholy man; 'you make me feel quite sick. Think of the horrible damp smells there. I am nauseated to my stomach now, and wish I had never gone down into that nasty hole.'

And he stopped and put his hand up to his mouth, as if he were actually going to carry his nausea to its bitter end; and Monte Carlo, fearing a *dénouement*, hastened on to join the others.

'Is he not a love of a man?' he heard the Gusher say to the Enthusiast, as he caught them up.

'Now, now, you should not talk of me behind my back, or, at least, you should take care that I was not near enough to overhear you,' laughed Monte Carlo; 'you make me blush with modest confusion.'

'I was not talking about you, you silly, conceited man!' she answered.

'Oh, don't spoil it, I beseech you,' he said, assuming a comical air of disappointed vanity. 'Of whom were you speaking, then, may I ask, in that highly flattering manner? Lucky man, whoever he be.'

'Why, that dear, delightful gentleman in that beautiful white flowing robe, of course,' she replied, pointing to the Dominican brother, who was walking by the Sheikh's side and conversing with him. 'I have really and truly fallen desperately in love with him. I have indeed; I mean it. You needn't grin like that, you nasty, disagreeable man.'

'Is it the man or his dress that has captivated your fancy, may I inquire?' laughed Monte Carlo again.

'I don't know exactly, I really don't; but I think it is the whole thing. He has such a dear, sweet, contented face, and such a lovely silky beard, and he looks so clean and nice!'

‘ Now, do you know what he has got on underneath that beautiful white robe ? ’ he asked.

‘ You should not put such foolish questions to me, you naughty man ! ’ she replied, blushing ; ‘ how should I know what his under-garments are ? ’

‘ Well, I will tell you, ’ he answered gravely. ‘ He wears next to his skin an old piece of coarse sacking, just what they use for putting corn in. He never takes this sackcloth off ; and every now and then he gets a handful of ashes and pours them in between the sackcloth and his body. So you may imagine what a dear, clean man he is. One of these Dominican brothers, whom I met in Italy, told me that he had worn his sackcloth for over thirty years, without ever once removing it. ’

‘ Oh, how disgusting ! how very repulsive ! ’ she cried out, not perceiving that her companion was merely chaffing her. ‘ I wish you had not told me. I was just getting so charmingly romantic over that silky-bearded monk. But perhaps he does not wear the sackcloth. Do you think that it is quite, quite certain that he does ? ’

‘ I should recommend you to go and ask him, ’ replied her tormentor.

She was actually about to do as he suggested, but he called her back, saying :

‘ On second thoughts, perhaps you had better not do so. It might be more proper if I asked him myself. ’

When they got inside the museum, they found most of the other members of the tribe gathered in front of an oblong stone slab, about four feet high and two feet broad, which was leaning against the wall. The stone was evidently very ancient, for it was quite eroded and weather-worn. It was covered with an inscription in Greek characters ; but most of the letters were indistinct, and the whole inscription was most difficult to decipher.

The Fossil was down on his knees in front of it, examining it critically through his glasses ; and the Archbishop was standing over him, eyeing him with a smile of amusement on his lips, for it was evident that, with all his boasted classical attainments and erudition, he could not make head or tail of the inscription on the stone.

‘ Well, what do you make of it ? ’ he said, after a short time.

‘ The stone is so much worn away that I confess my inability to decipher the words, ’ he replied slowly, rising from his knees. ‘ Perhaps it was more legible when it was first discovered. What has been made out of it ? ’ he inquired, turning to the Sheikh.

‘ If you will allow me, ’ replied the Sheikh, advancing to the stone, and taking his stand beside it, ‘ I think I can help you to make a good deal of it. Here, for example, you see the letters :

ΝΩΝΩΚΑΙΟΝΕΣΙΜΩ,

and the next word clearly is the Greek for “ deacons ”—

ΔΙΑΚΟΝΟΙΣ.

The whole inscription may be read as follows :

“ To Nonus and Onesimus, Deacons of the Church of the Witness of the Resurrection of Christ. ”

‘ Ah, now I see it quite clearly, ’ said the Fossil.

‘ Yes, when it is pointed out to you, ’ muttered the General Nuisance.

‘ This inscription clearly shows that there was in this immediate vicinity in the early Christian days a church which had been erected as a perpetual witness or memorial of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This church would, of course, be naturally erected close to the scene of the Resurrection, or, in other words, close to the Tomb of

Christ. In all probability the church of which you have seen the remains in this Dominican enclosure is the one referred to in this inscription ; and, in that case, the tomb of our Lord and the garden of Joseph of Arimathea must be close at hand. This theory is strongly corroborated by a fragment of another funereal inscription which is on this broken stone, but which is even more illegible than the one we have just been examining.'

Whilst he was speaking he had moved to another stone which was placed on the ground a short distance away.

'On this stone, when it was first discovered,' he said, 'the words

"Buried near his Lord"

could be clearly deciphered in Greek. This seems to prove that those Christian tombs which we have visited are adjacent to the Tomb of Christ. Now I think we have seen the most important things in this Dominican enclosure, and, as it is getting rather late in the afternoon, we will bid good-bye to our courteous friend here, and make our way to the next place which I have to show you.'

At this moment the Malaprop called out :

'What a strange-looking stone, and what curious figures there are upon it ! Do you know what it is all about ?'

'Why, good gracious ! we have just been having it all explained to us,' said the General Nuisance. 'Why ever do you not listen whilst things are being shown to us ?'

'I was looking at those curious old saucer things in that glass case,' she said ; 'and I really was not paying attention. What are those saucer things ?' she added, turning to the Sheikh.

'They are simply lamps,' he replied ; 'the oil was

poured into the hollow, and the cotton wick, or sometimes a piece of stranded cord, came out of that little round hole you see, and the light was burned there.'

'Why do you call those things saucers?' said the General Nuisance. 'I don't see anything like a saucer in their appearance, for they have a cover over them at the top, and, besides, they have a handle.'

'Well,' replied the Malaprop, 'they would be rather like saucers if their lids were taken off, and if they had no handles.'

'She might just as well say,' remarked the Matter-of-fact Man to his neighbour, the Enthusiast, 'that she would be clever if she were not such a fool.'

Almost immediately facing the door through which they emerged into the lane there was, on the other side of the narrow passage, another arched gateway with a wooden door in it, leading into a garden. This door was locked, but the Sheikh had brought the key with him from the hotel, where it was generally kept. Opening the door, he passed into the garden, followed by the tribe. It was a considerable-sized enclosure, bounded on its south and west sides by a low, rudely-built wall; but towards the north and east it ran into the face of the mound which had already been visited by them as the true Calvary. A few olive-trees were growing in the garden, and the ground had been sown for barley. At the northern end—that is to say, directly on their left-hand side as they entered the garden—the rocky face of the mound had been artificially made vertical, and in its side, some five or six feet below the present surface of the ground, was the entrance to a rock-cut tomb. This tomb with its entrance would have been invisible had not a wide trench to the depth of several feet been dug away from the garden at this its northern

boundary. By means of rough steps cut in the trench they were able to descend to the entrance of the tomb. Before they did so, however, the Sheikh drew their special attention to the statement made by St. John as to the locality of the sepulchre where Christ was buried.

‘Assuming that this mound is the true site of Calvary,’ he said, ‘the garden in which we now are seems almost of a certainty to be identical with that of Joseph of Arimathæa. The Evangelist distinctly says: “Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus, therefore, because of the Jews’ preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.” You will notice how exactly that description is borne out here. This garden literally runs into the hill of Calvary; in this garden there is this sepulchre; and this sepulchre is nigh at hand to the scene of the Crucifixion. If you will come down with me to the door of the sepulchre, you will see from the strata of the soil in the side of this trench that the original level of the garden was at least five or six feet below the present surface. The ground has been raised here, as in so many other places in and around Jerusalem, by the débris resulting from the many destructions of the city; so that the very existence of this tomb has been unknown for centuries, and in all probability it was completely covered long before the Empress Helena visited Jerusalem in search of the Holy Sepulchre. It has only been discovered within the last twenty-five or thirty years; and I have little or no doubt myself that it is the genuine Tomb of Christ.’

They descended into the ditch, to enter the rock-cut tomb through a low doorway. Besides this doorway there was another opening in the rocky face of the tomb,

a little further to the east and at a higher elevation. This latter opening was evidently the original hole made by the workmen who excavated the sepulchre in the rock. The very marks of the tools were still plainly visible in the walls of this opening. The Sheikh bade his friends look through this opening one by one, and all could see, though dimly and indistinctly, to the bottom of the tomb at its further end. This being the original opening, and the Tomb of Christ being still incompleated at the time of His burial, it would have been this opening against which the stone was rolled, the lower doorway being clearly an addition of later days. Therefore, as the Sheikh explained to the tribe, on the supposition of this being the actual tomb, it was through this hole that St. John looked when he came to the sepulchre on the first Easter morning ; and, with the level of the garden at that time, he would have to lean forward, or stoop down, to look in properly. The Sheikh begged his companions to pay particular attention to this point ; for, he said, it had an important bearing on the proof of the resurrection of Christ, as he would explain to them presently. When all had looked through and expressed their satisfaction at being able to see inside, the Sheikh unlocked the door, and they all penetrated into the interior of the tomb.

It was an oblong chamber, the ceiling, floor, and four walls of which were, of course, formed of the mother rock. It was divided into two compartments by a low partition, which ran from north to south, and which had been left when the solid rock was cleared away from the rest of the chamber. This partition itself was in two separate portions, the one on the north and the other on the south ; and between them there was a passage about two feet wide connecting the two halves of the rock-hewn

sepulchre. The western half had no *loculi*, or receptacles for corpses, in it, and it was probably intended to serve as a sort of antechamber to the other portion, though a groove cut in its western wall towards its northern side seemed to indicate that the workmen had commenced to prepare for a *loculus* there, which they had never completed. In the eastern chamber, which was the principal and more interesting half, there were *loculi* which had been made for two, or perhaps three, bodies; for, with regard to one of these constructions, it appears doubtful whether it was originally intended for a burial-place, or whether it is not the ruined remains of an altar which had been erected in the chamber in the earliest ages of Christianity. On the east wall immediately over the centre of this place an old frescoed cross, painted in red pigment and with the sacred monograms on either side of it, was to be faintly seen when the tomb was first discovered and cleared of the earth and rubbish with which it had been completely filled up; but almost all traces of this have now disappeared, having faded away by the exposure to the air. Of the two remaining *loculi*, only one had ever been finished and used, and that was against the north wall at the eastern end, and directly opposite to the opening in the face of the tomb. To this *loculus* the Sheikh now directed the attention of the tribe as being in all probability the very place in which the body of Jesus had been laid.

‘I have already detailed one or two of the arguments in favour of this being the genuine sepulchre,’ he said. ‘I have shown you how exactly the position of the garden and tomb with respect to Calvary agrees with the description in the Gospel narratives; and this of itself is almost sufficient to identify the place. Then you have seen those early Christian tombs which we entered from the



Dominican enclosure across the lane, and in which were found those remarkable tablets, showing that Christ's tomb must have been close by. Those tombs are separated from this one by only a very narrow thickness of wall in the natural rock ; for in approaching them in the underground vestibule, we really passed underneath the lane to this side. Therefore, if this is the Tomb of Christ, the Christian whom that second tablet commemorated was literally "buried near his Lord."

' Now I will briefly enumerate to you the other evidences which prove, as conclusively as anything can, that this is the genuine tomb. In the first place, it is undoubtedly a Jewish tomb, which was excavated in the Herodian period ; for, if you will bend over this finished *loculus*, you will see that at the bottom there is a hollow cavity scooped out of the eastern wall, where the head of the corpse would be laid. This hollow, which is technically known as the "head-cavity," is a distinctive feature of tombs of that period, the idea being that, when the body should be laid to rest, the natural rock should serve as a canopy of honour over the head. This places the tomb, then, at or about the time of Joseph of Arimathæa. Then, again, this tomb was evidently intended for a man of wealth and importance, such as Joseph was ; for the *loculus* is, as you notice, very long and wide, and this, again, was a token of honour and respect. Moreover, as I have already pointed out to you, this tomb was never really finished. Only this one *loculus* has been completed. For some reason or another, after one body had been buried in it, it was abandoned as a sepulchre ; and apparently, from the ruined altar—if this be an altar—and from the frescoed cross with the monograms of Jesus Christ on the wall above it, it was used as a church or sanctuary of worship in the earliest days of

But, we have been told, the earliest Christians did not use the sign of the Cross

the Christian Church. If Christ was buried here, that circumstance would account for both these facts ; and if, as is most probable, this place was filled up and covered by earth in the time of Adrian, when he attempted to efface all traces of Christian sanctuaries, we can easily account for the fact of the site of the holy sepulchre having been lost when Helena came to Jerusalem. All this chain of evidence seems to prove satisfactorily to any unprejudiced investigator that this undoubtedly is the sepulchre where Christ was buried.

‘ But there is one other argument which, to my mind, is stronger than all. This is the only tomb which I have ever seen or examined—and I think I have examined almost every known tomb in the neighbourhood of this city—where the events which St. John records in the twentieth chapter of his Gospel could possibly have occurred ; and, as I will show you now, everything in this tomb admirably illustrates and corroborates his plain and straightforward story. He tells us that on the morning of the third day after the Crucifixion the women came in a great state of agitation to him, and informed him that the stone had been rolled away from the door of the sepulchre, and that the body of Jesus was gone. Thereupon he and St. Peter hastened with all speed to the tomb. He, being the younger and more active of the two, arrived first upon the scene ; and, leaning forward or stooping down, he looked in through the opening, as you have done just now, and saw something in the dim and indistinct light. What he saw was simply the linen winding-sheet which had been wrapped round the body of Jesus. He says nothing about seeing the napkin or turban which had been twisted round the head ; for, that being in this head-cavity—assuming that this is the actual tomb—would be invisible from

the outside. The appearance of the winding-sheet, as he saw it, caused him, as he distinctly intimates, to refrain from going in. Now why, do you imagine, did he so refrain ?'

'Simply from a feeling of reverence,' suggested the Archbishop.

'Or from nervousness, I think probable,' said the Gusher.

'I have always supposed that it was a sort of religious scruple that restrained him,' said the Angel.

'To tell you the truth, I don't think I have ever stopped to think about it,' confessed the Matter-of-fact Man.

'And I expect that that has been the case with most people,' replied the Sheikh. 'Now, I will tell why he did not go in, and probably it will throw a new light upon the whole story to you. His impression was, from what he thus indistinctly saw, that the women had made a mistake, and that the body of Jesus was still there. You will see why I say this when we consider what followed. St. John goes on to say that, on the arrival of St. Peter, the latter, being more bold, impulsive, and rash than his companion, immediately ventured inside. He came up to the spot where we are now standing ; he looked over into this *loculus* and examined it carefully. What he then saw convinced both him and St. John of the actual fact of the Resurrection. Mark closely the exact words which St. John uses. He says : " He saw, and believed. For up to that time they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead." You will notice that he plainly tells us that those two men came to the sepulchre that morning with all their prejudices against the idea of a resurrection ; they went away absolutely certain that Jesus was risen ; and that certainty influenced the whole tenor of their lives and

characters from that time forward. Furthermore, the certainty was borne in upon them simply and solely by the appearance of the winding-sheet and the head-turban. This appearance is described in our English Bible thus: "He seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself." What has been your idea about the appearance of these things ?

'I really cannot see that there can be any interpretation but one, and that the one which is commonly understood,' replied the Archbishop. 'The linen clothes, or, if you choose to term it so, the winding-sheet, was neatly folded up, as one would fold up a table-cloth after one's meal, and deposited in one place by itself, whilst the napkin which had been twisted round the head was equally neatly folded up, as one might fold up a dinner napkin, and deposited in another place by itself.'

'But,' objected the Matter-of-fact Man, 'anybody might have done that, after having stripped the corpse before carrying it away.'

'Yes,' assented the Angel; 'that thought has often occurred to me.'

'I must confess for myself,' said Monte Carlo, 'that that would never have convinced me of a resurrection.'

'Nor anyone else who had any common-sense,' said the Fossil. 'Those Galilean fishermen must have been in a very excited condition, or else poor gullible fools, to have allowed such a trifling circumstance to have overcome all their rational scruples.'

'I wish you would not always talk like that upon sacred subjects, and offend people's ears,' said the General Nuisance. 'I can quite understand how the

Apostles were persuaded of the Resurrection by the orderly arrangement of the funereal garments. It showed how very calmly and deliberately everything was done, and that there was no haste about the matter, as there would have been if robbers had carried off the body.'

'Yes, I know,' replied the Fossil; 'that is the stock argument, which you will find in every commentary of the Bible. But it always seems to me a very poor piece of special pleading, and only reveals the extraordinary weakness of the whole case.'

'There I quite agree with you,' said the Sheikh, 'or, rather, I should agree with you, if that were the real meaning of the account which St. John gives. But the interpretation as commonly understood is absolutely and grotesquely incorrect. The appearance of the winding-sheet and the head-turban was nothing like what you all imagine. If we take the original Greek, we shall find that there are two most unfortunate mistranslations which are in our English version. What is the correct meaning and etymological force of the Greek word *entetuligmenon* ?'

This question he addressed to the Fossil, who replied in a scholastic tone :

'*Entetuligmenon* is the perfect passive participle of the verb *entulisso*. *Tulisso* means "to twist"; *entulisso* means "to twist up"; *entetuligmenon* means "having been twisted up" and remained so.'

'Precisely,' said the Sheikh; 'and now what is the correct force of the Greek expression *eis hena topon* ?'

'*Eis hena topon* would properly mean "inside of one place," or receptacle,' answered the Fossil.

'Thank you, my friend,' replied the Sheikh; 'you have given exactly the renderings that I should have

done ; but I preferred them to come from you. Now, you will all observe what a vital difference these translations make to the whole story. For *entetuligmenon* is the word which is translated "wrapped together" in our English Bible in reference to the head-turban ; and *eis hena topon* is merely rendered "in one place." Substitute the translations which our friend here has given you, and see what the passage becomes : "He seeth the winding-sheet lying (lying undisturbed, as the true force of the original is), and the turban, or napkin, that had been about His head, not lying mixed up with the winding-sheet, but still twisted up (like a turban, as it had been twisted round the head) inside of one place or receptacle by itself." That place or receptacle is, clearly, this head-cavity, in which the head had been laid, and owing to the turban remaining in it, St. John, we have already observed, could not see it from the outside of the tomb. Here, then, we have at last the actual spectacle that those two disciples saw, and which convinced them, as by a flash of intellectual and spiritual lightning, of the fact that the Man Jesus, whom they had seen die on Calvary, and whose dead body they had assisted to lay in the sepulchre, was actually and indisputably risen, a glorified body, from the tomb. They saw the winding-sheet lying at the bottom of the *loculus*, still retaining its folds, as if it was still wrapped round the body ; they saw the turban which had been twisted round the head, still retaining its twisted form, and still remaining in the exact position in which it had been laid in the head-cavity. In other words, *nothing whatever had been disturbed*. The only thing that had happened was that the body itself was gone ! That risen, glorified, etherealized, spiritual body, on which henceforth the limitations and barriers of time and space had no effect, had passed

through the winding-sheet and the turban without disturbing them ; thus proving to St. Peter and St. John, and through them to all mankind in all ages, the absolute, certain, incontrovertible fact of history that the very Man who had died on Calvary had risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep.'

A solemn hush fell on all assembled within that tomb as the Sheikh concluded, and for some minutes no one spoke. The whole theme was so inexpressibly sacred, and the new light which had been thrown upon the historical proof of the Resurrection was so startling and convincing, that comments seemed superfluous and almost profane in that very tomb where, in all probability, the scene itself had actually occurred. The Archbishop reverently uncovered his head, as he bent forward and looked down at the head-cavity, and all the other men, even including the Fossil himself, quietly followed his example and removed their hats. The place whereon they were standing was indeed holy ground.

Presently the Sheikh added :

'I should like to point out further to you the reason why, in the providence of God, the stone was rolled away from the entrance to the sepulchre. It was not to let the Lord out. The spiritual Body which had passed through its funeral cerements also passed through the rock, as it did that same evening later on pass through the walls and closed doors of the Upper Chamber where the disciples were gathered together. The Resurrection had already taken place before the earthquake occurred which removed the stone from the entrance. No ; the stone was not rolled away to let the Lord out : it was rolled away to let those two disciples in. Our Lord would have risen if the tomb had for ever remained hermetically closed ; but we should never have had this

proof of His resurrection. It was necessary for that purpose that those two men should be able to visit that tomb as soon as possible after the Resurrection had occurred, before sufficient time could have elapsed to raise any doubt as to whether the body had not crumbled into dust, and before anyone else should be able to disturb those cloths; that they should see with their own eyes and hand down to posterity this absolute proof of the Resurrection. Doubtless it was for this reason that the Roman soldiers were providentially frightened away from the sepulchre, and that the women themselves, whose testimony would not have been so valuable as that of the two Apostles, were prevented by an angelic apparition from venturing too near and disturbing the cloths.'

'That is so, no doubt,' observed the Archbishop solemnly; 'but I feel almost too overpowered for words.'

One by one the Sheikh and his tribe passed out of the tomb in silence, more than one remaining behind a short while in quiet prayer and meditation; and the sun was sinking behind the western hills as they slowly wended their homeward way.

NOTE.—Lest it should be imagined that the above arguments and descriptions were plagiarized from the late Rev. Henry Latham's book on the 'Risen Lord,' it may be as well to state that the whole subject was introduced to the public and discussed fully by me in *Murray's Magazine* some five years before Mr. Latham's book was published.—H. S.



## CHAPTER XIII

### BETHLEHEM

Some curious riding outfits—Start of the cavalcade—The Valley of the Giants—The Well of the Magi—A charming prospect—The Convent of Elias—David and Ahithophel—Rachel's Tomb—Native rubbish-vendors.

**GREAT** was the commotion and excitement amongst the tribe on the morning when the preliminary trial of the horses, mules, and other appliances in connection with the camping-tour through Palestine was to take place.

The Sheikh had arranged that an excursion should be made to Bethlehem and Solomon's Pools, and back to Jerusalem by way of Urtas, which, in his opinion, was identical with the Emmaus of the New Testament. The whole trip is about sixteen miles in length, and, as there are frequent intervals for rest on the way, owing to the many sights that are to be seen, it is a very excellent trip for a preliminary canter, preparatory to the more extended and arduous task of a three or four weeks' riding-tour through the country.

The day set apart for this excursion was the last of their sojourn in Jerusalem. On the following day they were to ride down to Jericho, which was to be the first stage in their regular camping-tour. They had spent ten days in the Holy City, and almost every hour of their time had been occupied with sight-seeing, until most of them

felt that they had really got Jerusalem and its suburbs by heart, and that they were almost as intimately acquainted with it as if they had lived there all their lives.

Long before the majority of the tribe had made their first appearance at breakfast in the morning the Enthusiast had been out in the lane at the back of the hotel, where a whole troop of horses ready saddled and bridled were collected together in a confused mass, under the charge of several noisy, shouting, squabbling natives, in picturesque but dirty garments. He had mounted every one of the animals in turn, and had cantered them up and down the lane, determined to justify the old proverb, 'First come, first served,' by selecting the best animal for himself. He had engaged the services of Yusef to assist him in his selection, and at length, after having made up and altered his mind over and over again, he had chosen a fine-looking gray horse, with a long tail and a flowing mane. Then came the question of a saddle ; and at least half an hour had been expended in testing the respective merits of the varied assortments, most of them more or less worn out and rotten, before he could finally come to a decision as to the one which suited him best. Then he had made Yusef show him the way to a shop where he could purchase a riding-whip and gaiters. After an enormous amount of bargaining, in which Yusef had to act the part not only of interpreter, but also of arbitrator between him and the native shopkeeper, he returned to the hotel resplendent in a pair of bright scarlet Oriental riding-boots, and flourishing a plaited leathern thong, which was attached to his wrist by a leathern loop. He had also purchased a huge broad-brimmed helmet, around which he had caused a green muslin veil or pugaree to be wound ; and at a bazaar which he had passed on his way from the shop to the

hotel he had seen hanging up a white burnoose with broad yellow stripes running vertically down it. This he had promptly secured ; and thus gorgeously attired, he burst like a meteor into the saloon of the hotel, where the rest of the tribe were discussing their meal.

A general exclamation of amusement, wonder, and good-humoured chaff greeted his appearance. Several of the others were also arrayed in more or less extraordinary garments, according to each one's individual idea of the correct costume for a camping tour. It seems to be the generally accepted notion that, to be strictly *en régle*, a British or American tourist in Palestine, whether male or female, must make himself or herself as hideous and ungainly as possible. If this be the fashion, no one could deny that the tribe of Palestine Patrollers for the most part strictly conformed to etiquette. The only one of the ladies who looked her natural self was the Angel, who, in a neat and well-fitting riding-habit, and a becoming hat with a veil gracefully arranged around it, might have been about to take a ride in Rotten Row or to be starting for a meet in the Midlands. The others were almost too astonishing for description. The Malaprop had arrayed herself in a brand-new brown holland riding-skirt, which was at least six inches too long, and she wore a blouse which was three sizes too large for her, and was of conspicuously glaring colours and pattern. On her head was a hat as much too small for her as the rest of her apparel was too large. Altogether, she would have made a very excellent figure at a waxworks show. The Gusher had on a double-breasted jacket which went round her like a sack, and on her head was an Arab kerchief of many colours and with long tassels which flowed over her shoulders, the whole arrangement being attached to her

head by a black velvet band which went round her forehead. She presented the appearance of a curious mixture between a sedate British matron and a gay and giddy Oriental damsel. The General Nuisance had managed to make herself look even more stiff and formal than usual, and her rigid attire was crowned by a gigantic mushroom-shaped helmet and blue veil. A pair of blue spectacles to protect her eyes from the glare of the sun completed a costume which eloquently bespoke the character of the wearer.

The Fossil, like the General Nuisance, had armed himself with a pair of coloured goggles, of a very pronounced and obtrusive type, and he wore a pair of black gaiters round his ordinary trousers, the gaiters being so much too wide for his 'shrunk shanks' that he had been obliged to tie them round with pieces of string. The Pessimist looked as if he were going to a funeral, and he would have appeared in a tall silk hat if the Sheikh had not seen him emerging from his room with that head-gear on, and persuaded him, much against his will, to wear a high-crowned 'Panama,' with a wide brim and with a broad black ribbon around it. Monte Carlo looked very blooming and jolly in a light brown suit of chequer pattern, consisting of a cut-away shooting-jacket, a double-breasted waistcoat, tight-fitting riding-breeches, and top-boots. The Matter-of-fact Man wore an everyday costume calling for no special remark; but the Archbishop, like the Pessimist, might have been going to a funeral, though merely as the officiating minister, so faultless and correct was the attire in which he appeared.

So many were the difficulties and the drawbacks which the majority of the tribe encountered in the course of the preliminaries that it was fully an hour after they had

emerged from the hotel before they had fairly started on their way.

The Enthusiast, the Angel, and Monte Carlo started off at the head of the procession, followed by the Matter-of-fact Man, behind whom rode the Pessimist by himself on a raw-boned animal which looked as miserable and lugubrious as his rider. The Gusher and the Malaprop had experienced the greatest difficulty in getting themselves comfortably into their saddles. The muleteers had to fetch three different saddles before the Malaprop could be suited ; whilst the Gusher had the length of the stirrup altered at least half a dozen times before she could get it to her liking. Then she found that the girths were too loose, and that her saddle was slipping round ; and after she had gone a few steps she requested to have them slackened again, for she declared that her poor, dear animal could scarcely breathe. The Fossil was nearly as difficult to please, for this was his first experience on horseback in his life, and he was in reality terribly nervous, though he did his best to hide the fact. The Archbishop, who, on the other hand, was an accomplished rider, good-naturedly assisted the poor professor to adjust his equilibrium in the saddle, thus heaping coals of fire upon his chronic antagonist.

But it was with the General Nuisance that the Sheikh had the most difficulty in arranging matters satisfactorily. The moment she mounted she declared that her head was swimming, that she was certain her horse was vicious, that he pricked up his ears in a way that alarmed her, and that she would prefer to walk the whole distance rather than trust herself on his back. Finally, she was in a measure pacified and reconciled to her position when the Sheikh told off a muleteer to walk at her horse's head, and to hold its bridle the whole way.

At last the Sheikh managed to get everyone in riding trim, and he started off in pursuit of those who were already in front, leaving the Gusher and the Malaprop to toil painfully after him ; whilst the Archbishop and the Fossil proceeded leisurely behind, engaged in controversial disputes which were varied from time to time by friendly advice from the Archbishop as to the way in which the Fossil should hold his reins, and how he should prevent himself from being shaken to pieces when his horse began to trot.

The rear was brought up by the General Nuisance and her escort, the worthy spinster sitting bolt upright in her saddle, looking the picture of injured innocence and outraged dignity.

The Enthusiast had galloped ahead, but he was not long to remain in advance, for, passing a long string of camels with jingling bells, his steed became restive and plunged about, finally depositing its rider ignominiously on his back in the middle of the road. Monte Carlo and Yusef, who had witnessed the accident, dashed forward to his assistance, the former seizing his horse, and the latter stooping to render assistance to the fallen hero. Fortunately no great damage had been done, and the Enthusiast dashed off again as if nothing had happened.

This little contretemps was not altogether without its use, for it gave time for the others to come up, and the cavalcade now marched forward in a body.

They had already passed the turning to the railway-station, and were skirting a broad and level tract of land to their right, which gradually declined in the distance to the west into the opening of a valley descending the hill country of Judæa. It was up that valley that they had come in the train on the day of their journey up from Jaffa to Jerusalem.

'This plain to our right is mentioned in the Bible,' said the Sheikh before they started on their way, after having condoled with the Enthusiast upon his mishap. 'It is called the Plain of Rephaim, as some people think, though I am not myself inclined to identify it with that spot. There is no doubt whatever, though, that this is the "Valley of the Giants" referred to in the fifteenth chapter of Joshua, where a description is given of the border-line of the tribe of Judah.'

'Let me see, I almost forget how the border-line is described there,' said the Archbishop.

'After stating that the line ran up the Valley of Hinnom,' said the Sheikh, 'it says that it went up to the top of the hill west of the Valley of Hinnom and north of the Valley of the Giants. This can only mean the hill which we have just come up, and on the slopes of which are the almshouses of Sir Moses Montefiore; and, therefore, this must be the Valley of the Giants.'

'Then what tribe are we in now?' asked the Angel.

'We are now in Judah,' replied the Sheikh, 'and shall continue to be so all day until we cross the Valley of Hinnom again on our return to the city this afternoon.'

'What happened on the Plain of Rephaim?' said the Enthusiast. 'I think that was the name you mentioned just now.'

'Soon after David removed his capital from Hebron, where he was for the first seven years of his reign, to Jerusalem, the Philistines came up to attack him in his new metropolis, and they pitched their camp on the Plain of Rephaim,' answered the Sheikh.

'And why do you think, then, that this is not the plain?' asked the Archbishop.

'Because the Biblical narrative says that David went "up" from Jerusalem to meet them,' said he; 'and my

experience of this country has convinced me that the two little words "up" and "down" invariably have the literal meaning of "uphill" and "downhill" in the Bible. The remembrance of this fact is often useful in helping to determine the locality of a Biblical site. Thus, in this case, if the Plain of Rephaim had been here, David would not have gone "up" to meet the Philistines. Then, again, from 2 Samuel v. 25, it is evident that the Plain of Rephaim was close to Geba. Now Geba is undoubtedly identified with a place called Jeba, which lies right on the opposite side of Jerusalem, on the road to Michmash, and, to reach it from Jerusalem, David, having crossed the Valley of Jehoshaphat, would have had to climb the steep path up the southern end of Mount Scopus. This is in exact accord with the Biblical story, and therefore I think we may dismiss from our minds any idea of this being the Plain of Rephaim. But here we are, you see, by a wayside well, and we will halt beside it for a few minutes, for there is a very ancient tradition connected with it.'

'Oh, do please tell us all about it,' impulsively exclaimed the Gusher, entirely disregarding the fact that the Sheikh had deliberately stopped the party for the express purpose of relating the anecdote.

'It is called the Well of the Magi,' said the Sheikh, quietly ignoring the Gusher's interruption, 'and the tradition which I am about to relate goes back apparently to the earliest centuries of the Christian era. I need not, of course, point out to you that we are now pursuing the identical road which was taken by the Wise Men from the east, commonly known as the Magi, when they left Jerusalem for Bethlehem in accordance with the instructions which they had received from the Jewish chief priests. The story goes that, as they were



trudging along this road, weary, thirsty, and dispirited with their fruitless search for the King of the Jews in Jerusalem, they reached this wayside well just as the shades of evening were coming on. Here they halted, with their camels and followers, for a much-needed rest and refreshment, and they proceeded to draw some of the water from the well to quench their own thirst and that of their animals. Stooping for this purpose over the well, they saw, to their inexpressible surprise and delight, clearly reflected in the calm, still surface of the water, that identical heavenly apparition which had brought them from their Eastern homes to Jerusalem. This caused them to raise their eyes towards the sky, and, then in the words of the Bible itself, "Lo, the star which they saw in the east appeared unto them and went before them, till it came and stood over the place where the young child was."'

'That is a wonderfully pretty legend,' said the Angel, when the Sheikh had finished. 'I must not forget to make an entry of it in my diary.'

'And of course it is quite, quite true, is it not?' added the Gusher. 'Now, please do not say that this is all humbug, like you say of every other nice and lovely thing, you cruel man!'

'I see no reason why the story should not be true,' replied the Sheikh, smiling. 'At any rate, I will not undertake to say that it is false.'

'Oh, you nice, dear man! I do love you this time!' exclaimed the vivacious little woman, sparkling with delight.

'At least, it is a very attractive tradition,' remarked the Archbishop, 'and I also shall make a note of it.'

He did not add that he meant to introduce it into a sermon on the first available opportunity after his return

home, but that was the idea that was passing through his mind at the time.

‘What beastly water!’ suddenly exclaimed the Matter-of-fact Man, who had got Yusef to procure him some from the well. ‘If it were as muddy as this then, I guess those Oriental gentlemen must have been remarkably wise indeed if they could see anything in the world reflected in it.’

‘Oh, but you must remember it was a miracle,’ said the Fossil, with a cynical grin and sneer, as the party moved on their way again.

Presently they surmounted a rising portion of the road, and passed a large, monastic-looking building on their left. Immediately afterwards an extensive prospect over a hilly and undulating country to the south burst upon their view. The landscape was charming. In the foreground a deep valley opened up beneath them, and their road wound round the head of it on the west. Beyond this valley rose a beautiful range of well-wooded, excellently cultivated land, slightly higher than that where they were standing. Two populous villages or towns crowned these heights, or, rather, clambered up their sides to the summits; the one of these towns was on the west of the road along which they had to go, and which they could see trailing along for some miles in front of them; the other was on the east of it. Away in the far distance to the east and south-east there stretched a wild, barren series of rounded hills and mountains, gradually assuming a lower elevation, and revealing glimpses of deep and awful-looking ravines and gorges in their midst. In an opening between these mountains a depression lower than that of any of the ravines was visible, and in this depression there glistened in the sun the waters of the Dead Sea, of a blue so deep that it

almost assumed the colour of indigo. Beyond this again the glorious range of the Mountains of Moab stood up clear and distinct against the cloudless sky.

'This is a grand scene!' exclaimed the Angel, who was leading the procession at the time in company with the Enthusiast, and who now reined up her horse in order to take in the view at her ease. 'What are those two villages that we see before us?'

'The one to the right is called Beit Jâla now,' replied the Sheikh, 'though its ancient name was probably Giloh. You will doubtless remember Ahithophel the Gilonite, who, after having been the boon companion and friend of David from boyhood, turned traitor against him at last, and nearly broke his heart in consequence. That is the place where his home was. The other and larger town to the east is Bethlehem itself.'

'Bethlehem! Bethlehem!' murmured the Archbishop softly and reverently, 'how often have I gazed on thee in thought! How little have I ever dreamed that I should actually gaze upon thee with my bodily eyes!'

'I scarcely expected to find Bethlehem so beautifully situated,' said the Angel. 'I always imagined, I do not know why, that it was in the midst of rocky and barren hills. Look at all those dense and fruitful olive-groves in which it seems to be embowered.'

'And look also at the extensive vineyards which we see on every side,' added Monte Carlo. 'I declare, this reminds me of some Italian scene.'

'It has, however, some indescribable feature peculiarly its own, and which differentiates it from any landscape I have ever witnessed in Italy or any other European country,' remarked the Fossil.

'That is so,' said the Sheikh; 'I have often felt the same thing myself, and have tried to define the difference

in my own mind, but I hardly know what it exactly is. It is not that the houses are for the most part flat-roofed, for I have frequently seen the same in Greece and Italy. Nor is it the olive-groves and vineyards, for these also are abundant and luxurious in those countries and elsewhere. What, then, is it ?

‘I suppose,’ suggested the Angel, ‘that it is partly owing to the unconscious effect upon one’s mind of the sacred associations connected with the scene.’

‘And it seems to me also that there is something about the atmosphere here different from any European country I have ever visited,’ said the Archbishop.

‘Probably those two facts may be the main causes of the impression,’ replied the Fossil.

‘Whatever it may be, there is no doubt about the charm and fascination of this landscape,’ observed the Enthusiast, as he urged his animal forward again at the head of the troop, regardless of his late fall.

‘Has the monastic building on our left any particular history ?’ asked the Angel.

‘It is called the Convent of Elias,’ answered the Sheikh, ‘and the monks will tell you that it is built on the site of the spot where Elijah rested on his way to Beersheba, when he was fleeing for his life from the vengeance of Jezebel.’

‘Did he stop in that very house ?’ asked the Malaprop.

‘Scarcely,’ replied the Sheikh, ‘seeing that that house is not three hundred years old ; but if you will look at that piece of rock just outside the gate, you will see a curious impression upon it.’

‘Oh yes,’ exclaimed the Enthusiast, who had turned his horse round and had come cantering back when he heard the Sheikh begin talking about the Convent, determined not to lose anything if possible ; ‘I see it

quite distinctly. What has made that strange mark in it ?

‘What do you think it looks like ?’ said the Sheikh.

‘Nothing that I can think of,’ replied the Enthusiast.

‘I tell you what I think it appears like,’ said the Matter-of-fact Man. ‘One might fancy that some human being lay down upon the rock when it was soft like putty, and that the impression of the body has been left there ever since.’

‘You have just hit the idea,’ replied the Sheikh. ‘The tradition goes that Elijah lay down on this stone to rest, and that the marks of his sacred presence have been miraculously preserved there ever since.’

‘What awful rot !’ exclaimed Monte Carlo.

‘Oh, don’t say that, please !’ ejaculated the Gusher. ‘I think it is a very beautiful idea, and very likely to be true, I do indeed !’

And down it went in the Malaprop’s diary as a *bonâ fide* fact of history.

‘I suppose there is generally some foundation of fact for these ridiculous legends,’ remarked the Fossil ; ‘but I cannot for the life of me see on what foundation such a fable as that could have arisen.’

‘The name of Elias, or Elijah, has become connected with this monastery from circumstances entirely independent of the prophet Elijah, and this building has in reality nothing to do with him,’ said the Sheikh. ‘There was a certain bishop named Elias, who lived in the Middle Ages, and who founded this convent, and it is named after him. He is said to have been buried within its walls, and, as a matter of fact, travellers who visited this country a couple of hundred years ago state that they saw his tomb. That, however, seems to have disappeared long since, though it is strange how it has

done so, for the tombs of saints and founders of religious institutions are generally preserved with the greatest care.'

As they rode on towards Bethlehem, around the head of the intervening valley, the Archbishop came up to the Sheikh's side and said :

'I have been thinking, since you told us that that village to the right is the site of Giloh, the early home of Ahithophel the Gilonite, what a flood of light this throws upon that dramatic episode of David's life. For one can easily understand, as one gazes on the respective situations of Giloh and Bethlehem, and observes their close proximity the one to the other, how David and Ahithophel commenced that intimate friendship and affection which lasted through the greater part of their lives, until it was so rudely destroyed by the treachery of Ahithophel. Doubtless they were shepherd boys at the same time, tending their fathers' flocks on the same wild mountain-sides; and I presume that those pasturages would be on those treeless upland ranges which we see in front of us, beyond Bethlehem and Giloh, would they not ?'

'Undoubtedly,' replied the Sheikh; 'the shepherds of Beit Jâla and Beit Lahm—as Bethlehem is now called by the natives—still feed their flocks on those hillsides. If you were acquainted with the inhabitants of those two places, you would often see shepherds from each place chumming together while their respective flocks were peacefully feeding side by side.'

'Then that fully bears out my thought,' answered the Archbishop gladly. 'I have been picturing those two shepherd lads, David and Ahithophel, playing together whilst their flocks were grazing around them. We all know that there are, after all, no friendships like those cemented in youth; and I seem to feel, more clearly

now than ever before, the awful anguish that it must have been to David's warm and generous heart when the chum of his boyhood at length turned against him.'

'Yes,' responded the Sheikh, 'and what a vivid reality it imparts to that infinitely tender and pathetic lamentation: "It is not an open enemy that hath done me this dishonour; for then I could have borne it. Neither was it mine adversary that did magnify himself against me; for then peradventure I would have hid myself from him. But it was even thou, my companion, my guide, and mine own familiar friend. We took sweet counsel together, and walked in the house of God as friends." It is considered almost certain, I believe, that David composed that Psalm chiefly in sorrow and sadness of heart at the treachery of his life-long friend and counsellor.'

'Let me see,' said the Angel, who was riding by the side of the Sheikh, 'on what occasion was it that Ahithophel thus turned traitor?'

'At the rebellion of Absalom,' replied the Sheikh, 'he sided with David's undutiful son against him, and played a very double part which only rebounded upon himself. When his treachery was discovered, David, in consideration of his long friendship, took no measures of vengeance against him; but his own remorse killed him, for he committed suicide in his native home—that is to say, in that very village over against us to our right; and amongst the rock-cut sepulchres in the hillside adjacent to the village Ahithophel was buried.'

They had by this time arrived at the point where the road to Bethlehem branches off to the left from the main highway to Hebron. Immediately opposite to this, on the right-hand side of the road, they came to an ancient tomb with a square building surmounted by a circular dome.

'The structure which you see here is known in Arabic as Kubbeh Râhil,' said the Sheikh, when all the party had arrived at the spot ; 'in other words, this is Rachel's Tomb.'

'Now is this *really* the Tomb of Rachel ?' asked the Gusher ; 'or are you going to say that this is all rubbish again ?'

'Well, it is, and it is not,' replied the Sheikh. 'That is to say, the actual building which we see before us now is comparatively a modern erection. But, at the same time, there is scarcely any doubt that it stands over the ground where Rachel was really buried. This is one of the places of which we can be tolerably sure, for the Biblical narrative identifies the locality with tolerable certainty, and Jews, Christians, and Moslems all agree in revering the spot. I think I have already told you that, when this is the case, it is always a strong argument in favour of the genuineness of a site. We are told in the Book of Genesis that Rachel died and was buried in "the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem," and that Jacob buried her on the spot, and set up a pillar over her grave, in order that the place might be remembered for all generations. Every Friday many of the Jews from Jerusalem come here to pray and to commemorate the wife of their patriarchal ancestor, Jacob.'

Turning off to the east, and heading for Bethlehem, the cavalcade passed along a well-made carriage road, which wound in the form of a crescent along the head of a highly cultivated valley planted with olives and filled with growing crops of barley. A slight incline throughout the whole of this road, extending over half a mile in length, gradually brought them to the first buildings of Bethlehem, which opened up to their view, with its crowded houses, flat-roofed and white-walled, on the



upper slopes of the spur of the hill-country of Judæa, upon which Bethlehem stands. Here the good road suddenly came to an end, and a steep and difficult climb over stony and uneven streets brought them at length to a large open square, which forms the market-place, or principal rendezvous, of the inhabitants of Bethlehem. At the further end of this market-place there rose a massive and venerable pile of buildings, and in the wall of this pile immediately facing them was a low doorway, evidently leading to the interior of a church.

Long before they had reached this open square they had been beset by a noisy crowd of men and boys, most of them speaking broken English, the men pestering them to visit their shops of relics and curiosities, the boys meanwhile offering themselves as guides to the city, or clamouring to be allowed to hold their horses. The General Nuisance was especially annoyed and bewildered by the mob which surrounded her, and Yusef had to exert all his Oriental powers of persuasions, threats, and objurgations to keep them at a distance.

'See, ma'am,' he said, to pacify her agitated spirits, 'these people no harm. They only fool people, want sell rubbish. You tell them no good, not buy now, buy after.'

'Oh, do please go away, my good people,' cried out the poor Gusher in nervous pain, for she also was being besieged. 'I will buy something from you afterwards, I will indeed, if you will only keep away from me now. You will frighten my horse, I am sure you will.'

In a moment a shower of cards were thrust into her hand from all sides, each card announcing that Salim Khouri, or Hanna Massad, or Ibrahim Antoun, or some such vendor of Oriental curiosities, was the only reliable merchant in Bethlehem from whom might be procured, at the very lowest prices, rosaries, mother-of-pearl crosses,

crucifixes, baptismal shells, goblets, and dishes of Dead Sea stink-stone, cameos, amulets, charms, and every article that superstition could devise or credulity could cherish. Of all places in the world, Bethlehem takes the palm for importunate sellers of spurious relics and trashy articles of so-called sacred interest. It is true that, if you only knew how to set about the matter, you may frequently pick up some really valuable and genuine mother-of-pearl treasure at a ridiculously small cost, but the ordinary tourist generally has a lot of utter rubbish palmed off on him at a most exorbitant price. For sheer obstinacy and pertinacity, admitting of no denial, the shopkeepers and hawkers of Bethlehem have scarcely their equals in the wide world.

The Enthusiast had already fallen a prey to some of these harpies before the Sheikh, whose attention had been occupied in assisting some of the other members of the party to alight from their horses, could intervene to protect him from their importunities. The Sheikh was well known to all the Bethlehem inhabitants, and one word from him was sufficient to cause them all to retire on one side, and to leave him and his tribe free from molestation. The crowd, however, still continued to gape at the visitors, as though they were not accustomed to have numbers of tourists visiting their city every day.

The Fossil had with some difficulty succeeded in dismounting from his horse with the kindly aid of the Archbishop and Monte Carlo, and he was trying to pull himself together, feeling uncommonly stiff and sore, when he noticed a young urchin of about eight or ten years of age standing in front of him, and gazing up into his face with mingled pity, astonishment, and awe. The Fossil probably did not look his youngest just then, for he was

shaken and haggard from his ride. But he was scarcely prepared for the remarks of the youngster in reply to his somewhat surly inquiry as to what he was looking at.

‘ You very old ; you die soon !’

The outraged Fossil made a slash at the boy with his riding-whip, but the agile urchin was too quick for him, and was out of his reach in a moment, and grinning at him safely from a distance.

The Pessimist seemed bewildered beyond description by the mass of humanity which crowded around him ; whilst the General Nuisance expressed her decided opinion that there was ample scope for missionary work amongst the rude inhabitants of that dirty town. The Gusher, on the contrary, thought that they were the dearest and most picturesque people she had ever seen in her life ; and the Matter-of-fact Man observed that there was no doubt about their being the dearest people in the world, if the prices which they had already asked him for their stuff was any criterion of the case. The majority of the tribe, however, were too much interested in listening to the reminiscences which the Sheikh was recalling to their minds of ancient Bethlehem to pay much attention to the rabble of the modern city.



MARKET-PLACE OF BETHLEHEM ON CHRISTMAS MORNING.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY

The story of Ruth—Characteristics of the people—A genuine site—Constantine's Church—A discordant ritual—The Melchites—The Latin and Greek Churches—The 'Filioque' question—Tombs of St. Eusebius, St. Jerome, and others—The Grotto of the Manger—The star in the east.

'FROM time immemorial,' said the Sheikh, 'this must have been a spot noted for the fertility of its soil and the natural wealth of its resources, for the first name by which we hear of it is "Ephratah," or "Ephrath." Now these words signify "fruitful," and Bethlehem was therefore known in the most ancient times as "the fruitful place." This blessing it seems to have never lost, and at the present day, as you can see with your own eyes, Bethlehem and its territory are amongst the fruitful spots of the Holy Land. Look down at those fields, vineyards, and olive-groves beneath our feet; notice how terrace below terrace descends to the smiling valley, every terrace beautifully cultivated and abounding in rich products of mother earth. Even as we are gazing now at this fertile and beautiful scene before us, so might Boaz have gazed from the door of his house on the day when Naomi returned to her home at Bethlehem, accompanied by her daughter-in-law, Ruth the Moabitess.'

'How strange and lonely Ruth must have felt as she

came amongst all the women and girls of this place, who would naturally look askance at her as belonging to a hostile race,' said the Angel.

'And how far did she and Naomi have to come?' asked the Archbishop.

'Follow me to yonder corner of this open square,' said the Sheikh, 'and we shall be able to see Ruth's native land quite clearly.'

As he spoke he moved off to the spot which he had indicated, and his tribe followed in his train. From that point of view the whole range of the Mountains of Moab appeared clear and distinct to them, on the further side of the Dead Sea.

'The atmosphere is not quite so transparent to-day as it is sometimes,' said the Sheikh, as he directed their gaze towards the land of Moab; 'nevertheless, you can easily discern the glens and ravines in the mountain-sides. From this point I have often been able to make out the very bridle-paths up the hills, and to trace the routes over which I have myself travelled. Here and there you can see the white villages dotted about, though Moab is at present but very sparsely inhabited. In the days of Ruth there would have been such villages and towns on almost every hilltop and convenient site, and no doubt many of these would be quite familiar to her.'

'Perhaps even her own native home may have been visible from here,' suggested the Angel.

'That is very possible—nay, even probable,' replied the Sheikh; 'and I have often thought, as I have stood and gazed out over those hills, what a vivid touch of reality it imparts to that romantic and fascinating story to picture to one's self that Moabitish young woman, whose nature was so tender, devoted, and constant, peering from the threshold of the house of her mother-

in-law, Naomi, or from the flat roof of the home of her husband, Boaz, at the country scenes of her childhood's home. How her affectionate heart must have yearned towards her kinsfolk and friends, apparently so near and yet in truth so far away, since she had for ever severed herself from them by the deliberate choice which she had made under the dictates of a religious and conscientious impulse.'

'Poor Ruth!' sighed the Angel; 'I often think what a terrible effort that choice must have cost her.'

'And yet,' added the Archbishop, 'what a reward was hers! She became in a sense one of the very mothers of the Saviour of the world, for she was an ancestress of Jesus Himself.'

'And her name has been immortalized for ever among the heroines of humanity,' said Monte Carlo thoughtfully. 'No, I do not think that Ruth was much to be pitied.'

'That is all very well,' remarked the Matter-of-fact Man; 'but I guess she did not know much of this reward and this renown whilst she was living here, away from her own relations and in the midst of strangers, some of whom, you may be sure, were not very kind to her, or they would have been different from the Jews of all other ages.'

This was quite a long speech for the Matter-of-fact Man to make, and when he had made it, he retired into the background, as if he were almost ashamed of having committed himself. But there was, nevertheless, a great deal of common-sense in the remarks to which he had given utterance.

'A pretty little idyll, that story of Ruth,' remarked the Fossil to Monte Carlo, as they followed the Sheikh away from the spot where this conversation had taken place. 'I fancy that there may have been some founda-



tion of fact at the bottom of it, for it seems almost too natural to have been the mere creation of a poet's imagination. And yet, I do not know, what can be more pathetic and natural than "Enoch Arden," for instance ?

'And how do you know that that had not some foundation in fact, old fellow ?' answered Monte Carlo. 'But why question this story of Ruth ? I tell you what it seems to me, if you don't mind my saying so bluntly : you appear to go out of your way on purpose to try and make yourself disbelieve the Bible stories, just because they are in the Bible. Now, don't you think, my dear friend, that in so doing you are sailing very near the wind, and making yourself quite as unreasonable as those whom you deride for swallowing implicitly all that they find in the Bible ?'

The Fossil did not answer this forcible yet kindly home-thrust ; but he was unusually silent during the rest of the day, and it is more than probable that the plain words of the easy-going, light-hearted Monte Carlo sank deeper into his conscience than all the arguments of his controversial friend, the Archbishop.

'They say that nothing ever changes in this country,' said the Angel to the Sheikh, by whose side she was walking as they recrossed the open square. 'I have been wondering whether Bethlehem looks at the present day at all like what it was in the days of David.'

'No doubt the flat-roofed houses, the narrow, crooked, steep, and stony thoroughfares, the terraced olive-groves, the vineyards, and the fields are much the same,' replied the Sheikh ; 'but Christianity has affected the general appearance of this city almost more than that of any other place in Palestine, unless it be Jerusalem and Nazareth.'

'In what way ?' inquired the Archbishop.

‘First of all, in the large number of convents, churches, and other religious Christian buildings with which Bethlehem abounds,’ he answered. ‘Then in the occupations of the inhabitants, for the principal industry of the Bethlehemites of modern times is the manufacture of all these Christian relics, trinkets, and mementoes, which their sellers are so anxious to compel you to purchase; and lastly, in the costumes of the natives, which are, I fancy, considerably different from those of David’s time. You will notice, as we go through the Holy Land, that the people of this city wear a costume entirely their own, and quite distinctive from those of other places.’

‘They are wonderfully graceful and picturesque,’ said the Angel. ‘Why do you imagine that they are of modern date?’

‘I do not say that they are modern exactly,’ replied the Sheikh; ‘though I think they are of purely Christian origin, and certainly they are quite different from the costumes of the Hebrew women in the olden days.’

‘Why do some of the women wear white veils, and others have that curious head-dress with great strings of coins hanging from it?’ asked the General Nuisance.

‘That is to distinguish the married from the unmarried women,’ replied the Sheikh; ‘the married women have a red tarboosh under their veil, as you can see. These tarbooshes are generally covered all over with coins sewn upon them; these and the coins which hang under their chin constitute the principal part of their bridal dower. From their earliest childhood they save up these coins to add to others which they shall receive at the time of their marriage.’

‘Bethlehem seems to be extremely well-to-do,’ remarked Monte Carlo.

‘ Yes, they are a thriving and industrious set of people,’ answered the Sheikh ; ‘ and if they were not so importunate and obtrusive, the inhabitants of the city would be nice people to deal with. Bethlehem means the “ House of Bread,” and this seems to imply, as its former name of Ephratah, that the place has always been celebrated for its fertility. This has probably been considered all the more noteworthy because of its contrast with the barren country which stretches away to the east of it.’

‘ This is essentially a Christian town, is it not ?’ said the Archbishop.

‘ Almost entirely,’ replied the Sheikh ; ‘ there are very few Mohamedans in it, and practically no Jews at all.’

‘ And what sect predominates here ?’ asked the Angel.

‘ The Latins, as the Roman Catholics are called in this country, slightly outnumber the Orthodox Greeks, though there is not much difference between them in regard to figures. There are about one thousand Armenians, more or less, and these three branches of the Christian Church virtually embrace the whole population.’

‘ Do you mean to say that there are no Protestants here, then ?’ said the General Nuisance. ‘ Surely, with all the money that has been spent upon missionary work in the Holy Land, there ought to be a good number of members of our Church in Bethlehem.’

‘ A mere handful,’ answered the Sheikh ; ‘ the majority of the few Protestants in this city belong to the German Lutheran Church.’

They had now arrived at the low door leading into the church at the further end of the open square. Before entering it, the Sheikh gathered his tribe around him and said :

‘ We are now about to visit one of the most interesting

places in Palestine, or, indeed, in the whole world. This is called the Church of the Nativity, and it is interesting and important for two reasons. First, there is no doubt that we are here on a genuine site, and, amidst so much that is false and spurious, it is very gratifying when we may be practically certain as to the identity of any spot that we are visiting. And we may be quite sure that this church stands on the site of the old khan, or inn, to which Joseph and Mary went, and amongst the beasts and cattle of which our blessed Lord was born. The second reason why this is so interesting is that it is probably the oldest church in the whole world where Christian worship has been uninterruptedly carried on, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, and century after century, from the day of its first consecration in 327 A.D. down to the present time.' ?

'How do you know that this church stands on the site of the very same inn as that mentioned in the Gospels?' asked the General Nuisance.

'Within a short time of the erection of this church by Constantine the Great, one of the most celebrated of the early Christian Fathers, St. Jerome, lived, wrote, died, and was buried within the precincts of this very church; we shall see by-and-by the very chamber or cell in which he translated the Vulgate, and we shall also visit his tomb. Now, St. Jerome tells us in his writings that there were old men and women still living in Bethlehem in his day who well remembered the ruins of the ancient khan upon the foundations of which Constantine built his church.

'And how did he know that that ruined khan was the one to which Joseph and Mary went?' asked the Matter-of-fact Man.

'Because there was not, and never has been, any other

khan but that one in Bethlehem,' said the Sheikh. 'You see, it is different out here from what it would be in England or on the Continent. There, in a town of this size, there would probably be a large number of inns or hotels, and this would naturally cause a doubt to arise as to any particular individual hostelry. But out in the East things are different. These khans stand at certain intervals, chiefly along the principal highways, and they occupy the same position for centuries and thousands of years. The Bethlehem khan was the first stage on the great southern road from Jerusalem to Hebron, and across the desert to Egypt; and there is no doubt that the khan spoken of by Jerome was the same as that in which Joseph and Mary found it so difficult to obtain accommodation. To-morrow, on our way down to Jericho, we shall stop to rest for a short time at one of these Oriental khans; and I will then be able to explain to you better what is meant in the Bible when it says that there was "no room for them in the inn." I shall also be able to describe more clearly to you what the actual scene of the Nativity was probably like. Till then I will defer all discussion upon this vitally interesting and important subject; and to-day we will content ourselves with visiting Constantine's grand old church, and seeing the evidences which are here, as elsewhere, of the web of legend and tradition which has been woven by ecclesiastical superstition and fraud around the simple facts of history.'

They entered the building by the low door, which was barely four feet in height, and which necessitated their stooping to pass through it. The door opened on a dark passage, or vestibule, beyond which was another doorway, but this time large and high, which brought them into the nave of the church itself. The fine old

western porch, which originally formed the entrance to the church, has, at some time or another, been entirely destroyed, probably during the wars of the Crusades, and the wretched dark vestibule and low door of the present day substituted in its place.

'How beautifully quiet and cool this place seems after the heat and bustle outside!' remarked the Pessimist to the Angel with a sigh of relief, as they followed the Sheikh to the west end of the nave, whence a full view of the interior of the church was to be had. The nave was divided into five isles by four rows of columns, the centre aisle being considerably wider than any of the others. The pillars were of no great height, and were surmounted by massive Corinthian capitals. Unlike most churches of that style of architecture, these pillars did not support arches, but a straight row of solid blocks of stone ran above the tops of the capitals on either side of the central aisle, and on this row of blocks of stone the clerestory walls were built. Old windows deeply let into the walls pierced the clerestory at frequent intervals. Above all was a pointed roof.

'Is all this nave of the date of Constantine?' asked the Fossil, when the tribe had been viewing the scene in silence for some few minutes.

'All except the roof, and those fragments of frescoes which you see on the clerestory walls,' replied the Sheikh. 'The wall with the doorway in it, which forms the dividing screen between the nave and the sanctuary beyond, and which you see facing us at the further end of this centre aisle, is, however, quite modern, being, indeed, only a little more than fifty years old.'

'Do you know the date of those frescoes?' asked the Archbishop, as they proceeded up the centre aisle of the nave towards the sanctuary.

'They were executed about the middle of the twelfth century,' replied the Sheikh.

'And why do they cover only patches on the walls, instead of the whole of the walls themselves?' inquired the Enthusiast.

'Either the frescoes were never finished, or, as is more probable, the rest was damaged, either by the weather or by some wanton mischief. No one knows exactly why they have disappeared and their places been filled in with this common plaster and whitewash.'

'Whatever may have been the cause, it is a thousand pities that only these fragments are left,' observed the Fossil; 'for they are exceedingly quaint and beautiful.'

'More quaint than beautiful, I think,' rejoined the General Nuisance; 'I cannot see anything beautiful about them; for in my opinion they are badly drawn and inartistically coloured.'

'That is a matter of taste, I presume,' remarked the Angel; 'to my mind, they appear fine specimens of mediæval art.'

'So they are considered by most connoisseurs,' said the Sheikh.

'I cannot quite make out the subject,' said the Archbishop, who had been intently gazing up at them through his spectacles; 'I can see several figures, some of them singly and some in groups, and I can also make out a lot of foliage and ornamentation work.'

'You will notice, if you look,' replied the Sheikh, 'that there are five rows altogether. The top row is merely an ornamental frieze between the windows and the roof. Then, in the spaces between the windows there are figures of angels. Below the windows, again, you will notice another frieze of foliage, corresponding to that above. Beneath this is a row depicting several groups; these

groups are the representations of the various early Christian councils. The lowest stratum of all is occupied by a series of human figures, supposed to represent the ancestors of our Lord.'

They passed through the doorway in the screen wall at the east end of the nave, and found themselves in the beautiful and interesting sanctuary of the church. A large circular apse stood at the east end, and in front of it was a Greek altar, enshrined within an elaborate screen, hung all over with eikons, or sacred pictures, and with any number of hanging lamps suspended above and in front of it. Inlaid wooden and mother-of-pearl seats and thrones were before the altar shrine, and some sort of a religious function was going on at the time when the party arrived. There were several priests present, with the peouliar head-gear characteristic of their order; and a number of men and boys, some arrayed in cassocks much the worse for wear, some in their ordinary Oriental garments, were assisting in the service, as a kind of choir. They were most of them provided with some primitive musical instrument, and those who could not get anything better had armed themselves with a brass plate and a knife, and they added to the horrible din and discord by striking the knife against the edge of the brass plate with more vigour than discretion. The result of the general performance was decidedly the reverse of devotional or soul-inspiring, and the Druse, Yusef—an excellent fellow in his way, and instinctively reverent in the presence of true devotion, though, like all his tribe, bitterly prejudiced against native Christianity in any shape or form—stood for some few minutes riveted to the spot which he had occupied on entering the sanctuary, behind the Sheikh and his tribe, in astonishment and contempt at the jargon of discord. Gradually his face assumed an



expression of unutterable disgust, as the Matter-of-fact Man and Monte Carlo, who were standing near him, observed to their amusement ; and at length, unable to contain his virtuous wrath any longer, he gave vent to a short but emphatic ejaculation in a loud voice :

‘ All lies !’

Then, turning round abruptly, he stalked out of the church in a state of the utmost indignation. To his untutored mind, accustomed only to the plain and simple ritual of the Druse worship (and, as the writer knows from his own personal experience, the ritual of the Druse worship is plain and simple indeed), the superstitious formalities of the curious Greek rite seemed nothing more than a blasphemous mockery, being, as they literally were, mere sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

Nor was it only on Yusef’s mind that the same impression was produced. Most of the tribe felt an innate repulsion at the travesty of Christian worship as it appeared to them.

‘ I respect that fellow,’ remarked Monte Carlo to his neighbour, as they watched Yusef’s retreating form ; ‘ I confess that I do not remember to have ever seen or heard such a performance as this even in a Buddhist temple or a Hindoo shrine.’

‘ I suppose they think that they will be heard the better the bigger noise they make,’ answered the Matter-of-fact Man.

‘ Well, if I were the Almighty,’ responded Monte Carlo, ‘ I think that I should be inclined to grant their requests, whatever they are, if only to stop their hideous row.’

‘ Are the Greek functions always like this ?’ inquired the Angel of the Sheikh.

‘ No, not so bad as this,’ he replied ; ‘ I don’t exactly know what they are up to to-day, but I have not in-

frequently witnessed scenes quite as repellent as this, and in some cases even worse.'

'I can scarcely imagine anything more irreverent according to our ideas,' she observed; 'but then, we must always remember that what seems irreverent to us may not be so really to them.'

'That is perfectly true,' answered the Sheikh; 'it is almost impossible for us, with our highly educated and refined conditions, to sound the depths of ignorance and childishness which characterize these Oriental Christians. It would horrify you if I were to tell you the scenes which I have witnessed in some of these churches in Palestine, especially in those of the Melchites.'

'Who are the Melchites?' asked the Archbishop.

'They are a sort of mongrel cross-breed between the Latins and the Greeks,' replied the Sheikh; 'their technical name is "Greek Catholics." Some two hundred and fifty years ago the Franciscan, Jesuit, and Lazarist Orders of the Roman Church determined to make a vigorous effort to wean away the Syrian Christians from their loyalty to the Greek Orthodox Church, which had claimed to be the mother-Church of Palestine from the days of the Byzantine Empire. With this end in view, large numbers of the priests and monks belonging to those three orders came and settled in the country. They commenced their undertaking in the secret and underhand methods which are so characteristic of the Roman Church. They did not openly try to make converts or proselytes at first, but, settling among the people, they stirred up party spirit and strife amongst the Orthodox Greeks by every kind of insidious stratagem, and they represented to the masses the advantages which the Latins, who acknowledged the supremacy of the Pope, derived from the protection of His Holiness, which was

in those days a very real force. Having by these means gradually weakened the allegiance of many to the faith in which they had been brought up, they began to adopt more open measures of missionary work among them, endeavouring to persuade them by warnings and promises to acknowledge their communion with the Church of Rome.'

'I am not quite sure that I know exactly what are the points of difference between the Roman and Greek Churches,' said the Angel.

'The differences were originally twofold,' answered the Sheikh. 'One of these was of a religious nature, and the other purely political. At the time when the rupture took place which divided Christendom into its two great parts, known generally as the Eastern and Western Churches, there were two great cities in Europe which were contesting severely for the supremacy of the civilized world. These two cities were Constantinople and Rome. The rivalry between them reached its culminating-point in the fourth century, and the bishops and priests took an active part in espousing the causes of the opposing political factions. Naturally, the inevitable result followed; party prejudice led to personal animosity, and this personal animosity intensified the religious and dogmatic differences which had gradually sprung up between the two parties. The final result was a formal breaking away of the West from the East, and the establishment of the two disunited branches of Christendom—the one calling itself the Latin Church, with its headquarters at Rome; and the other known as the Greek, with its metropolis at Constantinople. To emphasize its own claims, each party adopted a title to indicate its position; the Latins claimed that they were Catholic, whilst the Greeks asserted that they were Orthodox. Hence the terms "Roman Catholic" and "Greek Orthodox."'

'But you have not yet made clear the point upon which I am in the dark,' remarked the Angel. 'I wanted to know what were precisely those religious and dogmatic differences upon which the two branches finally split.'

'The differences may be classed under six headings,' replied the Sheikh: '(1) What is commonly known as the "Filioque" question; (2) the Date of Easter; (3) the Supremacy of the Pope; (4) the Language of the Liturgies; (5) the Administration of the Sacramental Elements; and (6) the Celibacy of the Clergy.'

'What the dickens is the "Filioque" question?' asked Monte Carlo.

'A most important point!' replied the Archbishop dogmatically. 'We, the members of the Western branch of the Church Catholic, hold that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son, whilst the Eastern Churches assert that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and not from the Son.'

'And, pray, can you tell me whether you or anyone else knows what is meant by this Procession, whether it be of the one nature or of the other?' said the Fossil.

'It is a deep mystery,' replied the Archbishop solemnly; 'but we have the warrant of Holy Scripture and of the most illustrious of the Early Fathers for our belief.'

'May I further ask what practical difference such a dogmatic quibble makes to any human being's daily life and character?' said the Fossil.

'That concerns me not,' replied the Archbishop; 'if the Church considered it so vital a matter as to cause the disruption of the Body of Christ into two irreconcilable portions, it must be a principle of the most fundamental importance.'

'There is an alternative to that,' remarked Monte Carlo. 'It is just possible that those old ecclesiastics, heated as

they were by party prejudice and political animosity, made use of this controversy about a point which none of them comprehended in the least as the pretext for an open rupture.'

'I confess,' said the Sheikh, 'that I have discussed this dogmatic controversy with priests and dignitaries of the Anglican, Roman, and Greek Churches, and, though I have frequently found them most positive and resolute in their adhesion to the particular view which their own Church held of the matter, there is not a single one of them, when the point has been pressed home to them, who has been able to show that they have possessed a clear and intelligent idea of what is really the practical meaning of the abstruse and mysterious subject in dispute. It is evident also that the Roman Catholics do not really at heart attach much importance to the dogma, save as a handle of controversy with the Greek Church; for the Latin missionaries who invaded this country in the manner that I mentioned just now did not insist upon it when they were trying to make their converts. You will notice that, of the six points of difference between the Latin and Greek Churches which I enumerated just now, there are three which may be called more or less theoretical, whilst the other three are eminently practical. The "Filioque" question, the date of Easter, and the doctrine of the Supremacy of the Pope, would none of them interfere greatly with the convenience or necessities of the people. Therefore the shrewd Franciscan, Jesuit, and Lazarist missionaries made a great deal of these points, and insisted upon them as the great conditions for admitting their converts into communion with Rome; whilst, on the other hand, they pretended that the other three matters—namely, the language in which the Mass was said, the administering of the cup to the laity, and the

marriage of the clergy—were of minor importance, and that upon them they would not insist. As a matter of fact, these very points were of such importance in the minds of the people that, had the missionaries insisted upon them, they would have made no converts at all. It mattered little to them whether they kept Easter a fortnight sooner or later ; the supremacy of the Pope was a mere pious opinion which did not affect their daily life ; and, as we have already seen, the “ Filioque ” doctrine was beyond them altogether, one way or another. But the priests would not submit to enforced celibacy ; the laity would rebel against the cup being withheld from them in the Mass ; and both priests and laity would equally refuse to have the Mass conducted in Latin, which none of them understood. Hence, by the subtle and judicious manipulation of the conditions of conversion, the Latin emissaries succeeded in drawing large numbers of the Syrian Christians away from the Greek Orthodox Church. These Greek Catholics, or Melchites, are therefore, as I have said, a hybrid cross between the Latins and Greeks.’

‘And, like all half-castes, I presume, they have all the vices without any of the virtues of the opposite stocks from which they have sprung,’ said Monte Carlo.

‘I do not know that I would quite say that,’ answered the Sheikh ; ‘but they certainly are a very debased branch of the Church Catholic, and their ignorance and superstition are something appalling. I once attended an Easter Mass in their church at Haifa, and the scenes which I witnessed there are almost incredible. Shouting and laughter were going on all the time ; a young boy essayed to read the Gospel amidst a running fire of chaff and criticism from the worshippers in the body of the church ; before he had got half way through he broke down and burst out laughing, whereupon the celebrating

priest turned round from the altar, seized the book out of his hand, cuffed him on the ear, kicked him in the hinder quarters, sent him flying down into the nave hollaoing and crying, and concluded the Gospel himself. At the time of the administering and receiving of the consecrated bread and wine several young fellows literally and truly played leap-frog over one another's backs up to the altar ; a regular scramble ensued around the priest, each one endeavouring to snatch the bread out of his hands before the others ; and in the midst of it all three or four guns were discharged with blank cartridge in the choir of the church. A friend of mine, himself a Melchite, and a fervent member of his church, took me there and stood beside me all the time. He entered into the whole ceremony with the utmost zest, shouting and chaffing as loudly as anyone, and turning round to me every now and then to ask me quite seriously whether I did not think it beautiful. When, on retiring from the church at the conclusion of the Mass, I ventured to express my surprise and distaste at what I had seen, he was really quite astonished and disappointed, and he did not for a moment see anything irreverent or repulsive in the performance.'

'Come, come, Sheikh, a joke's a joke !' exclaimed Monte Carlo. 'But you're not going to make a fellow swallow all that.'

'Nevertheless, I assure you, I have not in the least overstated the facts ; indeed, I have purposely omitted some details which were really too repellent to be described. But to these people there is nothing at all abnormal in all this, for they are brought up in a perfect hotbed of ignorance and superstitious mummery, and what we have just been witnessing in this church you could see at almost any native Oriental function.'

The General Nuisance smacked her lips and sniffed the air audibly, as if scenting an excellent field for her missionary labours; and more than one of her fellow-pilgrims devoutly hoped that she would feel so distinct a call to the work that she would remain behind them to carry it into execution. There was no such luck for them, however, as her pious aspirations ended in a sniff.

They had left the sanctuary where the Greek function had been proceeding long before this, and the greater part of the conversation had been carried on in the Latin church on the north side of the choir. From this Latin church a flight of stone steps descended to a dark series of underground, rock-cut passages and cells. Having procured waxen tapers from the Latin monk in charge, they descended the steps, headed by the Shiekh, and attended by the monk himself. In the various cells there stood altars, over which were hanging-lamps, casting a very dim, religious light. The Sheikh explained that most of these altars marked the tombs of early Christian saints.

‘Here is the tomb of St. Eusebius,’ he said; ‘but you must not confound him with the famous ecclesiastical historian. I cannot tell you what particular claim to canonization or fame this Eusebius had. Here are the tombs of St. Paula and her daughter, St. Eustachia; you have probably heard or read about them. They were two holy Roman ladies who abandoned their home and comforts in order to become the pupils and disciples of St. Jerome. And here, opposite to their resting-place, is the very tomb of St. Jerome himself.’

‘I suppose there is no doubt about the genuineness of this, is there?’ said the Archbishop, bending reverently over the tomb.

‘Scarcely any doubt whatever, I should say,’ replied



the Sheikh. 'I think you may be quite sure that you are here on historic ground.'

'Oh, let me kiss the tomb!' exclaimed the Gusher, pushing her way forward in the narrow and confined space. 'I must kiss the tomb of that dear, good, holy Jerome.'

She had probably never heard of his name before that day, but his tomb was pronounced by the Sheikh to be a genuine holy site, and that was quite enough for the excitable and impulsive little woman.

'Now I am going to take you to a very interesting place,' observed the Sheikh, leading the way up another flight of steps at the end of the cell in which were the tombs of the Christian father and of his faithful disciples.

They entered a chamber which had evidently been originally a natural cave, but which is now fitted up as a chapel with altar, hanging-lamps, etc., and the Sheikh, standing in the middle of the chamber, said :

'This was the study of St. Jerome for many long years. Here he wrote his immortal works, and here was translated the Latin version of the Bible, commonly known as the Vulgate, and the authorized version in use in the Roman Church.'

Passing out of this chamber, and proceeding along another dark passage with one or two more altars in narrow recesses on either side, they came to a door which the Latin monk opened, and, going through it, they found themselves in a long low vault or crypt, profusely hung with lighted lamps suspended from the ceiling by elaborate chains, and with an altar at the further end.

'We are here immediately under the Greek altar in the choir of the Church of the Nativity,' said the Sheikh when all the tribe had assembled within the vault.

‘Directly over our heads that function which we witnessed was going on. You will observe, if you look at the walls and ceiling of this vault, that this was evidently originally a cave or grotto, which has been converted into a Christian shrine. It is generally known as the “Grotto of the Manger,” and it is so called because this is the traditional spot fixed upon by the ecclesiastical authorities of former ages as the stable of the inn to which Joseph and Mary went.’

‘And is this genuine?’ asked the Enthusiast.

‘Certainly not,’ replied the Sheikh. ‘As we shall see to-morrow in the khan where we shall rest on our way to Jericho, our Lord, it is practically certain, was born in the open air.’

‘Why, then, did they say that He was born here?’ said the General Nuisance.

‘Why indeed!’ answered the Sheikh. ‘Simply because they will not be contented with the broad fact that the church stands on the site of the inn, but they must needs go on to pretend to fix the exact spot where the stable stood. Not satisfied, indeed, with this, they even undertake to point out the very place where Jesus was born, and where the manger stood. You observe that silver star let into the ground immediately under the altar?’

‘I have noticed it already,’ observed the Fossil, ‘and was going to ask you its meaning.’

‘If you will examine it closer,’ said the Sheikh, ‘you will find a Latin inscription upon it, which you will perhaps read out and translate for the benefit of the others.’

The Fossil put on his glasses, knelt down, and read aloud the following words:

‘Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus Natus Est.’

'Oh!' ejaculated the Gusher, 'I can understand that! It says: "Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary." I must kiss that dear star, I must indeed!'

'I suppose that's all bosh, is it not?' said Monte Carlo.

'It is,' replied the Sheikh; 'and yet not half such bosh as some of the dragomans make out of it. You will scarcely believe me, I fear, but I assure you I am about to tell you the simple truth. The first time I came here (it is a good many years ago now) I had a young fellow as dragoman whom I had picked up at the hotel, and who had been recommended to me by the hotel-keeper as an excellent and well-informed guide. I was considerably greener then than I am now, and swallowed many things he told me as Gospel truth. But he opened my eyes when we came to Bethlehem. He brought me down to this grotto, he pointed out that silver star on the floor, and said: "Do you know what that star is?" "No," I replied; "what is it?" "That star, sir," he answered gravely, looking at me as innocently as if he believed it himself and expected me to believe it also—"that star, sir, is the identical star which the Wise Men saw in the east!"'

## CHAPTER XV

### AMONG THE JUDÆAN HILLS

The rival churches—A bloodthirsty Kawass—A shepherd boy—  
Solomon's Pools—Emmaus.

THE Malaprop had not been paying much attention to what the Sheikh had been saying, for her eyes had been fixed on a Turkish soldier who, rifle in hand, was standing on sentry duty in the Grotto of the Manger. She was wondering what he was there for, and why he wore such a dirty and disreputable uniform, and therefore she only caught the last words of the anecdote which the Sheikh had been relating. At the same time she became aware of the silver star fixed in the ground, and she connected it—rightly enough in one sense, though wrongly in another—with the words that she heard. Her impression was that the Sheikh had asserted as his own opinion that that was the identical star which the wise men saw in the east. She had a confused remembrance of the legend which he had related at the wayside well of the Magi; and the result of it all was the following instructive and original entry in her diary that evening:

‘I learned to-day what I never knew before—namely, that it was a silver star that the wise men saw in the east. How it got up into the sky I don't exactly know; but I must inquire from the Sheikh about that. Anyhow, it fell into a well that stands by the roadside between

Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and the Wise Men found it floating there when they stopped at the well to get some water to drink, for they were thirsty. They fished it out of the water and took it to Bethlehem, and they fixed it in the floor of the grotto there. And so the story of the Wise Men must be true, and nobody who goes to Bethlehem can help believing it, for there is the silver star itself still there, and I have seen it with my very own eyes.'

The Malaprop was not the only one who noticed the presence of the Turkish soldier in the Grotto of the Manger, for, as the tribe were proceeding down the church on their way back to the open air, the General Nuisance wanted to know why they insulted the Christians by sticking an infidel wretch of a Turk in the sacred chapel, to intimidate decent and honest people with his murderous rifles and daggers.

'Unfortunately,' replied the Sheikh, 'sad experience has proved the necessity here, as at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, of having soldiers posted at intervals throughout the church, in order to keep the peace between the members of the different Christian bodies. I can assure you that no decent and honest people need be intimidated by the presence of these soldiers, for they are perfectly harmless, and even courteous and obliging, to all peaceable and well-disposed persons. It is only those who do not know how to restrain their evil passions, and who allow their religious zeal to lead them into excesses, that need be under any uneasiness about these Turkish soldiers.'

'But, surely,' said the Archbishop, 'the days when armed soldiers are needed to keep the peace are over. None of these priests or simple worshippers would think of interfering with other people, or of committing breaches of the peace.'

'I wish from my heart that it were so,' replied the Sheikh, 'but, alas! it is not. If these sentries were withdrawn for a single day, in all probability there would be an outbreak of fighting between the Latins and the Greeks, and it would be a providential thing if blood were not shed on either side or on both.'

'Can that indeed be the case in these enlightened days?' said the Angel.

'I am afraid that the days are not yet very enlightened for the Oriental Christians,' answered the Sheikh. 'Bigotry and fanaticism were never more rampant than they are still amongst the Latin, Greek, and Armenian churches in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and two cases have happened since I have known the places personally which are sufficient to show you how sadly true this statement of mine is. Both cases occurred within the walls of this Church of the Nativity. The first happened some few years ago now, but the memory of it is still rife both among the Latins and the Greeks. There were two masses going on at the same time at the two altars of the opposing factions. A lusty old Greek Bishop was celebrating at the Greek altar and a Franciscan priest at the Latin. You must understand that every inch of ground, every altar, every lamp that you see hanging from the roof and ceilings, is carefully allotted to the rival sects. Many a bloody strife has arisen over the possession of a few square inches of floor or walls, and about the right of entry through a particular door, or up and down particular steps. On the occasion in question one of the hanging-lamps belonging to the Greeks went out in the middle of the Mass. The priest whose duty it was to look after the lamps had been careless or negligent, and had omitted to trim it and to replenish the oil. It is considered a matter of such supremely vital im-

portance that every lamp should be alight during the progress of the Mass, that the very efficacy of the service is supposed to be imperilled unless this is the case. When, therefore, the lamp went out, it was necessary to relight it, or to substitute another lighted lamp for the one which had gone out. Accordingly, one of the Greek priests who were assisting the Bishop in the celebration of the Mass rose from his knees to repair the disaster. Instead of procuring one of the lamps belonging to the Greeks, or fetching oil to retrim the defective lamp, the Greek priest calmly walked over to the Latin quarters, and proceeded to appropriate a hanging-lamp belonging to the latter community. He was immediately seized by a couple of the Latin priests, and in a moment there was a general affray. The Masses on both sides were suspended, whilst the priests and their attendants fought with fury. Censers, crucifixes, and other formidable weapons of a like nature which were at hand were brought into requisition, and soon blood was flowing profusely—the blood of sainted followers of the Prince of Peace. Foremost in the fray might be seen the burly Greek Bishop himself, lustily brandishing his episcopal crozier, and dealing with it some destructive blows. A frightened spectator had meanwhile run out of the church and given the alarm to the Turkish authorities, and a small band of soldiers was marched forthwith into the church, to separate the combatants and restore peace. With scarred cheeks, bleeding noses, and other signs of their sanguinary conflict, the Bishop and priests returned to their respective altars, and resumed their Masses at the points where they had been thus temporarily interrupted.’

‘Do you mean to say that that is a simple fact?’ exclaimed the Archbishop in horror. ‘I could scarcely have believed that such a disgraceful thing was possible.’

'Oh,' laughed Monte Carlo, 'the Sheikh has been drawing upon his imagination a little in order to produce a graphic picture.'

'I do assure you solemnly,' replied the Sheikh, 'that I have not in the least overstated the case. I was in Jerusalem myself at the time, so that you have the account almost at first hand.'

'Oh dear! oh dear!' cried the Gusher. 'Did you ever hear such a story? Now, did you ever, indeed? Fancy that big wicked old Bishop fighting with his great what-do-you-call-it! Oh, I should have liked to have seen it—I should indeed; but no, I shouldn't. At least, I don't know what I should have liked exactly.'

The Fossil edged away from the Gusher, by whose side he happened to be standing, and said to the Sheikh:

'What was the upshot of the affray?'

'It was characteristic and amusing,' answered the Sheikh. 'The Latins made a complaint to the Pope, and the Greeks to their Patriarch in Constantinople. A long and acrimonious correspondence ensued between the Pope and the Patriarch, and in the end the Sultan himself stepped in. He sent a couple of officials from Constantinople to hold an inquiry into the matter. After a thorough, and I must say very impartial, investigation, they decided that, though both sides were to blame, the Greeks were deserving of the greater censure, since the conflict had been caused by the unjustifiable abstraction of the Latin lamp by the Greek priest. The Sultan consequently ordered the removal of the Greek Bishop from Jerusalem, and this was done by his appointment to another bishopric, one of the wealthiest in Syria.'

'Scandalous altogether!' exclaimed the General Nuisance in virtuous indignation, and with a look which im-



plied that she would have liked to have had that Greek Bishop under her tongue for an hour or two.

'Was it the Bishop of Jerusalem himself that was involved in this matter?' asked the Enthusiast.

'No; he is called the Patriarch of Jerusalem,' replied the Sheikh.

'But you said that the Bishop was ordered to be removed from Jerusalem,' answered his inquirer.

'That is perfectly true,' said the Sheikh; 'but the Greeks have a curious system with regard to their Bishops. There are in Palestine, under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, eight bishoprics—those, namely, of Gaza, Lydda, Nablous, Samaria, Acre, Nazareth, Philadelphia, and Petra. But only one of these—that is to say, the Bishop of Acre—resides in his diocese; all the others live together in the convent at Jerusalem, adjoining the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.'

'What do they do that for?' asked the Archbishop.

'I suppose they find it more pleasant and sociable for one thing,' replied the Sheikh; 'and then, also, it is more convenient for their plotting and strategical schemes.'

'But their dioceses must be grievously neglected,' said the Angel.

'Certainly they are; but that does not bother them much,' he answered. 'You can have little or no idea of the state of rottenness and corruption of the Greek Church in this country. The whole system of patronage is one gross mass of bribery, and the morality of the parish priests is infamous to a degree. There is no proper supervision of any kind, and religion is murdered by political intrigue and personal self-indulgence.'

'That is a very sad picture that you draw,' remarked the Archbishop.

'It is, nevertheless, only too sadly true,' replied the

Sheikh. 'But what else can you expect, when I tell you that every spiritual office is put up to auction, from the patriarchate of Jerusalem down to the most insignificant village cure? The Sultan of Turkey has the patronage of the patriarchate of Jerusalem as his own right. This patronage he naturally exercises in such a manner as to get out of it the most money he can for his private purse, and, accordingly, when a vacancy occurs, he sells the office to the highest bidder. Now, the position is one of vast political importance to the Russian Government, who always have an eye upon the Holy Land in general and Jerusalem in particular. They can afford to outbid any private applicant, and the consequence is that they invariably purchase the presentation, and put in a political agent of their own, who forthwith commences to conspire against the Turkish Government and against all the other European powers, both civil and ecclesiastical.'

'But, surely, the Sultan cannot be such a fool as to allow the agent of so powerful a political rival as the Czar of Russia to be officially planted in the midst of Jerusalem,' said the Fossil.

'It does seem strange, does it not?' answered the Sheikh; 'but, then, you must remember that it is only against the Ottoman Government that the plotting goes on, whereas the money obtained by the sale of the office goes into the Sultan's own private pocket, so that he does not so much care. Besides, he knows perfectly well the situation, and his pashas and officials in Jerusalem are always keeping their eyes open, and they flatter themselves that they can outwit the Greek patriarch in cunning and intrigue.'

'It is a curious state of affairs altogether,' remarked Monte Carlo, laughing; 'but I suppose, like everything else, it is nothing when you are accustomed to it.'

'You said that there was a second incident that happened to your knowledge in the church here of strife and bloodshed,' observed the Enthusiast, who took good care never to allow the Sheikh to forget any story or information that he had promised to impart.

'That incident was even more tragic and disastrous in its results than the former,' replied the Sheikh, 'though it does not reflect so much disgrace upon the priests and professors of the Christian sects. It illustrates, however, very forcibly the rancorous animosity that exists between the adherents of the rival churches. But I will tell you the story after we have had our luncheon, for I expect that you are all tolerably hungry and thirsty after all this sight-seeing, and Yusef tells me that the lunch is quite ready.'

They crossed the open square, and turned to the left into another smaller open space, surrounded on three sides by houses and shops. The Sheikh led the way into one of these shops, which was filled with all kinds of specimens of articles of curiosity and sacred relics manufactured in Bethlehem, and behind this shop, separated from it by thick hanging curtains, they passed into a small room, fresh and cool, with windows looking out upon terraced olive-groves. On a long narrow trestle-table they found their luncheon spread. It had been brought with them from their hotel at Jerusalem, and it consisted of cold chicken and mutton cut up into fragments, hard-boiled eggs, oranges, dates, and cheese. A few bottles of white wine, manufactured from the vineyards of Bethlehem itself, were placed at intervals on the table to help wash down the acceptable viands. The Bethlehem shopkeeper and his two young sons, all picturesquely arrayed in their Oriental garments, all very courteous, voluble, and demonstrative, were at hand to assist Yusef in waiting upon the Sheikh and his tribe.

They were not long in discussing their lunch, for, as the Sheikh had said, they were all quite ready for it; and when they had finished, he related to them the incident which the Enthusiast was impatient to hear.

‘It was, as nearly as I can recollect, in the year 1891,’ he began, ‘that the event which I am about to narrate to you occurred. Two tourists, a German Count and a Russian friend of his, arrived at Jerusalem in the spring of the year, and put up at the Russian hospice—that enormous cluster of massive buildings which you have frequently seen just outside the walls of Jerusalem, on the north-western side of the city. There was a Kawass, or official servant, attached to the hospice, whose duty it was to escort visitors of importance about Jerusalem and the neighbourhood. The Kawass was a Montenegrin by birth, and an Austrian subject, though he was officially a representative of the Russian Government in his capacity of Kawass to the Russian hospice. He had been selected for the office principally on account of his ferocious and imposing personal appearance. Six foot three in height, and broad in proportion, with thick black eyebrows and a terrific moustache, he certainly did look a most formidable object when arrayed in his gorgeous official garments and armed with daggers and a revolver in his girdle and a long sword at his side. Nor was he only formidable in appearance, for he was the terror of all with whom he had to do. Hot-headed and impulsive, he gave way to passion on the slightest provocation, and had often committed acts of violence of a more or less serious nature.

‘Being a devout and bigoted member of the Greek Orthodox Church, he naturally regarded the Latin priests as the principal objects of his hatred and malice. On the day in question the German Count and

his Russian friend were paying a visit to Bethlehem, under the escort of this Montenegrin Kawass. They entered the Church of the Nativity, and, after having inspected the other places of interest, they proceeded to descend into the Grotto of the Manger by the stone steps which lead down into that chapel from the south side of the choir. Just at that moment a procession of Latin priests and monks, headed by a lay brother, who had the charge of the keys of the convent, were descending the opposite steps into the Grotto from the Latin portion of the Church, to hold a religious function before the altar of the manger, beneath which is that silver star. On seeing the Kawass approaching, followed by the two travellers, the Latin lay brother stepped forward, and requested the Kawass to wait until they had finished their religious functions. Meanwhile, the priests, marching in double file, were taking up their positions, one rank behind the other, on the floor of the grotto, facing the altar, and as each pair arrived at its post they knelt down and commenced their devotions. Probably, engaged in their religious duties, they were not aware of the presence of the visitors, but they were soon very practically and tragically made acquainted with it. When the lay brother requested the Kawass to stand back, the latter, in a rude and brutal manner, endeavoured to push him out of the way, remarking that he had as much right to enter the place as the Latin priests had, and that their religious functions were no concern of his. The lay brother then placed his hands upon the shoulders of the Kawass, in order to push him back and prevent him from intruding further upon the religious ceremony. Unfortunately, the head of the tall Kawass came into contact with one of the numerous hanging-lamps which you saw suspended from the roof of the grotto, and a

rather painful blow was inflicted upon him. Thereupon, losing all self-control in his impulsive passion, the Kawass whipped out his revolver from his girdle, and deliberately shot the lay brother dead. His bleeding corpse fell down upon the very silver star itself, which at least commemorates, if it does not actually localize, the birth of the Prince of Peace. Of course all the priests immediately rose up in confusion, and attempted to capture the Kawass. The German Count and his friend also stepped forward to seize the offender, but before he was finally captured and disarmed he had fired off two more bullets from his revolver, each of which wounded a Latin priest, one of whom subsequently died from its effects.'

'What a dastardly deed!' exclaimed the Angel in indignant horror. 'Of course, the man was hanged for the outrage.'

'I am not quite certain about his ultimate fate,' replied the Sheikh; 'but the whole circumstance gave rise to a strange and amusing political complication which at one time threatened to involve two or three of the European nations in a misunderstanding; and even some people feared the possibility of the outbreak of a general European war in consequence.'

'How was that?' asked the Fossil.

'Well, you see, the priest who was killed was, like all the Latins, under the protection of the French Government; the assassin was an Austrian subject: he was the representative officially of the Russian Government, and he was for the moment the escort and protector of a German. The murder was perpetrated in the Turkish dominions, and naturally, therefore, the Turkish authorities in Jerusalem desired to take cognizance of the outrage, and to try the prisoner. But, claiming the

protection of the Austrian Government, he had meanwhile been carried off to the Austrian Consulate, where he had been interned under close surveillance whilst the Austrian authorities were considering what was the best thing to do with him. The French Consul intervened in the dispute which arose between the Austrian Consul and the Turkish Pasha of Jerusalem, claiming that the prisoner should be handed over to him for trial, as he had murdered a man under the protection of France. The Russian and the German Consuls also put in their claims to have the man handed over to them; the former because he was the Kawass of the Russian hospice, and the latter because he was, at the time of the occurrence, the escort of the German Count. The relations between the various Consuls and the Turkish Pasha became very strained for a time, and none of them would speak to any of the others. Finally, the Montenegrin was officially notified to have disappeared from the Austrian Consulate, and I never heard what really became of him, but it was commonly believed that he had been surreptitiously spirited away to his native country, where probably he is at the present moment enjoying his ease and freedom. But come, we must be hastening on, as it is time that we were in our saddles again, and off for Solomon's Pools.'

Some considerable delay occurred, however, before they were fairly on their way again, for several of the tribe lingered behind in yielding to the blandishments and importunities of their host and his two sons, and purchasing various articles in the store. Meanwhile the General Nuisance was safely deposited in her palanquin, and her cavalcade started in advance. Finally, amidst much bustle, confusion, and noise, the rest of the party mounted their horses, and Bethlehem was soon left in their rear.

They retraced their steps as far as Rachel's Tomb, where they rejoined the main road from Jerusalem to Hebron. Turning to their left, they proceeded southwards for about two miles and a half, along a wild and stony upland district, where the only signs of life were scattered flocks of sheep and goats, who were feeding on the scanty herbage amongst the gray limestone boulders of the hill-country of Judæa. Every now and then a shepherd was visible, pacing leisurely among his flocks with a long staff in one hand and a rod, or club, in the other. Once a shepherd lad was seen reclining under the shadow of an overhanging rock and playing upon a primitive reed-pipe, which was evidently of home manufacture.

'You will notice,' said the Sheikh, reining up his horse to allow those of the tribe who were near him to listen to his remarks, 'that these shepherds almost invariably carry the staff and the club. The former is not merely a walking-stick, but it is used to clear away the bushes from the path; and the latter is employed for the purpose of beating down obstructions, and also at times as a weapon of warfare. It is doubtless to these that David refers in the twenty-third Psalm, when he says, "Thy rod and staff comfort me." See that youngster playing upon his pipe; he is doubtless a Bethlehem shepherd-boy, and it was just on such a pipe as that that the Bethlehem shepherd-boy, David, used to play in the days of old.'

No sooner had the Sheikh uttered these words than the Enthusiast was off on his horse to the shepherd-boy's side, to negotiate with him for the purchase of his pipe. He found a difficulty, however, in making the lad understand what he wanted, and the offices of the Sheikh had to be called into requisition before the purchase was completed, and the Enthusiast was able to ride off in



triumph with his newly-acquired treasure. Looking back, he saw the shepherd-boy with the coin in his open palm, upon which he was gazing with mingled sorrow and pleasure—sorrow at parting with what had been to him a really valued companion, and pleasure at having received what in his eyes was so large a sum of money in return for its loss.

‘Oh, what is that grand, castle-looking place down there in the hollow?’ exclaimed the Gusher shortly afterwards, as she rode in front of the tribe, and a short distance ahead of the Sheikh.

‘We are about to visit that place,’ he replied. ‘That building dates from the time of the Crusades, and it was erected in those stormy days to protect the huge reservoirs of which you can just see a portion beyond it, and to prevent the forces of the foes from availing themselves of the supplies of water which the reservoirs contained.’

Turning aside from the main road to the left, they cantered across an open field to the main entrance of the now deserted building, which in the Middle Ages had served partly as a castle-fortress, and partly as a wayside khan or inn. Here they dismounted, the General Nuisance having already arrived before them. A fine and inviting prospect opened before them to their view. Nestling in the hollow of a valley between two ranges of the Judæan hills were three ancient and massively constructed basins or reservoirs, which were partly excavated out of the solid rock and in other parts built up of huge blocks of stone, the whole being thickly plastered over with a coating of strong and durable cement. They were in gradually descending scales of depression, and were so arranged that the top of the lowest pool was beneath the level of the bottom of the middle one, the top of the latter being in its turn lower

than the bed of the uppermost. The middle pool or reservoir was nearer to the upper than it was to the lower, the distances being about fifty and eighty yards respectively. The reservoirs increased in size and capacity as they descended, and it had evidently been the object of the original constructors of these vast engineering works to make them collect and hold as large a quantity of water as possible. Masses of wild flowers, of all colours and shades, were growing on the hillsides and in the valley around the pools.

'These are known as Solomon's Pools,' explained the Sheikh. 'It is said that they were constructed by that Jewish King, in order to supply the Temple at Jerusalem with the vast quantities of water required for ablutions and for sacrificial purposes. You will doubtless remember my pointing out to you a large round basin on the Temple Area, to the south of the Dome of the Rock. I then told you that originally this basin was supplied with water from some pools among the Judæan hills by means of a stone aqueduct which ran around the hillside and passed under the walls of Jerusalem. These are the pools to which I then referred.'

'And do you think that they really are as old as Solomon's time?' asked the Enthusiast.

'There is no question whatever about their antiquity,' replied the Sheikh; 'and it is evident from the enormous labour, expense, and time that must have been spent on their construction that the works must have been executed during such a time of peace and prosperity as we read of under Solomon's reign.'

'Is there any allusion to them in the Bible?' inquired the Angel.

'None that I am aware of,' answered the Sheikh, 'though it is just possible that they may be indirectly

referred to in one or two passages of the Song of Solomon.'

'Nor does Josephus give any account of them?' asked the Fossil.

'He makes no reference to them, so far as I am aware,' said the Sheikh, 'and I have particularly studied his writings, for this and other purposes. I confess that it has always been a matter of wonder to me that we find no detailed account of these wonderful reservoirs, either in his works or in the Bible.'

'Whence comes the water in such quantities as to fill these reservoirs?' asked the Matter-of-fact Man.

'The whole of the hillsides around us abound with copious springs,' replied the Sheikh, 'the principal one of which is covered over by that small vaulted erection which you see over there, between the castle and the uppermost reservoir.'

'And what use is made of these reservoirs now?' asked the Malaprop.

'Good gracious, woman!' exclaimed the General Nuisance, 'what is the use of telling you anything? We had it all over the other day on the Temple Area.'

'Oh dear!' replied the good-natured creature, without any resentment at this interference in her tone. 'I beg your pardon. I am sorry. I had quite forgotten.'

'We must now remount our horses,' said the Sheikh, 'and we will proceed down this valley beyond the reservoirs. You will find it a very stony and difficult path; but if you give your horses their heads, they will carry you safely through, for they are wonderfully careful and sure-footed. Do not attempt to guide them against their will, or you will be very apt to come to grief.'

No mishap of any importance occurred, though one or two of the ladies were in a high state of nervousness, and

every now and then gave little screams of fright when their animals stumbled or slipped. A short distance down the valley, after leaving Solomon's Pools, the Sheikh and his tribe came upon a little village, most picturesquely nestling in the hollow, embowered in green orchards and enriched with fruitful gardens, which were fed by a sparkling and refreshing stream, flowing down the bed of the valley from the lowest of the reservoirs which they had left behind them.

'Oh dear!' cried out the Gusher; 'now this is really and truly one of the most charming, delightful, lovely villages that I have ever seen in my life.'

'I brought you this way on purpose to see it,' said the Sheikh, 'for it is not only a very pretty spot, but I believe it to be also a place which has been rendered immortal by one of the most interesting and fascinating scenes in connection with the history of our Lord's life upon earth. I have no doubt that this place is mentioned, too, indirectly in the Old Testament as being the site of Solomon's gardens. Josephus tells us that there was a city, or village, near to Bethlehem, where there were gardens and rivulets of waters, to which Solomon was in the habit of taking a morning drive frequently. This would exactly answer that description, and I know of no other place in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem that would.'

'What is its present name?' asked the Archbishop.

'It is called Urtas,' replied the Sheikh; 'and this very name appears to corroborate what I have said; for "Urtas" is evidently merely an Arabic corruption of the Latin word *hortus*, which signifies "a garden." It must, therefore, have been renowned for its gardens in the time of the Romans—that is to say, in the time of our Lord and His disciples. It would be a favourite country resort for the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and we can

easily imagine its villagers making a trip to the city in the morning and returning on foot towards eventide. There are remains of old Roman baths still existing here, and I am going to take you down now to see them. But before I do so I want you fully to appreciate the sacred romance of the spot. The word "Emmaus," as everyone knows, is merely the Greek form of the old Hebrew *Hammath*, or the Arabic *Hammam*; and this signifies "baths." Emmaus, in fact, corresponds to our English city of Bath. The distance of this place from Jerusalem is just seven miles and a half, or, in Biblical language, threescore furlongs. There are other places which have been conjectured by various authorities to be the site of the Emmaus, but, having visited and carefully examined them all, I have come to the undoubted conclusion that this village of Urtas, and none other, is the true site of that small and sequestered village towards which the two disciples were wending their homeward way when Jesus Himself drew nigh, and to which He accompanied them. It was here that they invited Him to rest with them, because the day was far spent and the night was at hand. It was in one of the homes of this peaceful village that He made Himself known to them in the breaking of the bread. So come with me, and let us try to wean our thoughts away from this poor modern village, and dwell for the time in meditation in the sacred village of Emmaus. Hence we shall return to Jerusalem in the track of those two disciples, though in the opposite direction; and by the time that we reach our hotel it seems to me that with us, as with them, it will be a case of the day being far spent and of the night being at hand.'

## CHAPTER XVI

### 'GO TO JERICHO'

Perils of the road—A fictitious attack—The Bedouin Arabs—The story of Sisera and Jael.

'WELL, I'm blowed if there is not another gorgeously arrayed, heavily armed, ferocious-looking individual waiting for us outside!' exclaimed the Enthusiast, bursting into the dining saloon of the Grand New Hotel on the morning of the departure of the tribe from Jerusalem on their visit to Jericho, the Dead Sea, and the Jordan. 'It seems as if we cannot venture anywhere in this blessed country without having a lot of these ornamental appendages attached to our tails. Whoever is this new nurse for us poor babies, come to take us out for a walk?'

The Sheikh and the rest of the tribe, who were discussing their breakfast at the time, laughed heartily at the Enthusiast's indignation, and the former replied:

'The formidable gentleman whom you have so graphically described has a no less formidable name, to which, however, I have no doubt you will become soon enough accustomed, as you will to the individual himself. His name is Mohamed-el-Achmed-el-Arikat-el-Abu-Dis.'

'Well, now, of all good solid jaw-breaking names, commend me to that!' exclaimed Monte Carlo. 'Pray, what does it all mean?'

'It is very simple when you come to analyze it, like

a good many other things which seem complicated at first,' replied the Sheikh. 'Mohamed is the man's own individual name; Achmed is the name of his father; Arikat, the name of the tribe to which he belongs; and Abu Dis that of the village where he lives. *El* is the Arabic for "of"; it literally means "the," but is used here in the sense of "of." Thus, his real title is Mohamed, the son of Achmed, of the tribe of Arikat, of the village of Abu Dis.'

'And who is this mysterious individual?' asked the General Nuisance.

'He is the Bedouin Arab who is to be our escort down to Jericho,' said the Sheikh.

'Whatever do we want with an escort to Jericho?' asked the Enthusiast.

'It is a custom with which we are compelled to comply,' answered the Sheikh; 'you see, directly we begin to make preparations for our journey through the country we are at once practically reminded of the wonderful accuracy of the Bible records, especially with regard to the geographical and physical conditions of the land. For example, here we are to-day about to start for Jericho. We shall follow virtually the same road as the man in the parable who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves. You will soon see how literally we go *down*.'

'Oh dear! oh dear!' ejaculated the Gusher, interrupting the Sheikh in his remarks. 'I do hope that we shall not fall among thieves to-day—I really do hope that we shall not. Oh, would it not be too dreadful for words if we should?'

The Pessimist turned pale and trembled, but no words came from his lips.

'Well,' replied the Sheikh calmly, but with a smile of

malicious amusement, 'we certainly shall. Nay, we have already; for the heavily armed, ferocious-looking man with a jaw-breaking name, as our friend Monte Carlo aptly describes it, is nothing but a thief himself.'

'What do you mean?' cried out the General Nuisance in alarm. 'Do you seriously say that you are going to entrust us to the care of a thief and a robber?'

'You need not be under any serious apprehension about the matter,' answered the Sheikh, smiling again; 'the only thing of which he is likely to rob us is the amount of money which we shall pay him as his fee; but that is robbery, none the less.'

'How do you make that out?' inquired the Archbishop.

'Well, you see, the fiction is still kept up that the road from Jerusalem to Jericho is dangerous, owing to the marauding Bedouins who infest the district. Consequently no European travellers are allowed to undertake the journey except under the escort of a duly qualified guide, for whose services they have, of course, to pay pretty dearly. This is what I mean by the robbery of which I have spoken.'

'And who are these duly qualified escorts?' asked the Fossil.

'They are the very Bedouin Arabs themselves who infest the district,' replied the Sheikh. 'The escort who is waiting for us at this present moment outside the hotel is one of these Arabs, and he gets his living entirely by conducting travellers to the plain of Jericho and back to Jerusalem.'

'And is the road really so very dangerous?' inquired the Pessimist nervously.

'It is, and it is not,' replied the Sheikh. 'That is to say, natives, both male and female, go up and down it with perfect safety, and without any escort whatever.'



But at the same time, if we were to attempt to do like them, and were to refuse an escort, it is practically certain that we should share the fate of the man in the parable before our journey was completed. A band of robbers would attack us, and we should be very fortunate if we escaped with nothing worse than a fright. One or two of our horses would at least be certainly wounded or killed, and we ourselves might possibly share the same fate.'

'In that case,' sententiously observed the Matter-of-fact Man, in the calm manner of one who was undismayed by the Sheikh's warning, 'I fail to see what good our Arab guide will be to us. Surely six or seven Englishmen like ourselves would be more efficient in such an emergency than one miserable native, however formidable may be his outward appearance and array.'

'Ah, but you fail to see the position,' returned the Sheikh; 'that one man is an absolute guarantee against any real danger, for the only reason why we should be attacked would be our rejection of his services. Our aggressors would be this very man and his kinsfolk, who would feel it incumbent on them to make a public example of us, in order to deter future tourists from equally dispensing with their services.'

'Then you really think, apart from the contingency which you have described to us, there is no danger at all of any attacks upon travellers in Palestine?' said the Fossil.

'No danger of any dangerous attacks,' said the Sheikh, 'though cases have come under my notice in which particularly nervous parties have been wrought up to a state of terrible alarm by fictitious attacks on their camp at night, especially on the Plain of Jericho.'

'In what way?' asked the Pessimist anxiously.

‘Shortly before retiring to rest,’ answered the Sheikh, ‘the dragoman would come into the saloon tent in a mysterious manner, and tell the party in a hushed voice that they had just heard from the Bedouin escort that a band of robbers is in the neighbourhood, and that a midnight attack on the camp has been arranged. The dragoman would enlarge on the fearful dangers they were in ; but he would assure them that they would be perfectly safe if they kept inside the tents and left everything to him. Having wrought them up to the utmost pitch of terror and alarm, he would enjoin them to retire immediately to their tents, reminding them that the whole safety depended on their not even putting their noses outside their tent-door. In the middle of the night, which would be especially chosen when there was no moon and all was total darkness, a terrible noise would, safe enough, indicate that an attack had been made on the camp. There would be a furious stampede, a general confusion, shouting and clattering of arms, as of men in conflict. Guns would be fired and screams heard. In the height of the uproar the dragoman and the native escort would cautiously insert their heads inside the travellers’ tents in turns, imploring them, as they valued their lives, to make no sign, but to leave everything to them.’

‘Oh, but this is too dreadful!’ gasped the Gusher ; ‘and are we really to be exposed to such dangers as these ?’

‘Be quiet, please, and let us hear the end,’ interposed the General Nuisance, whose countenance betrayed that she was growing extremely nervous.

‘Having informed the trembling travellers that they had to deal with a most bloodthirsty set of ruffians,’ continued the Sheikh, unheeding the interruptions, ‘the dragoman would add that he and the escort were about to parley with them at the risk of their own lives, for

which, however, they did not care at all, if only they could protect and save their honoured charge. Then they would depart from the tents for a time, and the hubbub would cease as suddenly as it began. The travellers would await the issue of the parley in trembling expectancy, and presently their protectors would return and tell them that, after much bargaining, entreaties, threats, and persuasions, they had induced the robbers to accept, say, ten or fifteen pounds to leave the camp in peace. Of course, the money was immediately forthcoming from the terrified travellers, and the whole incident would be satisfactorily closed.'

Monte Carlo and the Enthusiast burst out laughing, but their mirth was promptly checked by the General Nuisance, who observed that she considered the whole subject far too serious for amusement, and that, for her part, she considered that the Sheikh had behaved in anything but a straightforward manner in not having informed her of all these prospective perils before she had joined the party.

'Madam,' remarked the Fossil, assuming a somewhat comical expression of superior dignity and contempt, 'you have evidently failed to grasp the situation. As I understand the case, there was no genuine attack at all, but it was really a dramatic entertainment arranged between the two scoundrels themselves at the expense of their unfortunate patrons.'

'You could not have expressed the facts better,' replied the Sheikh, laughing heartily. 'Of course, the dragoman and the escort had plotted the whole affair between them. They had enlisted the service of the muleteers and camp-servants to create the disturbance. Having given them a small part of the money which they had extorted from the travellers, they would divide the

spoils between themselves, and would enjoy together a hearty laugh over the clever way in which they had tricked the unwary foreigners.'

'And what is more,' added Monte Carlo, 'as I know from my own experience, the travellers, when writing home to their friends the account of the incident, would take care that the narrative as presented by them would lose nothing in the way of dramatic exaggeration.'

'Just so,' assented the Sheikh; 'but even that is not all. On the morning following this fictitious attack the escort and dragoman would make a great palaver to the travellers about their valuable services, and the perils which they had encountered on their behalf, telling them that if it had not been for them they would have all been bleeding corpses by that time. So successfully would they work upon their feelings that the hat would be sent round, and a handsome sum would be presented to the escort for his devoted bravery. As for the dragoman, he would lose no opportunity of reminding the party how instrumental he had been in saving their lives, and he would be rewarded by a liberal baksheesh at the end of the trip, and a written testimonial would be signed by any number of the party enlarging upon his devotion, honesty, and his attention to their interests. His name would be recorded in their diaries, and on their return home they would recommend him strongly to any friends of theirs who might be contemplating a trip through the Holy Land.'

'All this sounds very sad and very shocking,' remarked the Archbishop, in a serious tone of voice. 'But do such things really go on now?'

'Very seldom,' replied the Sheikh. 'I have already said that the genus of dragoman has vastly improved of late years, partly owing to a better education on their side, partly to the influence of the tourist agencies, who

soon detect and dismiss any incompetent or fraudulent employés, and partly to the natural law of evolution and progress, which gradually abolishes rotten systems and causes the survival of the fittest. In justice to the dragoman of the present day, I must admit that most of them try their utmost to look after the interests of their patrons, to learn more accurately to discriminate between the true sites and the false, and to give genuine satisfaction by every means in their power. But I know as a positive fact that most of those accounts which one used to read in the memoirs and letters of tourists about the dangers of travelling in the Holy Land have arisen from the kind of fraudulent trick such as I have described, which has been palmed off upon them by the people whom they have employed to protect and escort them and to look after their interests.'

'Then you think that travelling in Palestine is really quite safe?' said the Angel.

'As safe as travelling in England, on the Continent, or in the United States,' answered the Sheikh. 'I can only tell you that I have travelled all over this country, on both sides of the Jordan, frequently with no other companion or protector than my faithful servant Yusef, and that I have never carried any weapon of any sort with me. Not only have I never met with the slightest molestation, but I cannot remember a case even of discourtesy or incivility. I wish I could say the same with regard to my travels on the Continent or in America.'

'But how about the Bedouin Arabs on the east of the Jordan?' said the Fossil. 'I have always understood that they are a very wild, turbulent, and dangerous people.'

'I do not deny,' answered the Sheikh, 'that one has sometimes to be on one's guard with respect to them; but even in their case there is one infallible talisman of safety.'

‘And what is that?’ asked the Archbishop.

‘If in the course of your riding through the country you come unexpectedly upon an encampment of Bedouins about whom you are not quite certain, it is the greatest folly to stop or hesitate, as if you were surprised and alarmed. It is absolutely fatal to attempt to turn back. They will immediately conclude that either you are hostile to them, or that you have something valuable about you that you wish to conceal from them, and the chances are that you will be attacked. The only thing to do is to ride straight up to the tent of the Sheikh of the encampment, which you can always tell, because it is twice as long as any of the others. You must make it appear as if the one object of your ride had been to pay a visit of courtesy to him. You throw yourself off your horse, make your salaams, and ask for a glass of water or milk. It will never be refused you; and the moment it has passed your lips your person is inviolable, not only as long as you are in the encampment, but whilst you are in the district belonging to the tribe of those particular Arabs. The Sheikh will send one of his men with you as an escort and protection; and when you arrive at the confines of his district, he will hand you over to the care of an Arab of the neighbouring tribe, and so on.’

‘Hospitality is regarded by them as a sacred duty, then, from what you say,’ returned the Fossil. ‘I suppose it is really a part of their religion.’

‘Not so much of their religion as of their traditional sentiment and instinct,’ replied the Sheikh. ‘There are three fundamental instincts upon which these children of Nature live and act.’

‘And what are they?’ asked the Archbishop.

‘Hospitality, propriety, and self-preservation,’ he answered. ‘You cannot understand the story of Sisera

and Jael, for example, unless you thoroughly appreciate and remember this fact ; but bearing this in mind, you will have no difficulty in comprehending Jael's conduct.'

'I should be glad to have that explained,' said the Angel ; 'for I confess that I have always looked upon Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, as a most dastardly and treacherous murderess.'

'Her conduct was simply diabolical, and no one can make it anything else,' opined the Fossil.

'On the contrary, I think she was quite justified in slaying the intruder,' remarked the General Nuisance.

'That must be so,' rejoined the Archbishop, 'for we have the seal of the approval of the Divine word for it.'

'What!' exclaimed Monte Carlo, 'invite the poor fellow into her tent, to treat him with such hospitality, and then, when, in reliance upon her honour, he had comfortably gone off to sleep, to murder him by ramming a huge tent-peg into his temples ! It seems to me rather grotesque, to say the least of it, to talk about an action like that being righteous and well-pleasing to the Supreme Being.'

'What right have you to presume to dictate to the Supreme Being as to what is well-pleasing to Him ?' said the General Nuisance.

'The right of the common-sense and reason which that Supreme Being has given me,' replied he.

'Not when it goes contrary to the revealed word of God,' answered the Archbishop.

'Revealed fiddlesticks !' interjected the Fossil.

'What was this Jael, anyway ?' inquired the Malaprop.  
'I quite forget all about the story.'

'Don't you remember ?' replied Monte Carlo jocosely, rather glad of this opportunity to escape from his passage-at-arms with the General Nuisance. 'She was the wife

of the gaoler at Philippi, of course, and Sisera was one of the prisoners, whom she put to death.'

All of which went down gravely into the Malaprop's diary.

'Seriously, what is the explanation of Jael's conduct?' said the Angel to the Sheikh. 'You said that there was no difficulty in understanding it.'

'I have been listening silently but with interest to the various remarks which have been made upon the matter,' answered the Sheikh, 'because they all show how little the story is really understood by people in general. Some of you have applauded Jael's conduct, and some of you have been equally unsparing in your censure. As a matter of fact, if you will allow me to say so, you all are equally wrong in your judgment. The conduct of Jael was neither meritorious nor deserving of unqualified condemnation. It was simply the natural act of a woman of her race in the circumstances in which she was placed. But, first, let me clear away one misapprehension. The Archbishop has spoken as if the sentiment expressed by Deborah and Barak in their song of triumph over the death of Sisera and the destruction of his army was an authoritative oracle from on high. Disabuse your minds of that at once. The Bible distinctly says "*Thus sang Deborah and Barak.*" The Song of Deborah and Barak was no more inspired by God than any other chant of victor's exultation after any glorious conquest. You must not forget what I have already impressed upon you more than once—namely, that the Hebrews, like all Orientals, looked at everything solely from the point of view of their own personal or national interests. For exactly the same reason that they regarded the Egyptian Pharaohs as unmitigated sinners, because their actions did not suit them, so, in like manner, they upheld Jael

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as "blessed above all women that lived in the tent" simply because her action in ridding them of a dangerous foe in the person of Sisera was to their advantage. It was only Deborah and Barak who pronounced Jael blessed for her deed; there is no Divine commendation to be understood or implied.

'This gets rid of the difficulty of one view of the case. Now for the other side. We have seen that there is no reason why we should be compelled against our better judgment to consider Jael's deed as a righteous and holy act; there is equally no reason why we should go to the opposite extreme, and denounce her deed as a treacherous and dastardly murder. Jael was simply a Bedouin woman; her husband Heber was the Sheikh of a Bedouin encampment. Now, I have just told you that these Bedouins act under three great natural impulses or instincts—hospitality, propriety, and self-preservation. You will see how admirably the story of Jael and Sisera illustrates these features of the Bedouin character. Jael is in her husband's tent when Sisera rushes in in terror, and implores her shelter and protection. She at once acts upon the impulse of the first instinct—hospitality. She has no time to think of anything else, nor is she a creature of reason, but of impulse, like all the women of the Bedouin tribes. Now, I shall, I hope, have plenty of opportunities of showing you a Bedouin encampment, and you will see that the Sheikh's tent, which I have already told you is about twice as long as any of the others, is divided into two portions, separated from each other by a curtain of the same material as the rest of the tent, and this curtain hangs from the roof to the floor of the dwelling. The curtains in front of one portion are generally kept raised during the day, and this portion belongs to the male members of the family, and is used also as the reception compartment for guests. The other

portion, which is always kept closely covered, is for the female members of the family, and it is as sacred as any Turk's harem. No man is allowed to intrude into that sanctum; and any woman who admitted him there would be certainly punished by death, as well as the intruder himself. It was into this woman's portion of the tent that Sisera rushed. The curtains of the other portion would be raised, and therefore there would have been no shelter or concealment for him there. In his blind fear he forgets the laws of Bedouin propriety, and invades the sanctum of Heber's harem. So long as she is busied in dispensing the duties of hospitality to this poor, hunted fugitive who has sought her succour, Jael gives no thought to the enormity of the offence that he has committed in passing beyond the curtain which secludes her sanctum, nor of the terrible risk which she is running in allowing him to remain for a single minute. Like a true Bedouin woman, she dispenses that hospitality in the most thorough manner. She gives the guest of the very best which she has to offer; and doubtless she fully expects that, when he is duly refreshed and rested, he will at once speed forth upon his way. Instead of that, he calmly lies down on the ground, and goes off to sleep in the woman's portion of the tent.

'The instinct of hospitality having now been obeyed, and Jael being left to her reflections, the risk of the situation possesses her mind, and with it the sense of outraged propriety. It is almost impossible for us to realize the extreme strictness of the sentiment of the Arabs in regard to sexual propriety. They are undoubtedly the most rigidly moral race with whom I have ever had any dealings. By acting on her instinct of hospitality, Jael begins to realize that she has committed an act of indiscretion of so serious a nature that, unless she does something promptly to vindicate her

*Very far fetched. There is nothing in the narrative  
 suggest that Sisera had invaded the harem quarters.  
 He had turned in at Jael's invitation, & she had politely  
 protected him by her action in giving him a drink*

innocence and her modesty, she will inevitably meet with condign punishment of the utmost rigour.

‘And here comes in the third and last instinct of the Bedouin race—self-preservation. The only way to save herself is to sacrifice Sisera. It may be that some other man or woman of her husband’s encampment or tribe will discover the fact that she has had a man in her sanctum. Nay, it is by no means unlikely that he was seen to enter, for there must have been other people about. However that may be, there must be no hesitation in the matter. The man who has violated the laws of propriety must die. It is unfortunate that he is her  
\* guest ; but, after all, he is an uninvited guest, and he has brought his fate on his own head. She must, for her very life’s sake, be able to point to his dead body and say : “ This man has penetrated into my portion of the tent, and I have slain him in consequence.” Thus, and thus only, can she hope to escape suspicion, accusation, punishment, and death. The resolution once formed, she acts as promptly and thoroughly upon it as she has already acted upon the impulse of hospitality, and so the unfortunate Sisera meets a violent and awful death at her hands. This is the plain and simple explanation of the story of Sisera and Jael, which, whilst it relieves Jael from the stigma of base treachery on the one hand, disposes equally of the traditional idea that she received a commission direct from God to perpetrate the murder.’

‘Thank you very much,’ said the Angel, when the Sheikh had concluded ; ‘I now understand the whole narrative far better than before.’

‘Allow me also to add my thanks,’ remarked the Fossil ; ‘you have made the story wonderfully reasonable and clear. I have no doubt that your explanation is perfectly correct.’

*Exod. IV. 18. And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him Turn in, my Lord: turn in to me, fear not.*

‘Nor I either,’ acquiesced the Archbishop; ‘and, to tell you the truth, I am much relieved to be able to think that Jael acted under her own impulses, and not from any directions from on high. The mystery of the incident has always been a stumbling-block in my mind, though I have never allowed myself consciously to confess the fact, even to my own soul.’

At this moment Yusef came in and informed the Sheikh that all was in readiness for the start to commence.

He was followed by the heavily armed and ferocious-looking Arab who had excited the Enthusiast’s astonishment and indignation. The latter prostrated himself before the Sheikh with the usual Oriental mode of respectful homage and recognition, and the latter introduced him to the tribe as ‘Mohamed-el-Achmed-el-Arikat-el-Abu Dis,’ adding in a lower tone :

‘This is the robber who is to prevent us from robbery as we go down from Jerusalem to Jericho.’

As the tribe were proceeding to the door of the hotel, to mount the animals which were waiting for them outside, Monte Carlo observed to the Enthusiast :

‘By Jove! the Sheikh has got the Archbishop and the Fossil to agree for once in a way. Did you notice how they each of them actually confessed that they had had erroneous ideas about the story of Jael and Sisera?’

‘Yes,’ replied the Enthusiast; ‘we are getting on, and if the Sheikh does not look out, he will have the two old fogies embracing one another and declaring that they hold the same faith before he has done.’

So saying, he gaily mounted his Arab steed and galloped after the Bedouin escort, who was already guiding his splendidly-caparisoned mare along the narrow lane at the back of the hotel which led towards the ‘New Gate’ at the north-western angle of the city.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE GOOD SAMARITAN'S INN

The Garden of Gethsemane—Bethany—Abu Dis—The Apostles' Spring—Lunch in the tent—A Syrian inn—The Nativity—The Ascent of Adummim—The Convent of Elias—What were the ravens ?

It is quite true, as the Sheikh said, that one appreciates the force of the opening sentence of the parable of the Good Samaritan as soon as one begins to undertake the journey from Jerusalem to Jericho. Not only is one supposed to be in danger of falling among thieves, unless one is provided with a proper escort, but in a very literal sense indeed one does go 'down' from the former city to the latter. As the crow flies the distance between the two places is not much more than fourteen miles, and yet one drops nearly 4,000 feet. Jerusalem is situated 2,600 feet above the level of the sea, whilst Jericho, the lowest inhabited place on the earth's surface, is nearly 1,000 feet below the sea-level. The consequence is that, as may naturally be imagined, the Plain of Jericho is intensely hot during the summer, and, indeed, after the early part of spring. The oppressiveness of the atmosphere is unbearable to ordinary human beings for the greater part of the year, though during the winter and early spring the climate is delightful. No doubt it was owing to the fact that pilgrims were frequently over-

come by the fearful heat which they experienced on their way across the Plain of Jericho to the Jordan at certain seasons of the year that Jericho came to be regarded by them as the type of the infernal regions, and that thus a polite way of consigning bores to the realms of Satan was invented under the phrase 'Go to Jericho !'

Quite a new light is thus thrown on the esoteric meaning of our Lord's parable, for, Jerusalem being always taken in the Bible as the type of heaven, the 'New Jerusalem,' if Jericho is to be understood as the type of hell, then the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho is a type of the sinner on the downward path, with his back to heaven and his face towards hell. He travels alone and unprotected like the man in the parable ; for he has rejected the services of the Holy Spirit, the only duly qualified escort and guide. Sooner or later he is sure to fall among thieves : there are the devil and his angels, ready to rob him of his innocence and purity ; evil companions, to rob him of his fortune and his good name ; vicious habits, to rob him of his bodily health and his mental abilities ; and ruin, destruction, and death stare him in the face, unless, happily for him, before it be too late, he comes across 'the Good Samaritan.'

All of which the Sheikh pointed out to his fellow-travellers as they proceeded together on the steep downhill road that conducts the wayfarer from Jerusalem to Jericho.

They left the holy city, as has been said, by the New Gate, near the north-west angle of the walls, which has only been re-opened of recent years, after having been hermetically closed for centuries. Turning to the right, they descended the hill which leads down eastward to the crossing of the Damascus road. They passed along the southern base of the Skull Hill of Calvary, and skirted

the exterior of the north-east angle of the city walls. Thence descending rapidly into the Valley of the Kedron, they crossed the little dry mountain-torrent bed which rejoices in the name of the ' Brook Kedron,' though there is not a drop of water in it for nine months out of the twelve ; and then, leaving on their left hand the quaint old three-arched doorway which opens into the so-called ' Tomb of the Virgin Mary,' they arrived at the Garden of Gethsemane, peacefully reclining at the base of the Mount of Olives. Here three paths up the mountain-side diverge, and each of these paths has a distinct sacred interest of its own. Here the Sheikh halted on his horse until the cavalcade of the tribe had all collected, and pointing to the most northerly of the three paths, he said :

' It was up that very path that David went when he fled from Jerusalem at the time of the rebellion of Absalom ; and it was just over the brow of the hill at the top that Shimei met him, cast stones at him, and cursed him. This second path, which winds so steeply up the hill to the right and above the Garden of Gethsemane, is the ordinary path for pedestrians over the Mount of Olives to Bethany. It was up this path that our Lord and His disciples went, evening after evening, during the last week of His life of humiliation on earth ; and somewhere along that path occurred the incident of the barren fig-tree. This lower path beneath the west wall of the garden is, as you will perceive, by far the easiest and least steep of the three. It passes over a lower shoulder of the mountain-side, and joins the steeper path on the other side of the mount, shortly before arriving at Bethany. From time immemorial this has been the path which has been used by animals, camels, horses, mules, donkeys, and so forth ; and, as you see, it is now

a tolerably good carriage road. It is along this road that we shall now proceed, and it was beyond a doubt along this same road that our Lord made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, riding upon an ass.'

Most of the tribe were already familiar with the greater part of the information which the Sheikh thus imparted, for they had ascended the summit of Olivet by the second of the three paths—several of them more than once—during their ten days' sojourn at Jerusalem, whilst a few of them had also made the excursion to Bethany, though the greater part had reserved their visit to that village until this day, when they should pass through it on their way to Jericho.

The modern name of Bethany is 'El-Azariyeh,' which is evidently an Arabic corruption of El-Lazariyeh, or the village of Lazarus. Thus, even at the present day, the memory of the friend of Jesus, the brother of Martha and Mary, clings to the little poverty-stricken village where, in Bible times, he made his home. It is generally stated that Bethany signifies 'house of rest'; but Hepworth Dixon was probably correct when he suggested that the name really implies 'house of poverty.' Certainly that name well befits the place at the present day, for Bethany, or El-Azariyeh, is as poor and poverty-stricken a hamlet as one may wish to meet with in his travels over the globe. The inhabitants are the most degraded and importunate beggars, even in Palestine, and that speaks volumes for the misery of the village. The whole place is depressing in its squalor and disillusionment, and there is little or nothing to tempt the visitor to linger among the ragged and repulsive natives. The so-called tomb of Lazarus has nothing whatever to mark it as a genuine site; whilst the ruined building which is shown as the house of Simon the leper is simply



the remains of some Crusading edifice, and the miserable modern hovel which purports to have been the original home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus is too evidently a fraud to be worthy of even a passing notice.

The Sheikh, therefore, did not waste much time in keeping his tribe hanging about in the village of Bethany, and they were soon once more on their way, plunging rapidly down into the steep descent, along the excellent carriage road which has lately been constructed through the wilderness of Judæa to the Plain of Jericho.

A picturesquely situated village on a hill to their right caught the eyes of the Enthusiast almost immediately after they had left Bethany behind them, and, pointing to it, he asked the Sheikh whether it had any name of importance, and whether there were any associations of interest attaching to it.

‘That is the village of Abu Dis,’ replied the Sheikh, ‘where our friend Mohamed-el-Achmed, who is riding so majestically there at the head of the tribe, dwells with his kinsfolk and acquaintances.’

‘But I thought you said that he was a Bedouin Arab, and that the Bedouin Arabs live in tents without any settled villages or residences of their own,’ answered the Enthusiast.’

‘These fellows have become so stuck-up and civilized by their contact with European travellers that they have degenerated from the simple ways of their forefathers, and have settled in that village,’ replied the Sheikh ; ‘and, what is more, they are actually contracting the European style of domestic architecture, and are outdoing the native villagers themselves in modern progress. Not content with the primitive flat roof which characterizes the ordinary Oriental house, these Arabs are affecting the slanting tiles of Western civilization.’

You notice that high house with a conspicuous red-tiled roof in the middle of the village. That is the very dwelling-place of Mohamed himself.'

'*O tempora, O mores!*' ejaculated the Fossil, who was riding near the Sheikh and endeavouring with difficulty to get a comfortable position on his horse's back, but who tried to appear nonchalant and at his ease. 'To think of the free-born children of the desert themselves sinking to the depth of effeminate luxury, and building houses to dwell in!'

'What else can you expect of people who earn their living by pretending to be daring freebooters, when they are nothing more than vile impostors in brigandage?' answered the Enthusiast.

At the foot of a long zigzag descent they came upon a wayside fountain with a quaint arched erection over it, and a picturesque group of natives—shepherds, camel-drivers, women, sheep, goats, and camels—was clustered around the well.

'This place is commonly known as "the Apostles' Spring," explained the Sheikh. 'Its native name is Ain Shems, which means "the sunny fountain." This name seems to indicate that we are here on the site of En-Shemesh, which is mentioned in the Book of Joshua as being one of the boundary marks between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. In fact, almost the whole way along this road we are passing on the border-line between those two tribes. Judah, of course, is on our right, and Benjamin on our left.'

'Why is this called the Apostles' Spring?' asked the Archbishop.

'I suppose, probably, because our Lord and His Apostles must have passed it several times during their journeys between Jericho and Jerusalem,' said the

Sheikh, 'and this would be quite sufficient for the mediæval monks to have converted it into a holy site and connected it with the name of the Apostles.'

'Oh!' exclaimed the Gusher; 'perhaps St. Peter and St. John have drunk of the water of this well. I must have some—indeed I must. Will you ask one of those beautiful, dirty people to bring me some in one of their jars?'

'I will get you some,' said the Matter-of-fact Man, alighting from his horse; 'I also must have a drink, for I feel thirsty.'

There was nothing of note to vary the monotony of their ride for the next hour or two, until they came to an old Khan by the roadside, where arrangements had been made for their mid-day halt. Beneath the exterior walls and on the shady side, a tent had already been erected for their accommodation, and Yusef was assisting a couple of other natives to spread out the lunch on an Oriental carpet in the centre of the tent. The tent itself was double-lined; on the inside the hangings were decorated with the elaborate and many-coloured patchwork for which the tent-makers of Cairo and Damascus are famous. There were no chairs or camp-stools, and the party had to arrange themselves around the interior of the tent, sitting as comfortably as they could upon their crossed legs or their haunches. This was quite a new experience for many of them, and they found considerable difficulty in adapting themselves to the situation, though the novelty had a charm of its own, which made them forget the discomfort of the position. The repast consisted of sundry scraps of cold mutton and chicken, very stringy and tough, hard-boiled eggs, sardines, cheese, raisins and dates. It was not a very tempting array which was displayed on enamelled plates

upon the ground ; but they were all hungry after their ride, and were not in a humour to criticise their fare.

‘Where are the rest of our tents ?’ asked the Enthusiast, who seemed to have expected the whole encampment to have been pitched for their lunch.

‘We shall find them all ready for our reception when we arrive at our camping-ground on the Plain of Jericho,’ replied the Sheikh. ‘They started a long time before us this morning, and have gone straight forward to their destination.’

‘And are these two individuals a portion of our retinue ?’ said Monte Carlo, pointing to the two natives who had assisted Yusef to prepare the lunch, and who were now handing round the viands to the several members of the tribe.

‘Yes,’ answered the Sheikh ; ‘one of them is the muleteer who has charge of the luncheon-tent, and whom you will see every day of our camping-tour when we reach our noonday halting-station. The other is one of our two waiters, and with him you will all become very familiar before our journey is over, for he and his companion waiter are most necessary and indispensable functionaries to minister to our comforts and requirements. I had better, therefore, make you acquainted with him at once. What is your name ?’ he added in Arabic, turning to the waiter in question.

‘Salim,’ he replied.

‘Can you speak English, old chap ?’ said Monte Carlo to him.

‘A leetle, sir,’ answered the native, grinning from ear to ear.

He was rather a fine-looking young fellow, dressed in semi-Oriental, semi-European costume—that is to say, he wore European trousers and coat, with Oriental

waistcoat, head-dress, and slippers. He had a black moustache, of which he was evidently very proud, for it was carefully trimmed and cosmétiqued. There was a good-natured expression on his face, and he was lithe and active in frame. The Sheikh spoke a few words to him in Arabic, commending the ladies and gentlemen of the tribe to his care, and intimating that the amount of baksheesh which he would receive at the end of the tour would depend upon the satisfaction which he gave to the company in general. He then introduced him to the tribe, and Salim made his salaams in the wonderfully graceful and courteous manner which is so characteristic of every Oriental, even of an Oriental waiter.

At the close of their repast the Sheikh took the tribe into the square enclosure of the khan or inn. The entrance was through a wide archway in the side nearest to the road, and this archway opened into a covered courtyard with two similar arches at the further end, and doors leading into chambers on either side. Beyond the covered court was a spacious open square, surrounded on three sides by the high walls of the khan, and on the fourth bounded by the chambers and the court. A man in native costume was at one corner of the covered court, making coffee over a charcoal brazier, and at the same time filling and preparing a narghileh. There were several of these narghileh pipes arranged on a shelf near the brazier. The man was the innkeeper, or, as he is known by the natives, the *khanidjeh*. A few muleteers and other wayfarers were squatting or lying on the floor of the court, and some horses and mules were tethered in the open square within.

Neither the innkeeper nor his guests paid much attention to the entry of the Sheikh and his tribe beyond a passing glance of recognition and a brief greeting in



**KHAN-EL-AHMAR.**  
"THE GOOD SAMARITAN'S INN."

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Arabic between the innkeeper and the Sheikh. The Enthusiast and the Gusher immediately began to take stock of everything and everybody in the khan, with many exclamations and expressions of interest; whilst the General Nuisance and the Pessimist, casting one sidelong glance of scorn and contempt at the native wayfarers, edged away from them as far as possible, and hastened through the court to the open enclosure beyond, the General Nuisance declaring that there she could breathe the fresh air without the contamination of the odour of humanity, a sentiment which the Pessimist mournfully re-echoed.

Meanwhile, the Matter-of-fact Man was examining the manner in which the innkeeper was making the coffee, and endeavouring vainly by means of gestures and signs to explain to the bewildered and amused *khanijeh* how he thought the coffee ought to be made.

‘You will see at once,’ remarked the Sheikh to those of the tribe who cared to listen to him, ‘that a Syrian inn is as different as one can possibly conceive from what we understand by an inn in England. This covered court is called the *liwán*, and it is the principal rendezvous of the travellers during the daytime; you will generally see men like these here present lounging about from morning to night, smoking pipes and sipping coffee. In fact, pipes and coffee are the only things which the Oriental innkeeper provides. The guests of the khan have to bring their own food with them, and their beds, too, for the matter of that!’

He then led the way through one of the doors into a chamber, which was absolutely bare and destitute of furniture of any sort or kind. The walls were coated with a grayish plaster, and the floor was covered with a coarse cement.



'This,' said he, 'is one of the rooms of the inn proper, and when the travellers rest for the night, they spread upon the floor a sort of quilt or mattress, which they use as a saddle-cloth on which to ride during the daytime. Thus every native literally carries his bed about with him when he travels.'

'How many rooms are there in this inn?' inquired the Archbishop.

'Three or four, I think,' answered the Sheikh, 'but we can easily see for ourselves.'

'Then this inn cannot accommodate many guests,' said the Angel.

'On the contrary,' replied the Sheikh, 'upon occasion a great number of native travellers could be put up here.'

'But you don't mean to say that they would put a lot of strangers together in one room?' said the Archbishop.

'Why not?' rejoined the Sheikh; 'no Oriental thinks of undressing to go to bed. They simply loosen their girdles, lie down on their mattresses, curl themselves up in their outer cloaks, and go to sleep in happy unconventionality.'

'And would members of both sexes occupy the same chamber?' asked the Fossil.

'In cases of emergency they would undoubtedly, especially if they were Jews or Christians,' replied the Sheikh. 'The Moslems would be more particular.'

'Then I suppose that a person has to take his chance of finding an available space for spreading his mattress?' remarked Monte Carlo.

'Exactly so,' responded the Sheikh; 'and in times when there is much travelling about, a person who arrives somewhat late at the khan may find a difficulty in securing room. In that case, he has to sleep in the *liwân*, or, if that also is full, then he has to go into the open enclosure,

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there, to our left. You see a ruined building. Some people think that that is the remains of the original inn ; but I have examined it carefully, and am inclined to the opinion that it is an old Crusading or Saracenic fortress, erected in those troublous mediæval times to guard this inn, which must always have been a place of great importance, as it is the only house of rest and accommodation between Bethany and Jericho. I believe that the tradition which assigns to the place in which we now are the name of " the Good Samaritan's Inn " is correct, and that it was to this very inn that our Lord referred in His well-known parable.'

' Can you show us the exact spot where the man in the parable fell among the thieves ? ' asked the Gusher.

The others laughed at this question, and the Fossil remarked that she had better first inquire whether the man himself ever really lived. But the Sheikh replied that he could show them, a short distance after they should have started again on their way, the place where, if a man was attacked by robbers, the scene would probably have occurred.

Accordingly, when, an hour afterwards, they had resumed their journey, they reached about a mile further on their way a place where a wild ravine branched off steeply to the right, and, halting the party at this spot, the Sheikh said :

' That ravine bears the name at the present day of " Talaat Ed-Dumm," which means " the Bloody Ascent." If you will look in your Bibles when we arrive at our encampment, you will find in the 15th and 18th chapters of the Book of Joshua that mention is made of the " Ascent of Adummim," as another of the marks on the boundary-line between the tribes of Benjamin and Judah. Now, the Hebrew word " Adummim " is the same as the Arabic word " Ed-Dumm," and there is no doubt that

this ravine is what is mentioned in Joshua, so that you may imagine the boundary-lines between the two tribes passing off there to the right. The very fact of this gruesome name, the "Bloody Ascent," being given to the place shows that from time immemorial, even before the days of the entrance of the Israelites into the country, this spot has always been associated with deeds of rapine and bloodshed ; and, therefore, it is not unlikely that our Lord and His hearers may have pictured to themselves the very spot where we now are as the most appropriate scene of the attack made by the robbers on the wayfaring man in the Parable.'

It was indeed a place well calculated to inspire evil reputation ; for nothing more dreary, desolate, and forbidding could well be imagined than the whole district which the Sheikh and his tribe were now traversing. Deeper and deeper they descended into this barren wilderness, and, after another hour's ride, the Sheikh suddenly led the way off the main road to the left, climbing up a steep ascent, on the summit of which he dismounted from his horse and waited for the rest of the tribe to come up.

A scene of unexpected grandeur and sublimity burst upon their view. They found themselves on the very crest of an almost precipitous descent, which went sheer down five hundred feet or more into one of the most stupendous ravines which any of them had ever seen. Immediately facing them, and about halfway down the opposite cliff of the ravine, was a remarkable castle-like cluster of buildings literally clinging to the hillside. The refreshing sound of running water could be distinctly heard at the bottom of the ravine, though it was too deep and narrow for them to see the stream or rivulet which produced the sound. There was, however, a highly picturesque old arched bridge, which spanned the ravine a short distance above the spot where they were standing,

and which was clearly visible to their eyes. They all stood riveted to the spot for some minutes before they could recover from their surprise and delight at coming so unexpectedly upon such a scene of natural awfulness and splendour in the midst of the dreary and uninteresting tract of country through which they had been riding.

'That wonderful building opposite to us, which seems almost suspended in mid-air, is a monastery belonging to the Orthodox Greek Church,' said the Sheikh, when he had allowed them sufficient time to gaze upon the scene, 'and it is known as the Convent of Elias or Elijah. It is so called because it commands a view over this wild and romantic gorge, which is connected with one of the most memorable incidents in the life of that great Hebrew prophet. The stream which flows at the bottom of this ravine, and the bubbling sounds of which you can now hear, is that which is called in the Bible the Brook Cherith, and it was in this ravine that Elijah hid himself from Ahab.'

'This the Brook Cherith!' exclaimed the General Nuisance; 'why, this is not in the least like the pictures that one always sees of it.'

'Oh dear no!' echoed the Gusher; 'I have always seen the dear old prophet, with his long white beard, seated on the bank of a delightful smiling stream flowing through the sweetest green meadows, with beautiful flowering shrubs and bushes around him, and with those darling black ravens flying towards him so fondly with the great big buns in their beaks. That is my idea of Elijah and the ravens, and I do not mean to give it up for this horrible, gloomy, dark ravine, even if you tell me to, you naughty, nasty man!'

'I am really very sorry to spoil your pretty picture,' said the Sheikh, laughing; 'but in the interests of truth, I am bound to tell you that not one single detail which you have described is in accordance with fact.'

‘Not even the ravens?’ said the Matter-of-fact Man in a dry tone, which seemed to imply that he had caught the Sheikh tripping.

‘Not even the ravens,’ replied the Sheikh; ‘there were no birds whatever in the case.’

A look of incredulous surprise overspread the countenances of most of his hearers at this bold statement, and a smile of grim satisfaction might have been seen upon the face of the Fossil, as he saw the look of outraged sentiment on the part of the Archbishop and the General Nuisance.

‘I say, old fellow,’ exclaimed Monte Carlo, ‘you had better look out what you are saying. We must have those ravens, you know, at any cost. We can’t afford to give them up. Why, they are part of the stock-in-trade of our childhood’s fancies.’

‘For all that, I am afraid you will have to give them up,’ replied the Sheikh, looking very much amused at the consternation which his words had caused.

‘Do you mean to say that the Bible is wrong again?’ exclaimed the General Nuisance indignantly.

‘Not by any means,’ answered the Sheikh; ‘the Bible is all right—it is only the commonly accepted interpretation of it that is wrong.’

‘I do not understand you at all,’ said the Archbishop seriously, ‘and I must really ask you for an explanation.’

‘Which, of course, I fully intend to give you,’ he replied, ‘or I should not have broached the subject at all. But I must ask your patience until we arrive at our destination this afternoon, for I must show you something else before you will be able thoroughly to understand and appreciate the explanation which I shall give you. We have not very much further to ride, and I think we had better remount our horses at once, and complete our journey as soon as possible.’

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE PLAIN OF JERICHO

Three Jerichos—Oreb and Zeeb—The real ravens—Camping in Palestine—An absurd contretemps—Poor Pessimist!

It may not be generally known that there are three Jerichos, all distinct from one another, and each about two miles distant from either of the others. In other words, these three Jerichos are situated, as it were, at the three angles of an equilateral triangle, each side of which is about two miles long.

The Jericho of the present day, which is called by the natives 'Eriha,' is a miserable collection of mud hovels inhabited by a people of the lowest and most degraded type, but surrounded by a most luxuriant paradise of verdure and flowers in the winter and spring time of the year. Adjoining the village are two hotels, affording very comfortable accommodation in the tourists' season. One is called the Jordan Hotel, and the other the Hôtel de Voyageurs. A short distance from them are two other substantial buildings, the one in a ruined condition, and the other quite new. The latter is a Russian hospice, which has been erected for the convenience of the thousands of Russian pilgrims who visit Palestine every year, and all of whom come down to the Plain of Jericho in order to bathe in the sacred waters of the muddy Jordan. The other is an old Crusading castle, which was originally built

for a similar purpose—namely, to shelter and protect the Christian pilgrims of the Middle Ages. The stream which flows from the wild gorge of the Cherith, now called the Wady Kelt, passes through the midst of Eriha, and its banks are lined with dense thickets of thorny briars, of the species from which, according to ecclesiastical tradition, the crown of thorns for Jesus' brow was formed. The whole village does not date probably from an earlier period than the time of the Crusades.

The second Jericho is that which was in existence in the time of Christ. This is the Jericho which Josephus calls the 'City of Palm-trees,' and it must have been exceedingly magnificent when Jesus and His disciples visited it. It was one of the many cities which owed so much of their glory to the munificent and extravagant patronage of the notorious Herod the Great. That monarch purchased it from the no less notorious Queen Cleopatra, to whom it had been presented by Mark Antony after the conquest of Syria by the Romans. It occupied a strong and commanding position at the very spot where the mountain pass from Jerusalem merges into the great Plain of Jericho. It was here that Zacchæus the Publican lived, and it was at the gate of this Jericho that Bartimæus sat by the wayside begging. This mighty city has virtually disappeared, nothing being left of it but ruined reservoirs, aqueducts, towers, and several mounds of shapeless stones. The palm-groves and the sycamore-trees for which it was famous are now nowhere to be seen, and the whole hillside is a treeless desert. But even the poor scattered relics are sufficient to give the experienced traveller some slight indication of the size and splendour of this Jericho when in the full tide of its prosperity. The ruined gateway at the upper end of the ancient city, where the road to Jerusalem passed out of Jericho, can



still be clearly traced, together with the fortress-tower built by Herod to protect it ; and here, beyond doubt, is to be located the scene of the meeting between the blind Bartimæus and Jesus of Nazareth. The view from this point over the extensive plain beneath is wondrously attractive and beautiful, and here the Sheikh halted his tribe for several minutes before finally descending into the plain. At the foot of a double-headed hill about a couple of miles to the north the white tents of their encampment were plainly to be discerned in neat array, inviting them to refreshment and repose.

After having pointed out to them the modern village, embowered in its orchards and shrubs, two miles to the east of them, and having discussed the associations of the ruined Jericho by the ancient gateway of which they were now standing, the Sheikh drew their attention to the two-headed mound above their tents, and said :

‘ Our encampment is pitched in a romantic spot, for it was on that hill which rises above it that stood the noted Jericho of Joshua’s time, which was destroyed in so signal and complete a manner. So from this point of vantage you are able to see clearly the relative position of the three Jerichos — that of the old Testament days, that famed in the New Testament, and that modern pollution of the natural beauty which surrounds it, which passes at the present day by the time-honoured name of its famous predecessors.’

‘ Truly, this is a wonderfully beautiful scene which lies outspread before us, north, east, and south,’ remarked the Fossil with unwonted animation.

‘ How grand and noble is that vast stretch of the Mountains of Moab, now that we are so near to them !’ added the Angel.

‘ And how marvellously rich is the deep blue of the

Dead Sea, away yonder to our right!' said the Archbishop.

'But where is the Jordan?' asked the General Nuisance. 'I thought that it flowed through this plain.'

'And so it does,' replied the Sheikh, 'but its bed lies down in so deep a hollow that, even from this point of elevation, we cannot see its waters. You can, however, clearly trace its course as it flows from north to south about ten miles away over there across the plain, for there is, as you can see, an almost continuous belt of verdure which grows upon its banks. To-morrow, if all be well, we shall be in the midst of that belt of verdure, and then you will be able to see the sacred Jordan itself.'

'Oh, look! oh, look!' exclaimed the Gusher, pointing to a low spur of hills running eastward from the mountain range of Judæa into the plain some eight or ten miles to the north of them; 'did you ever see two such curious pointed hills as those which stand out over there?'

'Those two hills are very prominent and conspicuous landmarks from almost any point of the plain,' answered the Sheikh, 'and, what is more, they have a very interesting and important association. The conical peak to the right is called "the Raven's Nest," or in Arabic "Oesh El-Ghoreb," and the other one is known as "Tuweil Ez-Dhiab"—that is, "the Wolf's Peak." Ghoreb in Arabic is the same as Oreb in Hebrew, and Dhiab the same as Zeeb, so that in these two hills we have the names of Oreb and Zeeb, who, as you doubtless all remember, are mentioned in the Book of Judges as being two princes of the Midianites who were conquered and slain by Gideon.'

'By the way, talking of them,' interposed the Archbishop, 'there is one thing in that narrative that I never quite understand, and I wonder whether you are

able to enlighten me upon my difficulty. We are told that Oreb was put to death upon Oreb, and that Zeeb was put to death on Zeeb. Now, what does that mean ?'

'I was just about to explain that very point,' said the Sheikh, 'and, as this is a very good spot for surveying the whole scene, we will, if you please, remain here a short time before we descend into the plain, so that we may rest our horses, whilst at the same time I unfold to you one or two most interesting facts of Old Testament history.'

The greater part accordingly dismounted from their horses, saying that they preferred to walk down the steep declivity into the plain after the Sheikh should have finished what he had to say, and the muleteers in attendance were sent forward with the horses to await their arrival at the foot of the hill.

'I need hardly recall to your minds, I suppose, the main facts of the conflict between Gideon and the Midianites,' began the Sheikh, as soon as they had all settled down to listen to his remarks ; 'but, briefly, you must understand that the Midianites were simply tribes of those wandering Arabs whom we know at the present day under the name of the Bedouin. Now, like all semi-civilized native tribes, the Arabs have from time immemorial been distinguished by certain titles or nicknames, and these nicknames have often been derived from birds or animals, probably characteristic of the particular types of people belonging to the tribe. We find this very commonly the case all over the globe. For example, amongst the North American Indians I have come across a tribe of the Bulls, and another of the Deer ; and amongst the Australian aboriginals there were the tribe of the Sharks, the tribe of the Kangaroos, and so forth. So, amongst these Bedouin Arabs, called in the Old Testa-

ment Midianites, there were two tribes, known respectively as the Ravens and the Wolves. The head man of each tribe—called in the Bible “the Prince,” but as he would be now termed, “the Sheikh”—was known *par excellence* as the Raven and the Wolf. Thus Oreb, the Raven, was the Sheikh of the tribe of the Orebim, or Ravens; whilst Zeeb, the Wolf, was the Sheikh of the Zeebim or Wolves. These two tribes especially infested this plain which we see before us, and those two prominent hills were in the centre of their respective districts. The Raven’s Nest was in the centre of the district inhabited by the Ravens, and the Wolf’s Peak was in the centre of the district inhabited by the Wolves.

‘The great battle between Gideon and the Bedouin tribes took place about thirty miles to the north of this plain, and nearly a thousand feet above it. We shall visit the battlefield in a few days’ time, as we travel northwards through the country. It is in what is known as the Valley of Jezreel. Now, when Gideon routed these Bedouin Arabs, and took their Sheikhs prisoners, he desired to make a public example of them in such a manner as to strike terror into the heart of their tribes, and to give them such a lesson as they would not be likely to forget for many years to come. He therefore did a most politic thing. He brought the Sheikhs down to the very districts which their tribes inhabited, and he put them to death, each on the conspicuous peak in the centre of his own district. Oreb, the Raven, he put to death on the Raven’s Nest; and Zeeb, the Wolf, he put to death on the Wolf’s Peak. Therefore you are undoubtedly looking out now upon the very scene where those dramatic incidents occurred.’

‘Wonderful! wonderful!’ murmured the Archbishop; ‘I could scarcely have believed that a personal visit to

this land could have thrown so new and vivid a light upon the scenes of Holy Writ.'

'By Jove, though, that is awfully interesting!' exclaimed the Enthusiast. 'I have never studied the Bible much, but I think that in future, if we have many more such illustrations, I shall find the book as fascinating as any history or romance.'

'I have not finished yet, by any means, continued the Sheikh, 'and there is something much more important and interesting behind. Many of you were shocked and astonished when I said an hour ago, as we were gazing down into the gorge of the Cherith, that Elijah was not fed by birds at all. You will perhaps understand now what really occurred. In that ideal hiding-place which he had chosen in that weird and awful ravine, the only people who would have discovered his whereabouts were the Bedouin Arabs. Nothing ever escapes them, and they probably became aware of his presence before he had been there half a day. They would inquire what he was doing, and why he was hiding; and when they learned that he was an outlawed refugee, hiding from the face of the King, they, being also natural outlaws and enemies of the royal government, would receive him with open arms, treat him with true Oriental hospitality, and see that he was duly supplied with food all the time that he was there. Now, as I have just been pointing out to you, these Arabs who infested this district belonged to the tribe of the Orebim, or Ravens. Thus, you see, the Ravens who fed Elijah were not birds, but Bedouin Arabs.'

'Bang goes another pretty picture and another childhood's illusion!' exclaimed Monte Carlo, laughing. 'But, seriously, for my part, I welcome your explanation heartily, and thank you for it, for it has the true ring of

common-sense and intelligence, and I do not see how anyone could doubt its correctness.'

'Nor I either,' assented the Fossil; 'and, upon my word, I really believe, like our enthusiastic friend, that, if the Sheikh gives us many more such explanations, I shall become an interested student of the Bible, and cease to regard it as a collection of fables.'

The General Nuisance sniffed in disdain at the Fossil's remarks, as she almost invariably did at everything that he said, and, in a characteristic spirit of opposition, she put her spoke into the wheel by saying :

'I do not accept your explanation at all, nor do I thank you for it. I much prefer to stick to my birds; and there seems to me one irreconcilable fact which completely refutes your theory. The Bible tells us that the Ravens brought Elijah bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening. Now, if, as you make out, these Ravens were men, they would certainly not have taken the trouble to make the journey twice a day, when they could easily have brought him sufficient supplies at one time to last him for a day or two at least.'

She glanced around the company with a triumphant air, evidently thinking that her objection was a crusher, and it certainly had made a considerable impression upon the minds of some of the tribe. But the next few words in which the Sheikh replied showed conclusively how untenable her objection was.

'The very passage which you quote is one of the most remarkable evidences of the historical accuracy of the Biblical record,' he said, 'and it is also a most potent argument in favour of the Ravens being the Bedouin Arabs. For in that hot and oppressive ravine, and at this great depth below the level of the sea, it is found quite impossible after the middle of the spring for any

food to keep good above half a day. The Arabs are obliged to cook all their provisions twice a day, every morning and every evening. Thus you see how this little incidental remark helps to prove, as I have said, not only the truth of the narrative, but also the fact that the Ravens were Arabs.'

'But how did the mistake creep into our Bible, then?' asked the Angel.

'That is very easy to understand,' replied the Sheikh; 'the translators of our English Bible knew nothing whatever about these Bedouin tribes and their nicknames. They saw the word *Orebim* in the Hebrew, and they knew that it meant Ravens. They could, therefore, do neither more nor less than they did do, and thus the erroneous idea has crept in.'

'And has no one ever suggested that the ravens were Arabs before now?' asked the Archbishop.

'Oh dear, yes,' said the Sheikh: 'as long ago as the fourth century of the Christian era St. Jerome, whose tomb we saw in the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem, and who was an excellent authority on all matters Palestinian, says distinctly that Elijah was fed by Arabs who were called Ravens.'

'It seems strange that the translators of our English Bible were not aware of that, does it not?' said the Enthusiast.

'I don't think they were so learned in patristic lore in those days as you may imagine,' remarked the Fossil, 'and probably none of the translators had ever come across the statement of Jerome. Even if they had, they were not unlikely to ignore it; for those ecclesiastics then, like many ecclesiastics now, dearly loved to make a miracle out of everything.'

He cast a sidelong glance of half-malicious merriment

at the Archbishop as he spoke, but the latter did not seem to take the hint.

'We have earlier authorities even than St. Jerome,' added the Sheikh; 'for the Jewish Rabbis themselves understood that there were no birds in the question, as we gather plainly from the Talmud and other Rabbinical writings. Indeed, I think we may now say, without any hesitation, that the birds may be consigned to the limbo of exploded myths.'

'I suppose it must be so,' rejoined the Archbishop, with a sigh; 'but I confess that I hardly like all these encroachments on our time-honoured beliefs.'

'You are not going to convince me,' stoutly asseverated the General Nuisance; 'I shall continue to cherish my faith in the miraculous providence of God.'

'A woman convinced against her will is of the same opinion still!' exclaimed Monte Carlo, laughing.

'And surely,' observed the Angel quietly, 'the overruling providence of God was manifested equally, whether the instruments of His providence were men or birds!'

'There is one point which has not yet been mentioned in connection with this subject,' observed the Fossil, 'and though it has never occurred to me before, I can see the force of it now. The Hebrew word "Oreb" is from a kindred root with the word "Arab," and, as I take it, the passage in dispute might very fairly be rendered: "The Arabs brought him his food every morning and evening."'

'Hear! hear!' ejaculated Monte Carlo; 'that seems a good one, if it is true.'

'There is no doubt about the soundness of your remark,' said the Sheikh to the Fossil; 'for, though Oreb and Arab are not exactly identical, they are from kindred roots, and are therefore sufficiently allied for all intents



and purposes ; and the Arabs received their name from their raven-like propensities.'

'I do so much enjoy these valuable elucidations of incidents in the Bible,' remarked the Enthusiast to the Angel, as they were descending the hill together.

'And so do I, more than I could express in words,' rejoined his companion ; 'scarcely a day passes that I do not thank God from my heart for the privilege of making my pilgrimage through this country under such favourable auspices as those which we enjoy.'

Once fairly on the plain and having remounted their animals, the Sheikh and his tribe lost no time in arriving at their encampment, where they found everything in readiness for their reception.

Thanks to the improvements of modern civilization, the art of camping through the Holy Land has been reduced to a state as nearly bordering on perfection as possible. Of course, those who expect to carry about with them all the luxuries and conveniences of their drawing-rooms and best bedrooms had better not attempt to undertake the journey at all. Such persons, indeed, should never travel abroad ; for they will, in the most favourable circumstances, be constantly finding themselves in unpleasant situations. But, short of this, there is everything that could in reason be expected to render a camping tour in Palestine most enjoyable and easy. The tents, as we have already intimated, are double-lined, in order to keep out the wind and the rain, and, except in storms of unusual violence, they may virtually be considered water-proof. Clean Oriental rugs spread upon the ground give to the interior of the tents the appearance of a carpeted floor. A washing-stand on trestles is provided with every necessary convenience, and hooks are suspended from the tent-pole for hanging up clothes. The

bedsteads themselves are ingeniously constructed of iron framework, which can be fixed up or taken to pieces in a minute. Across this iron framework a piece of canvas is stretched, with straps at either end to tighten it into its position. On this canvas the mattress is spread, and the beds are neatly made by the native waiters in attendance. If, after seven or eight hours in the saddle each day, one cannot sleep comfortably in such circumstances as these, one does not deserve to sleep at all. There are three sizes of sleeping-tents, to hold one, two, or three beds respectively ; but the Sheikh never arranged in any of his parties for more than two travellers to occupy one tent. A large double-poled booth in the centre of the encampment served as the dining-saloon and general sitting-room of the tribe, and next to this booth was the cooking-tent. The sleeping-tents were arranged in a semicircle on either side of these, the ladies' tents being on the one side, and the gentlemen's on the other.

It had been a matter requiring the most anxious consideration and diplomacy on the part of the Sheikh to arrange the occupants of the various tents, but finally they were disposed in the following manner : The General Nuisance and the Angel, who alone could be relied upon by the Sheikh to keep the peace with that uncertain individual, occupied the tent immediately adjoining the saloon on the further side from the cooking-tent. The Gusher and the Malaprop were companions in the tent on the other side of this. Adjoining the kitchen was a tent in which the Sheikh and the Fossil were domiciled. The Archbishop shared the next with Monte Carlo, and then came the Enthusiast and the Matter-of-fact Man. The Pessimist had expressly desired to be alone, and therefore a single tent for his accommodation completed the circle of the encampment.

Those who have never undergone the experience can scarcely imagine the skill and success with which a native cook who understands his business can turn out a dinner with the limited appliances at his disposal. Every evening the pilgrims were treated to excellent courses of soup, entrées, joints, sweets, cheese, and dessert, all served up in a manner which would have reflected credit on a London kitchen. Notwithstanding innumerable difficulties and drawbacks, the meals were always ready punctually at the appointed time, the waiters also discharging their duties in a thoroughly efficient and cheerful spirit. Indeed, the good temper and obliging willingness of all the native servants attached to the camp were the constant themes of admiration on the part of the majority of the tribe.

But even in the best-regulated institutions accidents and mishaps will sometimes occur, and, curiously enough, such a mishap did take place on this the very first night of their camping experience. By a strange fatality, too, the victim was the one of all the tribe to whom the Sheikh would have been least willing that it should happen—the poor, hypochondriacal, nervous Pessimist himself.

It was a perfectly ideal evening, without a breath of wind to disturb the calm serenity of the atmosphere; not a cloud obscured the bright, starlit skies, and so still and peaceful was the scene that the tribe had gathered together in the middle of the encampment, some on campstools and some reclining on the ground, after the conclusion of their evening meal; and there, for an hour or more, they had enjoyed themselves, discussing the associations of the romantic district in the midst of which they were encamped, and revelling in the novelty of their unwonted experience. The gray outline of the mountains of Gilead to the north-east, and of Moab to the south-east,

stood out clear and distinct against the evening sky, as though chiselled by the hand of some Titanic sculptor. Amongst the latter the Sheikh had pointed out the summit of Nebo, whence Moses had taken his first and only survey of the Promised Land ; and amongst the former, the lofty crest of Peniel, where Jacob had wrestled with the angel and halted on his thigh. The siege of Jericho by Joshua and his army had naturally come in for its share of the discussion, whilst the still waters of the Dead Sea, which shimmered like silver in the rays of the moon, now in its first quarter, had led to a conversation on the physical causes of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and of the other cities which had once stood upon its shores. The Sheikh had explained that the whole region had undoubtedly been subject to earthquakes and volcanic disturbances in the remote ages of the past, and he had also given it as his opinion, from researches which he had made, that petroleum wells in all probability existed beneath the surface along the shores of the Dead Sea. In his view of the case, the physical cause of the overwhelming destruction of the cities of the plain had been the outburst of a vast jet of petroleum or some similar mineral fluid, which, having been ignited either by lightning, by volcanic action, or by some other means, had literally rained down fire upon the devoted cities and calcined them out of existence.

In due course of time, with their minds filled with what they had been discussing, the members of the tribe retired to their various tents ; and the Sheikh was undressing in his tent—after having made some final arrangements with the camp servants, and having strictly enjoined the Bedouin escort Mohamed not to allow any disturbances to break in upon the midnight slumbers of the tribe—when suddenly the stillness of the evening air was rent

asunder by a piercing shriek proceeding from the Pessimist's tent.

The Sheikh immediately rushed out to inquire into the cause of this alarming outcry, and he found all the muleteers, the waiters, the cook, Mohamed, and Yusef hastening in a hubbub towards the tent from whose recesses the cry of distress had proceeded. One or two female heads in various stages of *déshabillé* appeared through openings in the doors of their tents, and little screams of frightened inquiry showed that the whole camp had been fully aroused. On entering the Pessimist's tent, the Sheikh could scarcely refrain from laughing at the ludicrous scene which presented itself. There was the poor Pessimist, with his head well up in the air at the head of the bed, and his toes on an equally high level at the foot, the rest of his body being tightly jammed in in the form of a concave semicircle between the iron framework of his bedstead, into which he had sunk—mattress, bedclothes, and all. The Sheikh at once saw what had happened. The canvas upon which the mattress lay had split from head to foot, and let the Pessimist down just as he was dosing off to sleep. The terrified man, however, literally thought that an earthquake had happened, and that he had been swallowed up alive. When the Sheikh bent over him and stretched out his hand in order to assist him to arise from his uncomfortable position, the Pessimist, in a voice trembling with nervous emotion, cried out :

‘Where are you ? Are you above-ground ?’

‘Above-ground !’ exclaimed the Sheikh, laughing ; ‘of course I am.’

‘But has not an earthquake happened ? Am I not swallowed up ?’ gasped the unfortunate traveller, still scarcely able to assure himself that he was safe and sound.

‘Swallowed up by an earthquake ! Nonsense ! nothing

of the kind,' replied the Sheikh ; ' the only thing that has happened is that your bed has given way, and the accident can be immediately repaired.'

Meanwhile, some of the camp servants, with more zeal than gentleness, had extricated the poor fellow from his comical dilemma, whilst one of the muleteers had rushed out, and now reappeared, bearing with him a large coil of rope. This rope they wound backwards and forwards across the iron framework of the bedstead over and over again, until they had made a strong temporary support for the mattress, and then, replacing this, and arranging the bedclothes upon it, they hoisted the Pessimist on to his bed, covering him up with the blankets and sheet. After this they retired, with oft-repeated assurances in the Arabic language, which of course he did not understand, that he would now sleep as soundly and as comfortably as a king. The Sheikh spoke a few words of comfort and encouragement, expressing his regret at the unfortunate accident and his hope that he would now settle down to sleep. Having wished him good-night, he returned to his tent, and completed his toilet preparatory to his own night's repose. Before getting into bed, it occurred to him that it would be kind to go back to the Pessimist's tent once more, and see whether he had in any measure recovered from the nervous shock which he had sustained.

On entering the tent, a sight almost as ludicrous as that which had first met his gaze aroused within him a feeling of mingled amusement and pity. There was the Pessimist crouching on his bed, with his chin tucked in between his knees, shivering like an aspen-leaf, whilst all the bedclothes lay huddled in confusion on the floor.

' Oh, come ! come !' exclaimed the Sheikh in a cheery voice, ' this will never do. Let me make you comfortable.'

With that he proceeded to cover him up neatly with the sheet, blankets, and counterpane, tucking him well in on all sides, whilst, with his teeth chattering from nervous excitement, the Pessimist whined :

‘O—h ! I should be so grateful if you would do anything to make me a little less utterly miserable and wretched than I feel at this present moment. O—h, o—h, I am so unhappy and distressed !’

‘A cheerful prospect for the commencement of a three weeks’ camping tour,’ thought the Sheikh to himself, as he finally let down the curtain of the Pessimist’s tent and returned to his own comfortable bed. ‘I hope to goodness that we are not going to have any more contre-temps of this nature.’

He laid down on his bed and tried to go to sleep, but it was a long time before he could succeed in doing so, for the picture of the Pessimist in his mind’s eye, combined with the stentorian snoring of his tent-companion, the Fossil, effectually overcame his efforts to slumber.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE DEAD SEA

A summary awakening—A swim in Eliaha's Spring—The sons of the prophets—A discussion on miracles—A census of the tribe—Apples of Sodom—A Rabble by the sea—Unpleasant bathing—A 'female soldier.'

NEXT morning, at five o'clock, the whole camp was aroused by an unearthly din. Jumping out of bed, and hastily raising the canvas door of his tent, the Enthusiast witnessed, to his wonder and amusement, the cause of the mysterious row.

A procession of the camp servants was slowly parading around the tents, each man lustily doing his part to add to the musical discord. At the head marched Elias-el-Ashi, the cook, with a large tin bowl in one hand and his charcoal tongs in the other, with the latter of which he was beating the former as if his very life depended upon his exertions. Behind him came the two waiters, Salim and Abdullah, the one hammering on a large brass tray with a tent-peg, and the other clashing together two tin plates, like cymbals. Then followed the whole retinue of muleteers, each one armed with a set of mule-bells, from six to ten for every person, and every bell apparently at jarring discord with the rest. The rear of the procession was brought up by Yusef, who was marching slowly and majestically along, crying out incessantly at the top



of his voice, which could be heard clear and distinct above the clamour of the music :

‘Time to get up ! Time to get up !’

Thrice in this manner they paraded round the enclosure of the camp before they had satisfied themselves that they had sufficiently aroused the tribe.

This was the daily reveille throughout the camping tour, Sundays alone excepted.

On this first morning the effect was startling, and almost everyone was dressed and in the saloon tent even before the breakfast was ready. The comments upon the summary manner in which they had been awoken from their slumbers were of a varied nature.

‘By Jove !’ exclaimed Monte Carlo, as he entered the saloon fully equipped for his day’s ride over the Plain of Jericho to the Dead Sea and the Jordan, ‘I can quite believe now that the walls of ancient Jericho were overthrown at the blast of trumpets and the shouting of the Israelites. Our tent was very nearly blown down this morning by that awful hurly-burly.’

‘Do you know,’ remarked the Archbishop seriously, ‘I was dreaming about ancient Jericho, and I thought in my vision that I was marching with Joshua at the head of his army around the city walls. When I was awoken by that discordant noise, I literally was under the impression for a moment that the sound proceeded from the trumpets and the shouting, and that it really was the signal for the destruction of Jericho.’

‘That accounts, then, for your jumping up in your bed and screaming out : “The sword of the Lord and of Joshua !”’ returned Monte Carlo.

‘No ; did I really do that ?’ asked his reverence.

‘You did indeed, I can assure you without joking,’ replied his tent-companion ; ‘and at first I was alarmed

lest the sudden tumult had unhinged your senses, until I saw that you were still more than half asleep.'

'It was enough to unhinge anyone's senses,' grumpily observed the General Nuisance; 'I call it simply disgraceful that the peaceful repose of decent people should be rudely disturbed in that uproarious manner.'

'Oh, now, I thought it a delightfully novel and enjoyable experience—I did indeed,' said the Gusher.

'Novel certainly, but scarcely enjoyable,' dryly remarked the Fossil.

'At any rate,' observed the Matter-of-fact Man, 'it appears to have answered its purpose, for here we all are in very good time, and I doubt if we should have mustered so punctually otherwise.'

'I was so sorry to hear of your unfortunate accident last night,' said the Angel kindly to the Pessimist, who sat beside her at breakfast, and who looked more than ever the picture of misery; 'I hope you have recovered by this time from the shock which you received.'

'Oh, terrible! terrible!' he whimpered; 'my nerves are completely shattered. It was bad enough to have been alarmed by the fear of an earthquake, and it kept me awake almost all the night; but to have been startled from the broken sleep into which I had only just fallen by that horrible and diabolical noise this morning is too much—too much! I fear that I shall never get over it, and I repent greatly of having ever ventured to travel with such a disorderly and disturbing crew.'

'I would not take it so seriously if I were you,' answered the Angel gently; 'it is nothing, after all, now that you know what it means. You will soon get accustomed to the sights and sounds of our camp-life, and I predict that you will thoroughly enjoy yourself once you have recovered from this slight shock to your nervous system.'

This well-meant remark scarcely produced its desired effect, for the wretched man was in a frame of mind which persisted in being discontented and miserable. He only replied :

‘ Nothing will induce me to enjoy myself so long as I am exposed to rotten beds by night, rude shocks in the morning, and disgusting smells all day.’

Having thus unburdened his mind, he proceeded in gloomy silence to eat the heartiest breakfast at the table.

‘ I say, Sheikh !’ exclaimed the Enthusiast from the other end of the table, ‘ that was a glorious swim that Monte Carlo and I had this morning in that reservoir, or whatever you call it, just beyond our encampment.’

‘ It was indeed !’ echoed Monte Carlo ; ‘ the water was so fresh and clear. It seems to come from a very copious spring welling out of the ground at the base of the mound which rises above our tents.’

‘ That,’ replied the Sheikh, ‘ is now called “ Ain-es-Sultan,” or “ the Sultan’s Fountain,” because it, as well as the land around it, is the private property of the Sultan of Turkey. But it also has a sacred association, for it is supposed, and probably correctly supposed, to be the place referred to in the second chapter of the Second Book of Kings. In consequence of this, it is commonly known as “ Elisha’s Spring.”’

‘ Let me see, I forget the circumstance to which you allude,’ said Monte Carlo.

‘ The men of Jericho complained that the water was unwholesome with which their city was supplied, and Elisha is reported to have removed the impurities by putting some salt into the spring whence the water flowed,’ responded the Sheikh. ‘ This has from time immemorial been regarded as the spring in question, and there seems every reason to consider it as such, for it

certainly must have been the source whence the people of Jericho drew the water for their domestic purposes.'

'Now, I suppose that was a miracle, was it not?' said the Angel.

'There is no reason why we should go out of our way to make a miracle of it,' replied the Sheikh. 'In all probability it was a simple case of the natural purification of the water by the admixture of the proper chemical salts. There was doubtless some ordinary cause for the poisoning of the water, which was easily removed by the application of some equally ordinary remedy.'

'That seems to me to beg the question,' rejoined the Archbishop; 'for how could Elisha have known the proper remedy without miraculous inspiration? There were no doctors or chemists in those days who knew anything whatever about physics or science.'

'That is just the point upon which you and so many other people are mistaken,' answered the Sheikh. 'There is every reason to believe, both from what we read in the Bible and from the testimony of the Hebrew Rabbinical authors, that physics and science were far better understood by a certain class of people in the time of the Jewish Kings than is generally imagined. The great mass of the people, of course, knew nothing about the laws of Nature and of science, for they were not educated as are the children of our day; but for all that, there were universities, colleges, and schools in Palestine at least as far back as the times of Elisha and Elijah, where students were instructed in various branches of knowledge and learning.'

'Was that so?' exclaimed the Archbishop; 'this is quite news to me.'

'Have you never read about the sons of the prophets in your Bible?' rejoined the Fossil, whose knowledge of the Hebrew history enabled him to appreciate the truth

of the Sheikh's observations. 'They were simply the students of these colleges and universities.'

'I have always regarded them as being trained solely for the prophetic office,' replied the Archbishop, 'and I did not suppose that they were engaged in any secular education.'

'Nevertheless, with all due respect to you, they undoubtedly were,' said the Sheikh; 'and the prophets of whom we read were frequently men who were distinguished, not merely for their piety and deep spiritual discernment, but also for their knowledge of physical science, and of the workings of natural laws and forces. Many of them were physicians and doctors of no ordinary skill, and of these none attained to greater eminence in their profession than Elisha.'

'It does sound so strange to hear you talk about Elisha as a physician,' remarked the Angel. 'It is so contrary to one's ordinary notions on the subject.'

'And so profane, I think,' added the General Nuisance in an undertone.

'Strange or not, it is true,' answered the Sheikh; 'and the sooner you grasp this fact, the sooner you will be able to understand his so-called miracles. Almost without exception, you will find, upon intelligent study, these are merely the results of the application of the laws of Nature and science, which to the ignorant and superstitious people appeared in those days, just exactly as they do now to the natives of these Oriental countries, to be the working of superhuman miracles.'

'How fond you are of trying to discredit the miracles of the Bible!' exclaimed the General Nuisance. 'I really cannot for the life of me see how you can consistently do so and retain your position as a minister of the Anglican Church.'

‘Pardon me,’ he replied courteously, and without deigning by his manner to show that he noticed the rudeness of the remark ; ‘so far from discrediting the records of the Bible, I venture to affirm that no one here present is more firmly convinced than myself of the accuracy and truth of those records. I have frequently stated, during the course of this tour, that all my investigations and researches in this country have confirmed my faith in the historical accounts of the Old Testament in a marvellous degree, and I thought that I had made my position perfectly clear. But, in order that there may be no mistake for the future, let me repeat, once for all, that the fact of these accounts being supposed to be records of miraculous events has arisen from a want of proper understanding and appreciation of the state of society, and of the modes of thought and expression which prevailed in this country at the time when those records were written. The events themselves, when rightly understood, are found to have been for the most part simple incidents resulting from the ordinary laws of Nature ; but by the ignorant natives, who knew nothing about science or physics, they were regarded as supernatural wonders. It is exactly the same thing at the present day. The modern Arabic name for a doctor is precisely identical with that for a prophet ; or, in other words, a doctor is regarded by the natives as a prophet and miracle-worker simply because the common people are ignorant of natural laws, and therefore imagine that a doctor is supernaturally endowed with wisdom from on high. This notion has been encouraged by the more unscrupulous of the learned, for their own personal aggrandisement and renown ; and in all ages, out in these Oriental countries, there have been people who have deliberately traded on the ignorance

and superstition of the natives, and led them to believe that what has been due to the simplest natural causes has really been the result of supernatural magic. Hence has arisen the belief in magicians, astrologers, and soothsayers which we find so universal in all Oriental books.'

'But I hope you do not class the Hebrew prophets among these unscrupulous charlatans, do you?' interposed the Archbishop.

'Most certainly not,' replied the Sheikh; 'nor will you find, if you study your Bible carefully, that Elisha and his fellow-prophets claim their works as miracles. The incidents are narrated in a plain and simple way, without comment or assertion as to any miraculous agency, and it is only the interpretation which has been put on the incidents by readers and students of after-ages which is accountable for the miraculous idea.'

'Why, then, are the incidents recorded at all, if there was nothing miraculous or supernatural about them?' asked the General Nuisance.

'Simply because, in most instances, there was a moral lesson to be drawn from them,' replied the Sheikh; 'and this moral lesson has only too often been overlooked in the erroneous glamour of the supposititious miracle.'

'Besides,' said the Angel, whose observations were generally marked by sound common-sense, 'these incidents are almost always of more or less interest in themselves, apart altogether from any question as to their miraculous nature, to say nothing of the valuable insight that they often give us into the manners and customs of the ancient Orientals.'

'That is so, I grant you,' replied the Archbishop; 'still,

for all that, I like to cling to my old-fashioned beliefs in the miracles.'

'*Chacun a son goût,*' murmured the Fossil contemptuously.

'I do not think that even yet you quite understand my position,' said the Sheikh, addressing himself more directly to the Archbishop; 'I do not for a moment deny or impugn miracles, if by miracles you mean incidents which occur beyond our present means of explanation, and, of course, I should be a fool to do so in the light of everyday experience. Nor do I doubt that God is constantly working, either directly or, more probably, through the agency of unseen intelligences and powers in such manners as appear supernatural to us. Hence result events which we call miraculous; but these are liable to occur quite as frequently now as in the days of old. What I am so anxious to impress upon you, with regard to the incidents related in the Bible, is that there is no use in going out of our way to insist upon their miraculous nature when a plain and simple natural cause can equally well explain their occurrence. The more clearly we realize this point, the more real will become the Bible to us, and the more intelligent will be our faith in the Word of God.'

'That I am perfectly ready to concede,' answered the Archbishop; 'but, to return to Elisha and his wonderful works, surely you will be candid enough to acknowledge that the cure of Naaman, the Syrian leper, can be explained in no way short of a miracle.'

'I am very glad that you have mentioned that case,' replied the Sheikh, 'and you have but anticipated me in doing so; for I was about to quote that very example as one of the most excellent arguments of my proposition.'



The story of Naaman and his cure is one of those typical incidents in the Bible which are seized upon by scoffers and sceptics as a splendid mark for their shafts of ridicule and objections ; and, on the other hand, it is one which is accepted by the faithful solely because they find it in the Bible. Both classes agree to regard it as the record of a miracle, whereas, as a matter of fact, the whole narrative is as simple a case of disease and remedy as you would find in the pages of any medical journal of the present day. There is nothing whatever supernatural or miraculous about it ; no intimation is given in the account that the writer of the record so regarded it ; and the miraculous halo which has gathered around it has been merely due to what I am so constantly insisting upon—namely, the want of proper understanding of the conditions of life, the modes of thought and expression, and the intellectual status of the mass of the people in the country and ages wherein the Bible was originally written.'

'You astound me!' exclaimed the Archbishop, with open eyes ; 'and I am quite at a loss to conceive how you can account for Naaman's cure upon purely natural grounds.'

'I hope that I shall be able with complete success to clear away your doubt upon this matter,' answered the Sheikh ; 'but as the explanation in all its details will necessarily occupy some considerable time, and as everything is now ready for our start upon our day's excursion, we must postpone our consideration of this interesting subject till a more suitable occasion. Our programme for to-day will be as follows : We shall ride through the dense foliage which covers this portion of the plain at the present season of the year to the modern village of Eriha, as the present Jericho is called. Thence we shall strike southwards across the plain, and make directly

for the northern shores of the Dead Sea, which are about eight miles distant from Eriha. We shall linger there for about an hour, allowing time for those of you who desire it to retire to a distance and have a bathe. After that we shall remount our horses, and ride another five miles in a north-easterly direction to the fords of the Jordan. There we shall spend some three or four hours, for our midday meal and rest, after which we shall return to our camp here, following as nearly as possible the line which the Israelites took after crossing the Jordan on their march to Jericho. On our way we shall pause for a few minutes on the site of Gilgal, which, you will remember, was the first halting-place of the Israelites on their entrance into the Promised Land, and traces of which still remain.'

'As we shall spend three hours on the banks of the Jordan, and as the Jordan was the scene of Naaman's cure, I should suggest that it will be a very good opportunity for you to give us your promised explanation of that incident during our halt this afternoon,' observed the Angel.

'A very good idea,' replied the Sheikh ; 'and I shall be happy to fall in with your wishes. And now, as I see that the muleteers are impatient for us to be off, we had better mount into our saddles without any further delay.'

At this moment the Matter-of-fact Man, who had been absent from the saloon tent for the last quarter of an hour, returned with a pencil and paper in hand, and full of some information which he was desirous of imparting at once to his fellow-travellers.

'I have been making a list of all the human beings and animals comprised in our party,' he said ; 'and here is the result of my investigations :

## HUMAN BEINGS.

Female members of tribe	-	-	4
Male members of tribe	-	-	7
Cooks and waiters	-	-	3
Bedouin escort	-	-	1
Yusef	-	-	1
Muleteers and camp servants	-	-	22
			—
Total	-	-	38

## ANIMALS.

Horses	-	-	18
Mules	-	-	22
Donkeys	-	-	5
			—
Total	-	-	45

So that you see there are no less than eighty-three mouths to be fed every day.'

'Upon my word, Sheikh,' exclaimed Monte Carlo, when the Matter-of-fact Man had gravely read out this list in the tone of an auctioneer or a town-crier, 'you need the qualifications of the commander-in-chief of an army to manage the conduct of such a party as this.'

'Yes, indeed,' rejoined the Archbishop; 'our Sheikh must be a very Moses himself.'

The freshness of the morning was delightfully exhilarating as the Sheikh rode forth at the head of his tribe, just as the hands of his watch indicated the hour of seven. All nature seemed to be conspiring to render the commencement of their day's excursion enjoyable. The rays of the sun had not yet had time to become too powerful, and they were tempered by a cool and refreshing breeze. The path lay through a succession of thorny copses, the foliage of which was clothed with the brightest

green of springtide. Innumerable creepers with brilliant flowers covered the prickly bushes, and the songs of birds were heard on every side. Every now and then the narrow and winding bridle-path passed through a shallow stream of clear and sparkling water, which was very grateful to the horses' feet. Conspicuous amongst the foliage was a small shrub on which hung clusters of yellowish-green fruit, somewhat resembling in outward appearance the crab-apple or the medlar. These shrubs were very abundant, and the Enthusiast asked the Sheikh whether they were good to eat.

'No,' he replied; 'those are the notorious apples of Sodom, which are said to crumble away at the touch. This is not strictly accurate; but, if you will keep these for some little time, you will find that as they ripen the insides wither up, and when you open them they are nothing but dust.'

So saying, he stooped down from his horse, and gathered a few of the apples from a bush, and these he handed to his fair companion. Most of the other men in the tribe followed his example, and soon all the ladies and gentlemen had their pockets well filled with the apples of Sodom.

Having passed through Eriha, where there was nothing of interest to detain them, they emerged upon the broad and level plain, with the glorious range of the Mountains of Moab on their left, and the hill-country of Judæa rising away to their right. Before them stretched clear and distinct the deep blue waters of the Dead Sea, apparently almost close at hand. In fact, the Enthusiast, the Gusher, and Monte Carlo dashed forward at a hard gallop, expecting to reach its shores in a very short time; but they soon discovered the deceptive nature of that clear and crystal climate. The farther they rode,

the more the waters of the Dead Sea seemed to recede from them, and it was not until they had been fully two hours in the saddle that they finally reached its pebbly beach.

When they did so, a curious and unexpected scene burst upon their view. The Sheikh had prepared his followers for a quiet and peaceful solitude, and he had given it as his opinion that one of the greatest charms of the Dead Sea lay in its absolute retirement from the bustle and turmoil of life. But, instead of this lonely and sequestered calm which they had been led to expect, they found as noisy a rabble upon the margin of the inland sea as if they had been at Brighton or Margate. An enterprising tourist-agent had chartered a steamer for a cruise in the Mediterranean Sea, and had filled it with some four hundred passengers, more or less, who had been induced to take the trip by the absurdly low terms which he had offered. It was altogether a cheap and nasty affair, and the trippers themselves were evidently of the tenth-rate class of tourists. In the course of their peregrinations, they had arrived off the port of Jaffa, and four days had been allowed them wherein to visit the Holy Land. Had they been sensible, they would have devoted the whole of those four days to Jerusalem alone, and then they would have exhausted not one-half of its treasures. But, being merely tourists, and not travellers in the truest sense of the term, their one idea was to get as much as they could for their money, and to be able on their return home to say that they had seen as many places as possible. Therefore, nothing would satisfy them but that they must devote three days out of the four to a hasty rush down to the Plain of Jericho, in order that they might catch a glimpse of the Dead Sea and the Jordan. Accordingly, the enterprising tourist-agent had hastily

chartered in Jerusalem all the wretched hacks and worn-out animals which the ordinary agencies and dragomans had rejected, and, having hired rotten and disused saddles, he had mounted his rabble upon these miserable steeds. Putting them in charge of half a dozen dragomans who were out of work, he had packed them off on their downward journey ; and when the Sheikh and his tribe reached the shores of the Dead Sea, they found this crowd already in possession.

They were, of course, of both sexes, and of almost every age from seventeen to seventy. The costumes in which the majority of them were clad were fearful and wonderful indeed, such as might have been seen on Hampstead Heath or at Herne Bay on an August Bank Holiday. Several of the grown-up men and women had already divested themselves of their shoes and stockings, and were actually wading in the Dead Sea. They did not, however, keep that little game up long, for the terribly sharp pebbles which form the bed of the sea near the shore soon drove them to resume their ordinary protections for their feet. Some few of the more sensible of the men had retired to a spot some half a mile distant from the main body of the crowd, and were enjoying a regular bathe in the saline and buoyant waters of the famous sea.

Not that a bathe in the Dead Sea is the most enjoyable of all recreations. Most visitors to its shores are moved with the impulse to throw aside their clothes and plunge into its blue and inviting-looking bosom ; but most of those who do so repent. Everyone knows that the specific gravity of the lake is so great that one cannot sink in it, but everyone does not know that there is generally so strong an undercurrent that one cannot stand in it. No sooner has one plunged into the water than one is whipped

off one's feet, and goes bobbing helplessly about like a wretched cork. In the effort to regain one's footing and to get back to the shore, one's feet and shins are barked by the jagged stones and pebbles ; and when at length one does emerge from its treacherous bosom, with the lower limbs bleeding and torn, one becomes aware of a horribly tingling and burning sensation in eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, and almost every pore of the skin, from the brine and bitumen which have penetrated everywhere. Unless great care is taken, the bather in the Dead Sea is liable to an eruption which breaks out all over his body, and which is commonly known as the 'Dead Sea rash.' The best antidote to this is to hurry across the plain as quickly as possible to the river Jordan, and to take a second plunge therein. The soft and muddy waters of that sacred but dirty stream will effectually remove the salt that has encrusted the body.

Two adventurous photographers, with an eye to business, had followed the rabble down from Jerusalem, and they were now reaping an abundant and well-deserved harvest for their enterprise and activity. The shores of the Dead Sea are lined with logs and branches of trees, which have been brought down from the wooded heights of the mountains of Galilee by the rushing waters of the Jordan and deposited in the lake. The strong back-currents have carried these limbs to the shores, where the waves engendered by the winter storms have washed them high and dry on land once more. During their passage through the Dead Sea they have become denuded of their bark and of every sign of life, and there they lie on the stony beach in all manner of fantastic shapes, grim and gruesome evidences of the destructive nature of the salts with which the 'Bahr Lut' (or Sea of Lot), as the Arabs call that dreary expanse of water, is impregnated.

Some of these barkless branches and trunks were utilized by the trippers for the posing of picturesque groups, and here the photographers were busily at work, immortalizing group after group with unremitting assiduity.

The six unfortunate dragomans in charge of the party were armed each one of them with a primitive kind of horn, on which from time to time they blew the shrillest and most discordant of sounds, apparently in the futile hope of keeping the disorderly rabble in subjection.

To complete the scene, some ten or a dozen Bedouin Arabs, simple children of the desert, attracted to the spot by this unwonted invasion of their peaceful haunts of solitude, were standing in a cluster about fifty yards away from the centre of the hubbub, and were surveying the scene with a comical expression upon their faces—an expression which plainly indicated confused sensations of wonder, amusement, indignation, and contempt.

Amongst the crowd of holiday-makers there was one figure which made itself conspicuous by its grotesque ungainliness, and which soon riveted the attention of one of the Arabs. It was a tall, gaunt specimen, in the most pronounced form, of the 'New Woman.' This remarkable female, who stood at least six feet in her stockings, had on her head a two-peaked cap made of a checked woollen material. A full stiff white linen shirt enclosed her breast, and a flaring scarlet tie done up as a sailor's knot was pinned in front of it. She wore a black velvet shooting-jacket with pockets at the sides, and her lower limbs were encased in a pair of gray plush knickerbockers, beneath which were thick brown stockings, with leather gaiters around them. A stout pair of riding-boots, and a hunting-whip in her hand, completed her truly marvellous get-up. She was very emphatic in her demands to be photographed; and, when she had



succeeded in appropriating one of the two photographers, she seized hold of a dragoman and made him station himself beside her, close to a dead log of wood, where she struck an imposing attitude, as she imagined, and ordered the operator to fire away.

The Bedouin Arab, who had particularly noticed her, now gradually and diffidently sidled nearer to the spot where she stood ; and, having slowly paraded around her from a safe distance and surveyed her from every point of the compass, he came up to Yusef, who was standing just behind the Sheikh and the rest of the tribe. They had alighted from their horses at some little distance from the rabble, and were looking on, like the Arabs themselves, with mingled amusement and disgust. The Sheikh, who, of course, was thoroughly acquainted with the Arabic language, was highly entertained at the following conversation which he overheard between the Bedouin and Yusef :

The Bedouin, pointing to the New Woman : ' What is that—he or she ?'

Yusef, laconically : ' She.'

The Bedouin, after a pause, during which he again inspected the curiosity : ' What is she ?'

Yusef, without a moment's hesitation : ' A female soldier.'

This appeared to satisfy the Arab, for he at once returned to the place where the rest of his fellows were standing, and the Sheikh observed him reporting the prodigy to them, as he could tell by his significant gestures.

At length all those who desired to have themselves immortalized amid their novel and romantic surroundings had been duly photographed ; the bathers returned to the main body ; the dragomans tooted on their horns ;

a general scramble was made for the horses, and the rabble mounted their steeds amidst a perfect Babel of confusion. The leading dragoman headed for the fords of the Jordan; the troop followed him in disorderly and straggling array; and soon the shores of the Dead Sea were restored to their customary quietude, and the Sheikh and his tribe were left in peace.

## CHAPTER XX

### NAAMAN'S WONDERFUL CURE

The Vale of Siddim—The Crossing of the Jordan—Mud baths for leprosy—The two mules' burdens of earth—Further explanations.

THEY lingered on the shores of the Dead Sea longer than the Sheikh had originally intended, in order to allow time for the rabble to clear away from the banks of the Jordan before their arrival there.

But the time was not wasted, for there was plenty to see and to talk about in the physical associations and surroundings of the place. During the last portion of their ride across the plain from Jericho they had passed through a weird and desolate region, of a most remarkable geological formation, totally unlike anything that most of them had ever seen before. The soil was of a light grayish colour, and composed of a material which, when dry, as it was at that time, was exceedingly friable and crumbly. The ground was split up into a vast quantity of small rounded hillocks, conical in shape, and fantastically eaten away in their slanting sides, as if by the action of water in former ages. When taken up in the hand and carefully examined, the earth gave the appearance of having been at some time or another thoroughly calcined by exposure to a tremendous heat. Though not without a certain grim picturesqueness of

its own, the region could scarcely be anything but forbidding and melancholy in its impression on the traveller.

'The only districts in the world where I have ever seen anything resembling that,' observed Monte Carlo, when one of the party had alluded to the curious formation in the course of conversation, 'are in the United States. There is something resembling the formation of this region in Colorado; and there is another tract of country almost exactly like it near the Missouri River in North Dakota. I once was nearly lost in the latter place; for there had been a great deal of rain, and the soil had become so slimy and sticky that my horse extricated himself from it with the utmost difficulty.'

'You would find this tract just the same in wet weather,' replied the Sheikh; 'and there is little doubt that these are the very "slime-pits" referred to in the Book of Genesis.'

'I do not know the passage to which you allude,' said the Angel; 'would you mind telling us the connection in which it occurs?'

'Certainly,' replied the Sheikh; 'you will find it, I think, so far as I recollect, in the fourteenth chapter of that book. It is there related that a great battle took place, in the time of Abraham, between certain Kings of the Euphrates Valley, of whom Chedorlaomer, King of Elam, was the most renowned, on the one hand, and the Kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, and the other cities of the plain, on the other; and that this battle occurred in "the Vale of Siddim, which is the Salt Sea." That, of course, means this plain on the borders of the Dead Sea; and we are distinctly told that the Vale of Siddim was full of slime-pits.'

'That, then, must have been the Vale of Siddim through which we have just passed,' remarked the Archbishop;

and, if so, then I suppose that the city of Sodom itself must have been situated somewhere very close to the spot where we are now standing.'

'Undoubtedly so,' answered the Sheikh; 'and, if you will remember, I told you last evening that I believe the physical cause of the destruction of Sodom and the other cities was the outburst of some natural oil-jets from the earth, such as petroleum or something of the same kind, which, becoming ignited, burnt up the cities and the district around. You noticed, as we rode through, the evidences of calcination in some bygone period, and this seems to corroborate my theory.'

'What are all those curious black masses floating about on the surface of the sea?' asked the Matter-of-fact Man.

'Bitumen,' replied the Sheikh. 'The whole neighbourhood teems with this natural product, out of which, if this country were under a decent Government, a very lucrative trade could doubtless be made.'

There was nothing of special interest in the course of their five miles' ride over the plain from the Dead Sea to the particular spot on the banks of the Jordan to which visitors are generally taken, and where, in certain seasons of the year, it is possible to ford over the river.

At this spot the scene is very beautiful. The banks of the river are fringed with broad belts of tamarisk, oleanders, and willows; and, in the midst of these dense groves, the undergrowth of shrub and the tangled clumps of reeds render the margin of the stream almost impenetrable, except at the open space which has been cleared away for ages to enable travellers to cross the Jordan by the ford. It is said that the wild boar and the leopard haunt these jungles, but, if so, they diligently

keep out of the way of travellers, for no one ever sees them. The river runs with a very rapid course past this spot, and its swirling eddies, as it rushes round the many winding bends of its banks, render it a dangerous thing to venture far from the shore, if one purposes to take a bathe. The banks are deep, muddy, and soft, and one must be very careful how one attempts to wade into the waters at all.

The mob of tourists had already abandoned the spot by the time that the Sheikh and his tribe arrived upon the scene ; but they had left many tokens of their visit behind in the shape of broken bottles, orange-peel, and innumerable pieces of paper bags. They had evidently taken their hasty mid-day meal there, before they had been hurried on by their impatient native guides. Salim and Yusef soon found a comparatively clean and cool place under the shade of a gigantic tamarisk, close to the borders of the river, and here they immediately proceeded to spread the lunch. Meanwhile the Sheikh pointed out to the tribe the precise locality where the Israelites were supposed to have crossed the Jordan.

‘ Now, that story is one which is calculated to tax one’s credulity,’ observed the Fossil, whose tone, however, was by no means so scoffing as it had sometimes been heretofore when he referred to Biblical incidents ; ‘ but I have no doubt that, if we understood it, there is some purely simple natural cause to account for the sudden drying up of the stream.’

‘ Most undoubtedly there is,’ answered the Sheikh ; ‘ and, what is more, I can explain it to you in a very few words. You will observe that the Jordan flows between high muddy banks, and that its course is both winding and rapid. These features are even more noticeable at some other portions of its course than they are here.

Indeed, so tortuous is the stream, that if you were to get into a canoe at the place where it flows out of the Sea of Galilee, as "Rob-Roy" Macgregor did, and follow its course to the Dead Sea, you would traverse more than double the distance that you would do if you mounted a horse at the same spot and rode straight down the valley to the same destination.'

'That reminds me of an answer which one of my school-fellows sent up at an examination,' interposed Monte Carlo. 'The question on the paper had been, "Describe the course of the river Jordan." The chap's answer was: "The Jordan is a river which runs straight down the middle of the map of Palestine; but, if you look at it very closely, it *wiggles about*."'

'And a capital answer, too,' replied the Sheikh, laughing, 'for the Jordan does so nearly run down the middle of the map that the two portions of Eastern and Western Palestine are almost exactly equal in area.'

'But what has that to do with the Israelites crossing the Jordan?' said the General Nuisance.

'We are coming to that now,' replied the Sheikh. 'Owing to the rapid speed of the Jordan and to the sharp windings of its banks, as well as to the soft and muddy nature of their soil, the river, as it rushes along, works deep holes in the banks in many places, and gradually undermines the overhanging earth. Every now and then, and especially when the earth has become sodden with heavy rains, a collapse of this overhanging portion takes place, and the whole mass falls into the river. There is one spot where the banks attain to a considerable height—that is to say, over thirty feet on either side—and, when they become undermined and give way, they completely choke up the bed of the river for a short time and form a natural dam, until the weight of the waters coming

down from above bursts through the obstruction again. Meanwhile, of course, the water of the river below this temporary dam flows along on its course to the Dead Sea, and very soon the bed of the river is left dry, except in the deeper holes. Now, the place where these banks are the highest, and where this natural obstruction would most readily occur, is identically that which is expressly mentioned in the Bible as the place where the waters were cut off at the time when the Israelites crossed the river. It is there stated that the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon a heap far away at "the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan, and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people passed over right against Jericho." There are two ancient sites, the one on the eastern and the other on the western side of the river, close to the place where the banks are the highest and muddiest; and these are called respectively at the present day Damieh and Zarthan. Damieh is, beyond doubt, the city Adam; whilst Zarthan is, of course, Zaretan. They are situated nearly thirty miles north of this spot where we now are, and the description of the Bible narrative identifies them precisely. The natural phenomenon which thus rendered the passage of the Israelites over the Jordan easy has occurred many times since then; and there is a remarkable case in point mentioned by a mediæval writer where another army was enabled to cross the river in almost exactly the same way as the Israelites under Joshua. In the latter instance, as in the former, the people, not understanding the natural cause, attributed the fortunate occurrence to a miracle wrought for their own special benefit.'

*Cf. Sir  
Loderick  
Brockle*

'Your explanation is very interesting, and I have no



doubt that it is correct, as far as it goes,' remarked the Archbishop; 'but you do not say anything about the fact that this phenomenon occurred just exactly at the moment when the Israelites arrived on the margin of the river. Surely, we must admit that the coincidence was so remarkable that it can scarcely be considered other than miraculous.'

'Why, my dear sir,' replied the Sheikh in astonishment, 'I should hardly have expected that observation from so close a Bible student as yourself. So far from the occurrence happening just at the time when the Israelites reached the Jordan, they had been encamped on the plain over there on the eastern side of the river for some considerable time, for that is the Plain of Shittim, where the host was stationed when Balak summoned Balaam from the Euphrates valley to curse them. There they would have undoubtedly remained for an indefinite period longer had it not been for the lucky—or shall we say providential?—collapse of the banks in the manner which I have described, which gave them their long-looked-for opportunity of marching into the Promised Land.'

'Would this collapse be likely to take place at the particular season of the year when the Israelites are said to have crossed the Jordan?' asked the Angel.

'Precisely at that very season,' answered the Sheikh; 'and one could scarcely imagine a more direct corroboration of the accuracy of the Bible record than the incidental observation that is made therein, fixing the time when the event occurred. We read that it was at the time of harvest, when the Jordan overfloweth her banks—that is to say, in the month of April or the latter end of March, when the harvest does take place upon the Plain of Jericho, and when the Jordan is full to over-

flowing, owing to the vast body of water which is brought down by the melting of the snows on Hermon and the mountains of Upper Galilee. It is, naturally, at this precise period that the pressure of the water upon the banks is most severely felt, and that the collapse would therefore take place. All similar collapses of which history speaks have occurred at this very season of the year, and I myself witnessed the phenomenon of the land-slip at this time a few years ago, though it was only upon a comparatively small scale, and did not cause the whole bed of the river to be dammed up. I saw, however, quite enough to convince me that that was what really happened at the crossing of the Israelites.'

The luncheon was now announced by Yusef, and at its conclusion the Sheikh, according to his promise, proceeded to give his explanation of Naaman's wonderful cure.

'You are, of course, I presume, all acquainted with the details of that narrative as recorded in the Bible,' he said, 'and therefore I need not waste any time in relating them to you. Naaman, you will remember, lived at Damascus, and was commander of the Syrian army. He was afflicted with leprosy. Now, you must bear in mind that, though leprosy in its fully-developed and virulent stage is, humanly speaking, practically incurable, it can, nevertheless, in its incipient stage, be wholly cured by the proper remedies. Moreover, it is necessary to add that any kind of skin complaint is generally styled leprosy by the Oriental natives. It is certain that Naaman could only have been afflicted with leprosy in its incipient and curable form. Had he been a fully-developed leper, it would have been impossible for him to have held his command in the Syrian army—nay, more, he would have been banished from his home,

and compelled to herd on the outside of the city with the other miserable beings afflicted like himself. The little Hebrew girl who had been captured as a prisoner of war in one of the Syrian raids into Palestine, and who was then a slave in Naaman's household, directly she discovered her master's disease, instinctively exclaimed to her mistress: "Why does he not go and consult Elisha?"

'Now, I have already pointed out to you that Elisha, in addition to being a holy man of God inspired with spiritual wisdom, was also a skilful doctor, as far as medical skill in those days went; and, from the Hebrew maiden's observation, it is evident that she had already heard of the reputation which he had achieved for dealing with cases of that sort. Naaman, upon his wife's suggestion, determined to follow his little slave's advice, and accordingly, after a preliminary visit to the King of Israel, he finally arrived with great pomp, attended by a large body of retainers, at the door of Elisha's abode on Mount Carmel. The proud Syrian officer naturally expected to make a great impression upon the humble Hebrew doctor; and, being the superstitious Oriental that he was, he fully anticipated from Elisha a great show of imposing incantations, charms, and other outward manifestations of mysterious signs. He was accustomed to the fraudulent practices of the Syrian doctors in Damascus, who then, as now, mystified their ignorant patients by a mighty display of pretended magic, and then gave them some simple potion, such as a dose of Epsom salts or some equally homely remedy, which in reality effected the cure that they superstitiously ascribed to supernatural agency. Instead of this, however, Elisha, being an honest man, having diagnosed Naaman's disease, prescribed for him the very treatment which any physician

of the present day who knew his business would have prescribed under similar circumstances.'

'What!' exclaimed the General Nuisance; 'do you mean to say that a London doctor would expect to cure a leprous patient by dipping his head seven times in water?'

'It depends upon the nature of the water, as well as of the disease,' replied the Sheikh; 'and to this I am now coming. You must not imagine, as you appear to do, that when Elisha ordered Naaman to go and bathe seven times in the river Jordan, he told him merely to strip himself and plunge seven times into the river. In the first place, you must understand that numbers do not generally represent to Orientals the same ideas that they do to ourselves. With our highly-trained, accurate, mathematical minds a number always represents a certain fixed quantity of units; but it is not so with Orientals. To them numbers are, and always have been, symbolical rather than arithmetical; and this fact must always be borne in mind, if we would intelligently study the Bible. Thus, for example, the number "forty" is generally the symbol of *preparation*. Moses was *forty* years old when he was providentially led into the Arabian desert, where for *forty* years he was being prepared for his mission as deliverer of the Israelites from Egypt. They themselves were *forty* years in the wilderness, as a preparation for their entry into the Promised Land. Again, Moses was *forty* days on Mount Horeb preparatory to the delivery of the law. Jonah was commissioned to allow the people of Nineveh *forty* days in which to prepare themselves for the punishment which would fall upon them if they did not repent. Our Lord Himself was *forty* days and *forty* nights in the wilderness, in preparation for His ministry. He was *forty* days pre-

) Rather, indefinite long period

paring His disciples to carry on His Church between His resurrection and ascension. Similarly, the number "seven" generally symbolizes *Completion*, or *Perfection*, as you will see for yourselves if, with this hint in your minds, you notice the passages in which that number occurs. Therefore, although in some cases it may have happened that the number did represent its exact quantity of units, it does not by any means necessarily follow that this was generally the case. For instance, it may have been that seven baths were literally sufficient to effect Naaman's cure, or it may have required a great many more. That does not affect the narrative in the least. What Elisha really ordered Naaman to do was to go and take a regular course of baths in the Jordan until he was perfectly and completely cured of his disease.

Now, here comes in the true moral of the whole incident. It was the very property of the Jordan which Naaman despised that was, under God, the means of his cure. On receiving Elisha's message, the Syrian leper at once exclaims that, if it were merely a case of bathing, he might just as well have stopped at home at Damascus, and bathed in the Abana or the Pharpar. You will see these rivers, I hope, in a few weeks, and before we reach Damascus you will have crossed "that ancient river, the river Kishon." The Jordan and the Kishon are the two principal rivers of Palestine, and, as you will see for yourselves, they are both of them muddy in the extreme, and, apparently, most unsuitable for the purposes of cleansing. The rivers of Damascus, and especially the Abana, are, on the other hand, delightfully clear, fresh, and inviting, and, judging from outward appearances, Naaman's proud boast was amply justified. Yet the Abana would never have cured his disease, however frequently he might have bathed in it,

simply because it lacks the ingredients which the Jordan so abundantly possesses. There is scarcely any spot in the whole of its course where you could wade into the Jordan without sinking to your knees, and often to your waist, in soft, thick, slimy mud. Any medical practitioner of the present day will tell you that the very best remedy for skin diseases is a proper course of mud baths. At many points along the banks of the Jordan traces can still be found of old medicinal mud baths. The baths at Gadara and Callirhoe may be mentioned as cases in point. There is little or no doubt that the physical means of Naaman's cure was the peculiar nature of the soil, held in solution by the muddy waters of the Jordan.'

'Now that seems to me a most sensible and scientific solution of the story!' exclaimed the Fossil; 'and, really, I am beginning to think that my want of belief in the Bible records has been due to my own fault rather than to that of the Bible itself. I, in common with almost everyone else that I know, have seriously misunderstood and misinterpreted those records.'

'You remind me of an incident that happened to me a few years ago,' replied the Sheikh. 'I was lecturing one evening in London on Damascus, and there were several well-known physicians amongst the audience. At the conclusion of the lecture, one of these, a man renowned as a specialist in skin complaints, introduced himself to me, and expressed his great satisfaction at this explanation of Naaman's cure. He said that, as a doctor, he had sometimes smiled with incredulity at what he had hitherto taken for granted was the reputed account of a man in the virulent stage of leprosy being cured by simply ducking his head in water. He added: "I feel perfectly sure that your explanation is correct, and I

trust and believe that I have learned a lesson to-night which I shall never forget. That lesson is that, if I find things in the Bible which I cannot understand, I shall be ready to believe that it is not the fault of the Bible, but of myself ; it is not that the Bible story is wrong, but that I have not the clue to the proper interpretation. In other words, the Bible narrative is probably right, but I am too big a fool to understand it !

‘ That was certainly a grand admission, coming from such a man,’ said the Archbishop ; ‘ and yet I am not altogether happy at having the glamour of the supernatural removed from the incident.’

‘ There are one or two minor details about that story of Naaman which I should like to have explained, if possible,’ said the Angel. ‘ Why, for example, did Naaman want to take back two mules’ burden of earth to Damascus with him ?’

‘ He gives the reason why,’ observed the Archbishop ; ‘ it was to erect a sacrificial altar to the God of Israel in Damascus.’

‘ Excuse me,’ interrupted the Sheikh, ‘ you are quite wrong in that respect. Naaman certainly confesses, when he asks for the earth, that in future Jehovah shall be the only God to whom in his heart he will do sacrifice. But that did not imply that that was the reason for which he wanted the soil, and I think I can easily show you what was really passing in his mind. Let us for a moment picture the scene between Elisha and himself. When he found himself cured of his disease, the easiest thing for Naaman to have done, so far as his own personal convenience was concerned, would have been to have proceeded to Damascus direct from the Jordan. He was already nearly half-way to his home, and it must have been at the cost of a great deal of time and fatigue that

he went back to Mount Carmel. But Naaman was a gentleman, and, as such, he desired to report his cure to his doctor, and to offer him his fee. Elisha, being both a wise and holy man, saw that it would make a much better impression upon his patient's spiritual nature if he refused to accept any fee, but, in doing so, he took the opportunity of explaining to Naaman that it was the very property of the soil of Palestine, held in solution as mud in the Jordan, which had been the natural instrument of his cure. Though the Bible narrative does not tell us this in so many words, yet the context renders it certain that some such conversation took place, and Naaman's request was the direct consequence of the explanation which Elisha had given him. He wanted the earth in case any symptoms of a return of his disease should manifest themselves at Damascus. He could then mix the soil with water there, and so take his mud baths without having to undergo the trouble and expense of a journey to the Jordan for the purpose.'

'That's capital!' ejaculated Monte Carlo. 'What a mighty deal there is after all in these old Bible stories when you come to analyze them and to understand them properly!'

'But there is one thing yet that you have not explained, and I don't see how you are going to get out of a miracle there,' objected the General Nuisance. 'How about the leprosy of Naaman cleaving immediately to Gehazi?'

'There is no difficulty whatever about that,' answered the Sheikh, 'and that part of the story is just as simple as all the rest. Gehazi, like many another servant of after-ages, had been playing the eavesdropper, and had overheard the conversation which had gone on between his master and Naaman. He thought to himself that,



if his master had been fool enough to refuse to take anything from this rich and mighty Syrian stranger, he would, at any rate, avail himself of the opportunity of getting something out of him. Accordingly, by his false and lying pretences, he obtained a couple of suits of clothes, in addition to a considerable sum of money. We shall doubtless meet some Oriental travellers during the course of our ride through Palestine, and, if you will remind me, I will then point out to you the way in which they carry their luggage and belongings with them. All their clothes, new and old indiscriminately, are tied up together in bundles, and though Naaman would certainly have given Gehazi new clothes, yet, mixed up as they were with those which he had often worn, there is little doubt that the infection of the leprosy was conveyed to Gehazi through the clothes. And thus you see the splendid moral of this part of the narrative : Gehazi's sin literally brought its own punishment with it.'

'That is all very well,' persisted the General Nuisance, 'but your explanation will hardly do, for the Bible distinctly tells us that Gehazi was struck down with the most virulent kind of leprosy *there and then* : "He went out of Elisha's presence a leper as white as snow." I think even you will acknowledge that it must have been a pretty stiff kind of infection that could have produced such stupendous results in that incredibly short space of time.'

'Your objection seems to be a poser, I admit,' replied the Sheikh, smiling, 'but it is so only in appearance. Here again the difficulty arises simply from the want of rightly understanding Oriental phrases and modes of expression. To stand in a person's presence is the regular phrase for being in a person's service. It is so amongst the modern natives. It was equally so in the

days of the old Hebrew monarchy. You will find the phrase frequently in the Old Testament in that same signification. For example, both Elisha and Elijah use the expression, "Jehovah, before whom I stand," meaning, "Jehovah, whose servant I am." The presence of Jehovah is over and over again employed to signify "the service of Jehovah." Indeed, so familiar and well known is the phrase and its application, that there is no need for me to enlarge further upon it. Suffice it to say that when a servant leaves his master's service, he is said to "go from his presence." When, therefore, we read, as a fitting conclusion to the whole of the dramatic story which we have been considering, that Gehazi went out from Elisha's presence a leper as white as snow, we know exactly what that statement conveys. It does not inform us that, whilst Gehazi was in the very act of being interviewed by Elisha, he became so saturated by leprosy on the spot that, before he quitted the prophet's room, he was as white as snow. It does tell us, on the other hand, that Gehazi's act of deceitful fraud involved him in a terrible retribution, since he literally caught the infection of Naaman's leprosy from the clothes which he had thus obtained, and in course of time he became so hopelessly pronounced and virulent a leper that he was compelled to leave the service of Elisha altogether. Now, I hope that I have succeeded in clearing away all difficulties connected with this most interesting historical narrative.'

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE RETURN TO JERUSALEM

' Gentleman drowning !'—The dangers of Jordan—Bethshan—Bethany again—' He came near and beheld the city '—A rest in camp.

AT this moment they were startled by a sudden cry and commotion. Yusef and Salim had been clearing away the luncheon, whilst the Sheikh and his friends had been sitting in a group on the border of the river, a short distance away from the tree beneath which they had had their repast. Only a portion of the tribe had listened to the explanation of the story of Naaman, for the Enthusiast and the Matter-of-fact Man had determined to have a bathe in the Jordan, and the former had persuaded the Pessimist, somewhat against his will, to join them. Meanwhile the Malaprop had retired to a solitary spot under the shade of a branching willow to write up an account of the scene on the shores of the Dead Sea in her wonderful diary ; whilst the Gusher had wandered off to look for wild flowers among the brushwood of the copses.

Mohamed-el-Achmed, the Bedouin escort, who had been quietly smoking the pipe of peace in another sequestered place within sight of the bathers, now appeared on the scene in a highly excited condition, and shouted out at the top of his voice to Yusef and Salim in Arabic. The two latter at once abandoned the occupation on

which they were engaged, and ran hastily in the direction of Mohamed-el-Achmed. The muleteer in charge of the luncheon requisites, who was indulging in a mid-day siesta by the side of his mule, also started to his feet at the sound of the Bedouin's cry, and joined in the stampede. As Yusef passed the spot where the Sheikh and his companions were seated, he cried out excitedly :

' Gentleman drowning !'

All thoughts of Elisha, Naaman, and Gehazi were at once driven out of the minds of all, and they were rudely brought back from the scenes of twenty-eight centuries ago to the perils and exigencies of the present day. Monte Carlo and the Sheikh immediately hastened after Yusef and the natives, followed at a somewhat slower pace by the elderly Archbishop, whilst the Fossil calmly concluded to remain behind, in order to soothe the agitated nerves of the ladies of the party.

When the Sheikh and Monte Carlo reached the place where the bathers had undressed, they found that Mohamed, like a true Oriental, had exaggerated the danger of the case. The Pessimist, it is true, was wringing his hands and giving other indications of a serious shock to his system, as he sat on the ground by the side of his clothes, with a towel around his loins. But the Enthusiast had already commenced to dress, though a close observer might have noticed a certain tremor in his actions, whilst the Matter-of-fact Man was drying himself with as much placid composure as if nothing whatever had happened. Nevertheless, when the story came to be told, it was manifest that the incident had been sufficiently alarming, and that, if it had not been for the cool presence of mind of the Matter-of-fact Man, the Enthusiast might have met with a fatal accident.

It appeared that the Pessimist had been alarmed by

the depth to which his feet had sunk in the soft mud of the banks as he attempted to wade into the river, and had accordingly beaten a hasty retreat, and steadily refused to venture again near the stream. To convince him that there was no danger, the Enthusiast had plunged boldly in, and had at once struck out for the opposite shore. But he had not proceeded far before he was caught in a whirling eddy, against which he struggled in vain. The Pessimist gave a scream of dismay, as he saw him being carried helplessly along the rapid current of the river ; and the Matter-of-fact Man, attracted by the cry, at once grasped the critical condition of affairs. It was at this moment that the Bedouin escort had rushed off to give the alarm, and before he returned the Matter-of-fact Man had rescued the Enthusiast from his dangerous position. Mohamed-el-Achmed, like most Bedouin Arabs, carried a long spear when he rode, and this spear lay on the ground by his side, at the place where he had been reposing. The Matter-of-fact Man rushed to the spot, seized hold of the spear, and ran with all speed to a bend in the river, towards which the current was fast bearing the helpless Enthusiast, and where the eddy bent close to the bank. Calling out to his companion to be ready to grasp hold of the spear, the Matter-of-fact Man leant over as far as he could, and the Enthusiast was providentially enabled to obtain a firm hold of the weapon, and by this means was drawn to the bank in safety.

The accident supplied a very practical illustration of the rapidity of the Jordan, and of the danger that there is in a stranger attempting to cross the river to the other side. Naturally, this incident formed the chief subject of conversation on their way back over the plain to their encampment at Jericho, and it was alluded to more than

once in the course of the discussion after the evening meal.

‘No wonder the Israelites hesitated to attempt the passage of the Jordan until the landslip which you explained this morning temporarily dried up the bed of the river,’ remarked the Enthusiast, when for the hundredth time he had been congratulated upon his narrow escape. ‘It strikes me that a few of the women and children would have gone to glory if they had attempted to cross whilst the river was in full flow.’

‘You remind me of the old Baptist minister,’ observed Monte Carlo. ‘He was holding a grand general baptizing function in a river upon a certain occasion. The current of the stream was tolerably rapid ; and just as he had got hold of a fair young damsel in his arms, and was ducking her under the water, she was swept away out of his grasp, and was seen by the excited congregation fast hurrying along to her death in the eddying tide. Without making any effort to save her, the pious Baptist minister calmly raised his arms aloft to heaven, and gravely cried out : “ One gone to glory ; bring another ! ” ’

‘Don’t be so profane, man,’ growled the General Nuisance, to whom the humour of the anecdote in no way appealed.

‘Talking of baptizing, is it true that St. John the Baptist discharged his office at the place where we were this morning ?’ asked the Angel.

‘Certainly not,’ replied the Sheikh, ‘although the ecclesiastical tradition has placed it there, as the spot is a convenient locality for pilgrims to reach who desire to bathe in the place where our Lord was baptized. The true scene of His baptism was many miles further north, almost immediately opposite to the ancient city of Bethshan.’

'How do you know that?' inquired the Archbishop.

'The site was identified with a probability which almost amounts to a certainty by the Palestine Exploration Surveyors in 1874,' replied the Sheikh. 'You will find in Conder's "Tent-Work in Palestine" a very interesting and convincing discussion on the subject. I need only say that the very word *Bethebara* still remains under the form of "Mahhadet Abara," or the Ford of Abara, and that the distance of the spot from Kefi Kemea, the site of ancient Cana of Galilee, exactly answers the requirements of the Gospel narrative.'

'You said that the scene of our Lord's baptism was near Bethshan, I believe,' remarked the Enthusiast. 'I seem to have heard of that place somewhere, but I really forget the connection. Did anything remarkable happen there?'

'Why, you surely don't forget that the bodies of Saul and Jonathan were nailed to the walls of that city by the Philistines!' exclaimed the Archbishop, who, like many other erudite scholars of the Scriptures, could not realize that everyone was not so intimately acquainted as himself with all the details of the sacred narrative.

'I am afraid that I have temporarily allowed that interesting fact to escape my memory,' answered the Enthusiast, somewhat abashed by the rebuke implied in the Archbishop's tone of voice, 'and I am much obliged to you for recalling it to my mind.'

'Is Bethshan still in existence?' asked the Angel.

'Yes, under the slightly modified form of Beisan,' replied the Sheikh.

'If my memory serves me correctly,' observed the Fossil didactically, 'that was the place which, under the name of Scythopolis, attained to considerable importance and renown during the earlier ages of the Christian era.'

The Romans, I believe, knew it as the "City of Temples," on account of the number and splendour of its sacred buildings and shrines of worship.'

'That is so,' assented the Sheikh; 'and there are many fine ruins still remaining there, quite sufficient to indicate the extent of its glory and magnificence in the days of long ago.'

'Oh, I do hope you will take us to visit those dear, beautiful ruins!' ejaculated the Gusher impulsively.

'If I can arrange our journey northwards through Palestine in such a way as to enable me to take you to Beisan, I will do so most willingly,' answered the Sheikh. 'I should be glad for you to see them for two reasons—first, because they are eminently worthy of inspection; and, secondly, very few travellers in the Holy Land ever see them, as they lie off the beaten track of the Palestine tourist.'

'Whereabouts is it situated, then?' asked the Angel.

'Just where the Valley of Jezreel joins the Plain of the Jordan,' replied the Sheikh.

'I am not much wiser than I was before,' said the General Nuisance; 'for I don't know where the Valley of Jezreel is.'

'No doubt you will become wiser in that respect, madam, when we have visited the valley itself, as I understand that we shall in all probability do in the course of a few days,' interposed the Fossil, who enjoyed in his dry way an occasional hit at the expense of one of the *bêtes noires* of his present existence.

'I didn't ask your opinion,' she snappishly replied, turning her back upon the shrivelled professor, and leaving the salon tent to retire to rest.

This unexpected little incident served to break up the party for the night, and in a few minutes the whole tribe



were ensconced in their respective tents, and the camp became enveloped in silence and darkness.

No untoward incident marred the tranquillity of the night's repose, and everyone enjoyed a refreshing and unbroken sleep after their long day's ride in the open air.

Next morning they were again astir soon after breakfast, for a somewhat wearisome and fatiguing journey lay before them. They were returning from Jericho to Jerusalem, and, before they had reached the end of the day's ride, more than one of the tribe dejectedly complained that the way seemed far longer and more monotonous than on the downward journey of two days before. Of course, the steep and long-continued ascent told upon the physical powers much more severely than the comparatively easy descent. Then, again, they had started on their trip to the Jordan Valley in all the freshness of spirits and elasticity of body engendered by the novel experiences of the situation. They had something new to engage their attention and to occupy their thoughts from one end to the other of that memorable day's ride; and they had little or no time to worry themselves about any of the aches or inconveniences connected with the mode of travel to which so few of them had been accustomed. Now they were returning over a path already trodden and explored; their limbs were stiff with the three days' ride; the excitement of novelty was beginning to wear away; and, with most of them, a sense of reaction and lassitude made itself more or less unpleasantly felt.

The Sheikh, however, allowed them to take a good long rest at the Good Samaritan's Inn, and again at the Apostles' Spring; and before they finally reached Jerusalem, the grumblings had for the most part died away,

and good-temper and enjoyment were once more uppermost.

At Bethany they halted again to visit the traditional tomb of Lazarus, and to bid farewell to their Arab escort, 'Mohamed, of the jaw-breaking name,' as the Enthusiast called him. He had discharged his duties in a manner to win the approbation of all. Even the Pessimist was heard to say that he did not think he smelt quite so offensively as did some of the other natives.

The Gusher insisted on shaking hands effusively with him when she said good-bye to him ; and the Matter-of-fact Man and the Enthusiast accompanied him a short distance along the road from Bethany to Abu-Dis. He returned to his relatives and friends with a goodly sum of Turkish dollars, or medjidies, presented to him as baksheesh by the Sheikh and his tribe.

As the latter proceeded on their way from Bethany to Jerusalem, the general conversation naturally turned upon the triumphal march undertaken by the meek and lowly Son of the Nazarene carpenter along the very road which they were now treading—a march which has for ever rendered that route inexpressibly sacred to all followers of Jesus Christ.

The first part of their way wound round a deep bay in the eastern base of the Olivet range, and thus Jerusalem itself and its immediate vicinity was entirely hidden from their view.

At length, turning an exceedingly acute angle in the road, they came quite suddenly, and without any previous warning, immediately in the face of the Holy City itself, which lay outspread before them in all its extent, on the other side of the narrow Valley of Jehoshaphat.

They all reined up their horses to gaze in silent ad-

miration on the wonderful scene, for, indeed, even now, comparatively fallen and unlovely as is modern Jerusalem, the view is so picturesque, enthralling, and grand, that it can scarcely fail to arouse deep and powerful emotions, even in the most callous and irresponsible breast.

The Gusher was the first to break the silence by one of her ecstatic bursts of rapture, and even the General Nuisance and the Fossil were too absorbed in their contemplations to rebuke her on this occasion.

‘What a glorious scene!’ exclaimed the Enthusiast. ‘See, there is the Temple Area immediately in front of us. How lovely the Dome of the Rock looks from this point! and there in the distance is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Yes, and surely that is Mount Zion behind the Temple Area!’

‘Surely this must be the very best point of vantage from which to view Jerusalem,’ said the Angel quietly.

‘And surely,’ added her father, the Archbishop, ‘this must be the very place alluded to by St. Luke when he tells us that in our dear Lord’s triumphal march “He came near and beheld the city.”’

‘Undoubtedly you are right,’ said the Sheikh. ‘The statement in the sacred narrative identifies this spot beyond all reasonable doubt.’

‘“If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace,”’ murmured the Archbishop reverently, and in a low tone.

‘How sad it all seems!’ said the Angel, the tears gathering in her eyes. ‘When one thinks of the Jerusalem that once was and the fate which befell it, one can scarcely trust one’s self to words.’

‘By Jove! I should have liked to have seen it in all its glory,’ exclaimed the Enthusiast.

‘As the eyes of the blessed Lord beheld it,’ added the Archbishop solemnly.

‘Can you describe to us exactly how it used to look?’ asked the Gusher of the Sheikh.

‘Well, hardly, I am afraid,’ he replied. ‘That is one of those things best left to the imagination, almost impossible to picture, quite impossible to describe.’

‘And to think that it might have been as beautiful as ever now,’ exclaimed the Enthusiast, ‘but for those wretched, rebellious Jews and those abominable Romans who smashed it up.’

“Of all sad words of tongue or pen,  
The saddest of these, It might have been,”

sententiously quoted the Fossil.

They moved on one by one, still gazing on the sacred and historical city, so fair and so fascinating even in its fall, and, crossing the Kedron Valley near the Tomb of the Virgin, they skirted the north-east angle of the city walls and arrived at length at the camp, which they found already pitched in a most inviting spot surrounded by olive-trees, almost adjoining the new buildings erected by the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, and within three hundred yards of the Calvary Hill.

A few days later the whole of the tribe were foregathered on the deck of the Austrian Lloyd steamer, waving their farewells to Yusef and Salim, who were returning to shore after having seen them all safely and comfortably deposited with their baggage on the vessel. Conflicting feelings of sad regret and satisfied pleasure filled the minds of the majority of the Sheikh’s tribe as they gazed for the last time on the sacred shores which they were leaving.

'Truly a lovely finale to our delightful journey through this realm of sacred romance,' sententiously observed the Fossil, as he pointed to the exquisite scene presented by the city of Beyrout and the mountains behind.

'Yes, I really think that Beyrout, as seen from the sea, must be one of the fairest visions upon earth,' sighed the Angel.

'Quite too really charming and heavenly!' ejaculated the Gusher.

And even the General Nuisance seemed to feel the influence of the scene.

'Do you know,' thoughtfully remarked the Archbishop, 'I seem to feel that life henceforth will always bear to me somewhat of a new and higher aspect than it ever has before. There is something which one can sense, but which one can hardly describe, that permeates one's whole being, arising from the sacred and sanctifying influences of the scenes through which we have been passing.'

'I think I can understand your feelings, dear father,' replied the Angel softly. 'Yes, the journey through the Holy Land has been emphatically hallowing in its influences.'

"Where'er we tread, 'tis haunted, holy ground;  
No earth of Thine is lost in vulgar mound,"

murmured the Fossil quietly.

'And I have such a beautiful diary of it all,' exclaimed the Malaprop.

'A pity there are so many smells and so much dirt in the country, though,' interjected the Matter-of-fact Man.

'Well, all I have to say is,' heartily ejaculated the Enthusiast, 'it has been an experience never to be forgotten so long as one shall live. And have we not been gloriously favoured in every respect? Scarcely a drop

of rain to damp our spirits. Thanks to our good friend the Sheikh, and the excellence of Cook's arrangements, not one single hitch, so far as I can remember, to mar the full enjoyment of the trip. Hurrah for Palestine! Hurrah for our glorious tour! Three cheers for the Sheikh! Hip, hip, hip——!

'Oh, but think,' whined out the incorrigible Pessimist, true to his nature to the last—'think how miserable it would have been if it had been raining all the time!'

THE END



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