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1939
THROUGH HIS LAND
FROM HIS CRADLE TO HIS THRONE

BY
ANIS CHARLES HADDAD B. A.

AUTHOR OF
"PALESTINE SPEAKS"

HONORARY MEMBER,
THE EUGENE FIELD SOCIETY
NATIONAL LITERARY ASSOCIATION, U. S. A.

Living Waters Printing Press P.O.B. 621 Jerusalem
and in every age wherein Christ is worshipped as the
Saviour of mankind.

This book, it is sincerely hoped, needs little intro-
duction. Its purpose should be obvious.
The descriptions may be found useful to travellers
in helping them to identify the scenes they visit, and
perhaps also be a source of pleasure to those who
having been to Palestine, will recall many pleasant
memories as they read through the pages, besides
giving those who lack the opportunity but not the
desire to do so, some idea of what it is like.

Readers will therefore with the assistance of these
pages have the interest and enjoyment of their visit
increased or will to some extent obtain compensation
for their disappointment, latent or realized.

This is a pleasant book to read. How delightful it
is to drift away from the hurry, rush, anxiety and
excitement of the Twentieth Century to the peace and
serenity of this most charming Bible Land.

Most people who take up this book will read it
through because of the enjoyment to be derived from
it. Throughout the long ages of the past it has been
well-known that the Holy Land and its people were,
in fact, the best commentary that could be written
upon the Life and Home of our Saviour.

The author merely takes a walk with us and has
confined his journeyings to the places and routes
hallowed by the footsteps of our Master. He has
many times visited all the places described so as
to verify on the spot the information given.

I believe that every Christian who reads this book
will understand and love the Bible better and will,
therefore, be deepened in his devotion to the eternal
Christ, who once was incarnate in human flesh as
a citizen of the « ever charming Palestine.»

C. A. Gabriel
PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The author is well-known by his book entitled «Palestine Speaks» which has had a wide sale in the United States of America, where it was published.

Letters have been received from numerous subscribers of Living Waters from Jerusalem, where the author is a Contributing Editor, who suggested that a book about the Country of Our Saviour may be published. Mr. Anis Charles Haddad B. A. was, therefore, requested to undertake this work, and he consequently chose the title «From His Cradle to His Throne.»

It is said, I believe, with perfect truth, that no country in the world has been productive of so much literature as Palestine. Indeed I hardly know what Solomon, who in his day said that of the making of books there was no end, would say now, if he could see the number of books published on Palestine only.

If a possessor of some old manuscript on Palestine were to compare them with the aspect of the country at the present time he would at once notice that there is a marked difference now.

Owing to many changes that have transpired and in order that the descriptions shall be genuine, they must be written so as to bring them up-to-date.

The author has, therefore, opened the door for the readers into that mystery and charm of the Holy Land which has fascinated the minds of Christian people throughout their whole lifetime in all lands
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THROUGH HIS LAND

CHAPTER I.

NAZARETH
THE HOME OF THE HOLY FAMILY

AMID the stony hills of Galilee there lies a straggling city spreading its houses over rounded slopes, which in spring are blue with iris and bright with cyclamen. Its seclusion and domesticity of aspect harmonize with the sentiment of the maternal instinct, and they are in our sympathy the day we visit Nazareth.

There is something additionally thrilling if one can see a historic place from a distance as one approaches, and Nazareth has this advantage. To one coming from the highlands of Samaria to the Plain of Esdraelon appear the hills of Galilee, while white and high lies the city of the childhood of Jesus. A friendly sweetness pervades it.

This is Nazareth, the home of Joseph, Mary and the place of the boyhood of Jesus that it might be fulfilled «He shall be called a Nazarene.» It lies with its white houses and graceful minarets, while cypresses stand tall and dark against white walls: behind cactus hedges are orchards of almond, pomegranate, peach, palm trees, dates and prickly pears: terraced on slopes rise vineyards and olive groves. The quiet loveliness of the valley seems to give it an air of
seclusion, as if shut away from the outer world. This is distinctly the most attractive little city in the Holy Land. It has been in great veneration since the earliest times of Christ and has attracted innumerable pilgrims and tourists from all parts of the world, which renders it prosperous. Perhaps as we come in sight of Nazareth we, in view of its precious and sacred memories, find our hearts filled with tender and emotional feelings and carry away with us memories never to be forgotten. Nazareth means «a flower». Well chosen, for Nazareth is indeed a flower of beauty in a most charming setting.

Nazareth is distinctly the most attractive little city in the Holy Land.

As a lad, the Saviour tended sheep and goats among those fertile lands and sterile rocks to while away the time, plucking the cyclamen and iris and watching the flocks of cattle seek their food among the thistles. As a man he may have worked those ancient ploughlands, taking his share of the simple labours of the family to which he belonged. So our Lord grew up amidst a busy place and knew the
problems of life and the trials of humanity as well as anyone. Here he met temptations, as every young man has to do, yet without sin. In short, within the circle that the sight commands, for thirty years or more Christ dwelt on earth acquiring in a humble incarnation one side of that wisdom which has changed the world.

Before Christ gave this little town its lasting holy fame it seems to have lain hidden in complete obscurity. This seclusion may have been one reason why Joseph on his return from Egypt made it his home, little thinking how his infant Son was destined to hallow and to immortalize the little town, of which a Galilean neighbour contemptuously asked «Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?» With regard to the bad character of Nazareth, it must be borne in mind that Nathanael was a Pharisee, despising all the Galileans. But in Nazareth was a carpenter’s shop destined to become the universal temple of toilers, and from it went forth One called by its name, «the Nazarene» in whom the whole world is blest!

I much desired to wander about the town alone and see its inhabitants, for to study the life of a country, to understand its people, there is no better way than just to ramble about, walking slowly and examining carefully without seeming to do so. Interest attaches to everybody and everywhere in Nazareth. Everywhere the eye rests on a view of quiet beauty. The people are remarkable for their grace and beauty, and some of the women, especially the girls, are surpassingly lovely. Celebrated for their beauty, an old writer ascribes it to the special favour of Mary. They are tall and remarkably straight, partly from the habit of carrying waterpots, wood, and other
burdens on their heads. In every walk, at every turn, in the streets, or on the hills, or in those flowery valleys, one seems to realize the presence of both the Mother and the Child.

There are, as may be expected, a large number of reputed sites in Nazareth, mostly however, without any reliable authority for their existence. But it is interesting to walk among its narrow streets. The streets are very attractive and it is very difficult to pass up without stopping to look and question. The saddles are particularly fascinating, for, instead of plain brown leather, they deal in girths and reins of woven black, yellow and blue, and hung with woollen tassels. Camel-bells, leather shoes, brown or red, brass coffee pots, coloured belts, shepherds' slings and pipes hang from the walls of the shops and the sunbeams, falling through holes wake the patches of colour of sudden brilliance.

Further on, the grocery shops begin, and the passer-by has to push past trays of coffee beans and sugar and pink and white sweetmeats, big tins of paraffin, baskets of walnut and almonds, all crowding out of the shops on to the pavement and making the narrow street narrower still. Baskets before the doorway are filled with a medley of waterpots — those pots of porous earthenware which, set to the wind, keep the water cool on the hottest day.

The street of the metal workers is a clanging bedlam where the measured hammerings of fifty coppersmiths each to his own time, rings on the seconds of the passing day. From each dim smithy, plates and pans and trays flow over the pavement and into the narrow street. The fiercest bargaining does not interrupt the obdurate craftsman at his anvil.

Owing to Nazareth's position, cupped in surrounding.
Nazareth

heights the ground is uneven. Without doubt many of the deep-worn footpaths which we see were the very ones which the Saviour trod, when He was walking on them—going to school, to the synagogue, to work with Joseph and out beyond the houses to the countryside, alone or with youthful companions.

Nazareth is indeed a flower of beauty in a most charming setting.

Many of the streets are stepped, and wide gutters run through the middle of the well-paved surface. In the rainy season these become water-courses. The streets are not wide enough to admit of wheeled transport, so donkeys, ever the favourite saddle-animals in Palestine, are much in evidence.

We pause in the carpenter’s street for some time. Here we look into the interior of a shop, with its simple tools and its little pile of new lumber, its floor littered with chips and shavings and the air full of pleasant smell of prettily cut olive wood. Sunshine through the arched entrance brightens the little shop opening on to the street. Many of the crafts-
men in the street are old fashioned; the tools and methods which they use are unchanged since the time when Joseph assisted by the youthful Jesus was working there. Singlehandled saws were then employed, together with chisels, hammers, hatchets, compasses and measuring line.

Since the shops are often little more than dark archways the carpenter usually works seated in front of his shop holding down a piece of wood by his bare feet and boring holes with a drill worked by a string and bow — a tool old in New Testament days. A busy time is just before the harvest season when new ploughs and yokes are ordered and old ones often need repairing.

As I stand watching him he looks up and smiles at us, and we give him the pleasant greeting of the country. Perhaps he wonders why I am so interested in him and his work, little dreaming that I am thinking of a carpenter who made the ploughs two thousand years ago!

Here we found a kind middle-aged priest who took a great delight in showing us the many little things of historic interest. He took us to the church which encloses the sanctuary on the site of the dwelling of the blessed Virgin. The House of the Holy Family has been the object of profound reverence since the dawn of Christianity. Here legend asserts the house of the Virgin stood, and that here she was visited by the angel Gabriel when he announced to her that she would become the mother of our Saviour. The house of the Virgin has been transformed into a magnificent church, belit with lamps and encircled with ceremonial. The church is paved with pink and gray, has a white-washed roof and painted walls. By a flight of steps we descend to the site of Mary's
house and the Chapel of the Annunciation where is
an altar with a sacred picture behind it. Here we
are surrounded by the living rock, stained black and
gray, except in certain parts which are cased in
gray marble. A grating in the flight of steps shows
where the house began, and before the two final
steps there are two side altars with pictures. Under
the Virgin’s altar four dim lights burn perpetually.

In the Bible days the people often lived in caves
because they were warm in winter and cool in the
summer’s heat. Rich embroideries are hung over the
rock of the cave, long since blackened by the smoke
from the candles of the pilgrims. Oil lamps burn
before the altar and in the dim light a friar knelt
in prayer. It was so quiet I could hear my heart
beat. Here in this quiet little cave the greatest miracle
on earth had taken place! I tried to think how
Mary must have felt when she heard the words of
the angel and saw the glory shining from his face.

Passing through a very low doorway we find our-
selves in a tiny cavern of natural rock containing
another altar, and a slight ascent leads to a third
cavern in which I can just stand upright. This is
named «Madonna’s Kitchen» and now holds a very
ancient stone cross. We then see the chimney of
the hearth upon which she warmed food for her
young Child and baked cakes for Joseph when he
came from work.

Passing now at the right around a kind of altar
screen to an apartment immediately back of this,
we are assured that we are in the Workshop of
Joseph, where he worked with Jesus. This chapel
contains a good picture. Imagination unbends to
the sweet associations of domestic life. The little
picture in this chapel illustrates the life of Christ, in
which as a blooming boy in his father's shop he saws a bit of wood into the form of a cross, looking up smilingly to the thoughtful Joseph and the yearning Mary as when he brings her the passion flower in the pleasant room.

At the beginning of the market is the church built on the site of the ancient synagogue. The people call it the «School of Christ.» Here Christ having read in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah the words regarding Himself, sat down and expounded them to the people «who wondered at the gracious words which proceeded from his mouth.» Here he was driven out by the Nazarenes who wished to cast him down from a high rock.

From here we go to visit another chapel called the «Table of Christ», in which tradition says our Lord Jesus sat with his disciples at meal both before and after his resurrection on a large block of rock answering for a table. The father impressed on me that this was a traditional belief, but that these beliefs had been handed down through many centuries.

Of all the sites commemorating real and apocryphal events in and about Nazareth connected with the Holy Family, that of the Virgin's Fountain is most convincing as it is and always has been the only spring of «living water» that the town possesses. Here as we often pass during mornings and evenings we watch the unveiled women and maidsens coming with a merry talk and laughter in their bright, many-coloured dresses with their pitchers to the fountain to draw water for their household supply, carrying the narrow-necked earthen jars. Pedlars also come to refresh throats grown weary with calling out their wares. The scene at the village fountain is always interesting, especially in a large town like Nazareth.
Following the example of Mary, the beautiful maidens of Nazareth resort to this famous fountain not only for water, but for the more agreeable objects of conversation and courtship. In this lovely setting we can see the boy Jesus and his Mother coming to the same fountain of pure and abundant water just as those damsels of Nazareth and their mothers are doing today.

![Image of Nazareth well](image)

This is certainly the same well from which Christ drank many times when weary.

Graceful women are laughing and chatting as they draw the water. Some with their little ones poised on their shoulders are standing here filling their pitchers from the sparkling stream as it rushes out of the three openings of the fountain; some are just turning away with the pitchers on their heads; while others linger to enjoy the evening gossip with their neighbours.

Here, too, in manhood when weary with toil in the summer's heat, Christ may often have sat at evening and perhaps have taught those who lingered round the fountain.
The water of the present spring gushes out beneath an arch. We do not see the actual spring, but the great stone basin in which through the conduit it pours its water in a copious spring. The basin of the fountain always overflows and sends streams of water to the gardens close by, giving delightful freshness and beauty to the valleys. Here we should drink of the water, for it is certainly the same well from which Jesus himself has drunk many a time when he was thirsty. I cannot vouch for its medicinal qualities nor am I certain that it will enable the blind to see when the water is rubbed over the eye, as some tell, but the water is very refreshing.

There is no place more impressive in Nazareth than the so-called Place of Precipitation. This mountain has been venerated by Christians from early time as the one to which the Jews drove our Lord after the incident in the synagogue to cast him down the precipice. Induced by the words of the Gospel to examine the place more attentively than we should have otherwise done, we go, as it is written «out of the city unto the brow of the hill whereon the city is built» and come to a precipice corresponding with the words of the evangelist. I rather suspect that the bold cliff overhanging the Plain of Esdraelon was selected by the monks because of the striking appearance and the grand prospect which it commands. Its sides are steep and covered with white limestone rocks, and, though not smooth, it is not sufficiently uneven to arrest one's fall. Once started downward by a violent push, no human power could resist the face or avert the catastrophe. Desiring to test the difficulty of the descent, I found it impossible to descend with safety except by placing my feet in the fissures of the rocks. I found the precipices
of sufficient height for the requirements of the narrative in Luke 4:28-30. When one thinks that the Mount of Precipitation is the highest of the mountains which embrace Nazareth, it is indeed easy to realize how determined his fellow-men were to kill Jesus.

Mount of Precipitation is a bold cliff and commands a striking appearance

Looking south one's glance is inevitably taken past the towered and minareted foreground to a garden-crowned hill where stands a convent with which a charming legend is associated. This chapel is known as «Our Lady of the Fright» by the Latins, and there is an old tradition which says that the Virgin, having learned that the Jews had dragged Jesus away to cast him down into the abyss from the mountain, followed the steps of her dear Son filled with fear and anxiety. She had barely reached the top of the hill when she saw the Jews coming back from the edge of the precipice. She was overcome with terror, for she saw that they were angry and that Jesus
was not with them. Soon she realized the cause of their fury - her divine Son had escaped. In her fright the Virgin leaned against a cave in the side of the mountain which miraculously opened up for her a hiding place. The crowd then passed on without discovering her. The spot may be seen today by the impression of a body in the rock. It was not far from here, too, that I was shown some tiny wild red flowers called by them «Blood of Mary», the legend being that they grew on the spot where the Virgin had cut her hands and feet against the rocks and so left drops of blood.

Who among his kinsfolk and acquaintance would have predicted such a future and such an end for the gentle carpenter's son — always so good to deal with in business and in daily life. It was revealed that the rough men of sequestered Nazareth when they were sad and weary used to say «let us go and see Mary’s son». So wonderful was the reflection of His beauty and holiness, so exquisite His sympathy so keen in Him was every natural human feeling, so wonderful His thought for all.
Chapter II.

Ain Karim
The Forerunner's Birthplace

One of the most romantic stories in the Gospel is the visit of the Virgin Mary to Elisabeth, told like most of the events connected with her life by Luke, the Evangelist.

Tucked away in a hollow about six miles west of Jerusalem, among the Judean hills lies the small but picturesque village of Ain Karim, the «Well of the Merciful», or «St. John of the Mountains.» The scenery on the way is delightful and refreshing, a picturesque valley with a clear view of undulating hills for miles around. The contour of the country...
is beautiful here, this being one of the prettiest parts of Palestine, which is truly a «land of hills and valleys.» The valley is covered with great rocks, for the path lies through stony ground, though here and there are little plots of bright green grass. Everywhere even among the rocks the landscape is brightened by the anemones, the scarlet poppies, the cyclamen and countless other spring flowers, for are there not some three thousand varieties of flowers in the Holy Land, and especially during the months of January and February?

On both sides of the summit of the hill are the Jewish colonies flourishing. At present the hillsides are partially planted with vineyards and fig and pomegranate and olive orchards.

I sat on a green hill facing Ain Karim and recollected the scene of long ago when Gabriel told Mary that her cousin Elisabeth, in her old age, was to be the mother of John the Baptist.

When Mary heard this she decided to go and visit Elisabeth and tell her all about the wonderful vision she had had. She set off over the hill, probably riding on an ass, to Ain Karim.

Ain Karim lies beside a confluence of valleys, the hills of which are crowned with hamlets, while the valleys, themselves are green with grass and their slopes fair with waving olive trees. The exceptional fertility around is a tribute to western energy, for a colony of Franciscan monks and Russian nuns have long been established at this spot in the belief that the parents of John the Baptist lived here. It is their industry and that which they have aroused or pay for in others, that has made things as they are. Because of the copious springs in the valley, Ain Karim must have been inhabited from earliest times.
History always clusters round springs of water. Civilizations come and go, but they remain a staid landmark.

The Franciscan chapel is the first to be seen, and then the great convent perched on a prominence on the hills beyond. What architecture is to be seen is simple. The grotto in the church may have been the birthplace of John the Baptist. It is most probable that some early Christians enamoured of the idea of a similitude between the circumstances of the birth of Christ and His great forerunner, let their imagination run away with them. What is of deepest interest to us is that the Virgin Mary dwelt here with Elisabeth for three quiet months before her Child was born; that this fair scene of terraced hillsides of vines and olive trees lying perched above the valley, daily met her eyes and influenced her thoughts; that here the two women must have talked of the mysteries dimly revealed to them; and that Mary, the simple village maid, here drew strength and courage and wisdom in communion with God for what lay before her, not alone at Bethlehem but in the wondrous path she was to tread for the rest of her life, as the earthly guardian of her heavenly Son.

But the Franciscan Fathers have no doubt of this chapel as being the birthplace of the forerunner of Jesus, for beneath the great altar is a circular slab of marble with a Latin inscription almost effaced which, when translated reads, «Here the forerunner of the Lord was born.» For centuries this place has been used by the Moslems as a stable and sheepfold, but it was regained by the pious monarch Louis XIV of France for the Franciscans and has since then been elaborately restored. It is a handsome and neatly arranged affair of its kind. Six lamps continually burn in it. Today this holy place is a
subterranean chapel and formerly was one of the rooms of the house of Zacharias.

Although there is little to identify Ain Karim with Luke’s description of the home of Zacharias, the Crusaders, those versatile priest warriors who are responsible for locating so many Biblical sites in the Holy Land, decided that the most beautiful spot in Judea was an appropriate setting for the birthplace of John the Baptist. Nevertheless the peace of fulfilled desire, of deferred hope accomplished, still lingers over this place. On this spot Mary visited her kinswoman Elisabeth; here she sang her song of praise.

There is a well at Ain Karim, as at Nazareth, where all the women go at morn and even to draw water for their household. One goes down by two flights of stone steps through the roofless arches of an old church, and which is associated with the visit of Mary to Elisabeth. Less famous, it is infinitely more beautifully situated and picturesque and surely also deserves the name of the Virgin’s Fountain, for I feel no doubt that Mary and Elisabeth drew water here and chatted with their neighbours just as these women of the village are doing, while I linger for some time and watch them passing to and fro with stately carriage and peaceful water jars carried on their heads. There is no other well at Ain Karim, and the customs of the East are unchanging.

This well is the business centre of the village and is used by the women for washing the clothes, and friends meet to laugh and chat. It is a very human spot, happy and full of peace, yet with an indescribable atmosphere as though the girls and women, tall and graceful, with pitchers on their heads, who gather there, are conscious of wonders enacted so long ago near the place where they assemble. The
throng round the fountain, the good temper and flashing musical waters, the sunlight and gentle green of the moss springing from the stone walls, the tinge of colour trailed along the hedgerows, of poppies and cranesbills, weeds of no great note, but such as the good God scatters everywhere on the waste ground — all this is a sight calculated to make a man love his kind.

Amidst such beautiful scenery, Mary dwelt with Elisabeth for three quiet months before the Child was born.

At the outskirts of the village we begin to ascend. Here we meet good-natured, squat, broad-faced Russian women, who greet us in their friendly fashion. The Russian community is the most interesting. It was founded over fifty years ago by Russian pilgrims and has gradually grown into a settlement of eighty aged nuns, who have built little stone houses around the hill terraces. They conduct the services of the church and eventually die and are buried there. The whole place is a model of comfort and cleanliness, all walls being whitewashed and spotless, while gardens are brilliant with flowers.
The poverty of the Russian Church is today one of the most pitiful things in the Holy Land. The diet of the nuns is tea and brown bread. They are devout women whose misfortunes have made the flame of their piety burn even more brightly. Their church in contrast to some of the dusty, dark places in the hands of the monks, is spotlessly clean. The poor half-starving women lavish on it a passionate love and tenderness.

We then make our way to the Sanctuary of the Visitation, where Elisabeth and Zacharias lived and where Mary sang her «Song of Praise.» We are greeted by a Spanish monk who so kindly welcomes us that we linger long conversing with him about many topics. The courtesy and kindness shown by the monks to those who are not of their own faith, deserves all praise! It is a hospitable tradition of the Middle Ages that is very pleasing, and as the monastic orders are composed of men of all nations, the visitor can at these establishments invariably find some one who speaks their mother tongue. On entering the chapel we see on the right side a rock in a niche, bearing the imprint of John's body. This rock has a curious history, and the legend, as told by the monk in charge, is that when Herod's soldiers were killing the innocent children, Elisabeth fled to the mountains, and concealing the forerunner of the Lord, laid him on this rock, which miraculously softened as wax to receive him, so the child was hidden and saved.

We then go out to the garden, and the monk gladly gives us flowers as a remembrance of our visit. It is the same garden where Mary and Elisabeth walked together after the meeting, and as they did so, the monks tell us, that the flowers the Blessed Virgin brushed against, even those that had no natural scent, are said
to have given forth a delightful fragrance. The room in which both used to sit together was filled at all times with a supernatural light, so that Joseph and Zacharias feared to enter it. Surely these associations must ever clothe with the richest interest, the vale and hillside of beautiful Ain Karim.

About three miles distant to the west of Ain Karim is the Spring and Grotto of Ain Habis — the Spring of Confinement — where the Baptist lived as a hermit until the day of his preaching in the desert on the banks of the River Jordan. Directly in front at the top of the mountain bounding the valley is an open door in the rock leading to the grotto in which the forerunner lived. There is no appearance of a desert in this place except solitude. It is one of the prettiest and best cultivated spots in the Holy Land. «St. John in the Desert,» is a picturesque site, cultivated and fertile, for it must not be forgotten that «desert», according to Oriental significance, means «lonely, solitary place.» Sitting at the entrance of the grotto and looking upon the valley and mountains, all around terraced and cultivated to the very summit, all still and beautiful, I thought I have never seen a place better qualified to inspire a pious, philosophic and happy state of mind than this «Desert of St. John.»
CHAPTER III

BETHLEHEM

THE CITY OF OUR SAVIOUR'S NATIVITY

WHEN Mary kissed her cousin Elisabeth good bye, she returned to Nazareth for her wedding to Joseph. Then came the law of Caesar Augustus that every man should go to his own city to be taxed, and so Joseph set off for Bethlehem. So with Mary riding on an ass, they travelled over the sandy track among the yellow hills on their long journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Mary was just about to have her baby, and this journey must have been a long and tiring one. The journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem took me a little over three hours in a fast car. For the Holy Family, walking on foot or riding an ass, it must have been a journey of several days.

«And now we are to go unto Bethlehem.» From Jerusalem it is only six miles distant, and yet what a change of scenes and environment. The winding roadway leads us thither through scenes rich in history and tradition.

Half-way on our journey we come to the Well of the Magi, otherwise called the Well of the Star. It is just a simple well by the roadside, but it has stirred the imagination of pilgrims from earliest days, for tradition has it that the «Wise Men» in search for the «Infant King» having lost sight of the guiding star, rested at this well and saw the reflection of the
star in its water. Then the Convent of Elijah crowns a peak surrounded in hoary legend.

Half a mile farther on we reach the Tomb of Rachel. Impressive is this tomb, where a modern house, built in the style of the East, white-walled and white-domed covers a rough block of stone worn smooth by the kisses of the Jewish women down through the centuries. It is a site venerated alike by Christians, Moslems and Jews, and it has the distinction of being almost the only holy place in Palestine of which the Jews are custodians.

The Tomb of Rachel by Bethlehem's Sacred Way

On the outskirts of Bethlehem we come to David's 'Well from which David's three mighty men brought him water at the risk of their lives, breaking through
the hostile host of the Philistines. This story brings to mind so vividly a picture of the spirit of human comradeship, and one of the prettiest of romances in the Old Testament. But it is the «Well of the Star» that thrills us today — the Star of the East.

Like Jerusalem, Bethlehem is a town of immemorial age and has been subjected to many vicissitudes: a hamlet a thousand years before Christ, it has been destroyed and rebuilt time and again.

A visit to Bethlehem at Christmas is an experience that one will never forget. The spirit of Christmas always seems to linger about the narrow and twisted streets of this City of the Nativity.

Bethlehem today is regarded as one of the most prosperous towns in Palestine. It strikes us as solid and self-contained. There is not the «mixter-maxter» of races we meet in Jerusalem. The very dress and deportment of the people seem more staid and correct, if not old-fashioned. There is an air of placidity about the place. Nowhere in Palestine has the British touch made a greater impression on the social well-being of the people than in this city of our Saviour's birth.

We enter Bethlehem by the newer road that leads straight to the court of the Church of the Nativity. We realize in a moment that we are on a hilltop, and as we look toward the east our eyes range down the terraced hillside and over the valley in which there is really the only «field» near Bethlehem. The first appearance of Bethlehem is very striking in whatever direction it is approached. It is built upon a ridge of considerable elevation and has a rapid descent to the north and east. The white stone of which the hill is composed and of which the town is built makes it very hot and gives it a dusty appearance.
We are now in the courtyard. Time was when this forecourt presented a picturesque appearance. In place of the evenly paved surface were rough cobblestones. Bedouins with the camels, sheep and goats crowded round an ancient well, jostling the worshippers who were making their way to the tiny front entrance. Broken pillars, relics of the colonnade of the ancient atrium, lie along the adjacent wall and afford seating accommodation for those tourists a-wearyed by the round of sight-seeing.

Thought of millions of people turn lovingly to Bethlehem, the Nativity scene of the First Christmas

Like all other sacred sites in the Holy Land the Church of the Nativity is now shared in common by Christian sects. Here as in many of the historic churches which mark holy sites, many Christian sects worship — Latin, Greek, Armenian, Copts — with the exception of the Protestant.

The place in the sacred building which each sect occupies, the duration and manner of the service,
even the number of times they would burn incense, as well as that portion of the church each sect could clean and regard as his own, were all dictated by imperial decrees.

The church which covers the traditional birthplace of Christ is one of the oldest in the world. No doubt Jesus was born in a stable and lay in a manger, and what may have happened is this. His parents, who were humble people, coming in the course of their travels to Bethlehem went to an «inn» and could get no accommodation. What an inn was in a little town like Bethlehem two thousand years ago may be imagined! It may have consisted of one or two chambers only, in which there was no room for them. The country all round about is very hilly: the ground floor on one side of a building would be the second floor of another side. The stable was, in all likelihood, the ground floor as basement of the inn in which travellers could house their donkeys and camels: and accommodation was little worse than that afforded above, and the manger may well have been a shelf or ledge of rock. Many a baby in Palestine before and since the time of that Christ-Child has been born in a stable, and a manger has served for the crib. Mangers for donkeys and other domestic animals, driven indoors by stress of weather, are scooped in a conveniently-placed ledge of rock.

We enter the church by a very small door, so small that we have to stoop, to remind men that they must bend their knees when they come to visit Him in His home. In former times a larger doorway had to be reduced in order to prevent Moslems taking their horses and donkeys and sometimes camels into the sacred edifice and disturbing the Christians in their prayers. We emerged through
the tiny doorway into the glorious church so inspiring in appearance as to make one catch one's breath, for beyond its wonderful pillars we knew we were to descend into the Cave-Stable where the Prince of Peace was born. Before going into the chapel of the manger we will take a candle from a most magnificent-looking priest, with the most marvellously combed jet black hair it is possible to imagine.

There is a very pretty custom in Bethlehem at the present day which has been observed for many generations. Most of the readers, I am sure, have seen the grotto beneath the Church of the Nativity, which is said to have been the stable wherein Christ was born. A silver star on the pavement is supposed to mark the actual spot where the birth took place and near by is a recess which tradition affirms to have been the manger, wherein the new born Child
was laid. On Christmas morning, while it is yet dark, after a service of praise, an image of an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes is carried in procession by clergy and worshippers to the accompaniment of a gladsome song and reverently placed on the star. The Scripture lesson is then read— the beautiful story from Luke's Gospel, of the young mother and her Babe at Bethlehem, and the shepherds who heard the angelic announcement while abiding in the field keeping watch over their flocks by night. Thus the entire ritual is still observed, and Bethlehem is always thronged with people at midnight for this happy occasion.

No voice breaks the stillness, we simply stand and think. And what mortal among us can gaze unmoved upon this star? Can we not picture the scene of the Birth of Christ in the impressive silence of this moment?

We descend quietly three steps and find ourselves in the Chapel of the Manger. An excavation in the rock covered with marble and hung with lamps represents the manger. The original manger, we are
told, now rests in the Church of St. Maria Maggiori, in Rome, whither it is said to have been carried in the twelfth century. Opposite the manger is an altar dedicated to the wise men, who came to adore the infant Saviour. Fifty-three silver lamps burn always before the statue of the Virgin and her Child. In the little chapel above the entrance to the cave, the pictures of the Virgin are loaded with the gifts of pilgrims. I saw, too, little silver and gold models of arms and legs and asked the old Greek priest what they were. He told me they are brought by people suffering from infirmities who pray for the Virgin Mother to be cured and leave the little silver models as a reminder behind them. There was a tiny silver model of a baby, left by a pious woman pilgrim who came to pray for a child!

In the adjoining Chapel of the Innocents we are shown under an altar a low opening covered by an iron grill which gives access to an empty cavern, in which, according to tradition, were deposited the bodies of the innocent children of Bethlehem that were slain by the order of Herod. We also see the Tomb of Jerome, a saint who translated the Bible from the Hebrew into the Latin language, and who died at Bethlehem in A.D. 420.

Sounds of chanting and intoning from different chapels greet our ears as we leave. We pass one of the policemen who are constantly on guard within this church, whose sanctity in times past more than once has been rudely disturbed by the tumult of sectarian bickerings. Yes, even at the birthplace of the prince of peace there have been many religious feuds, sordid and bitter. The sacred star itself was once stolen, and the resulting dispute was settled by the late Sultan of Turkey. He replaced the star at
government expense so that none of the rival sects could claim special ownership. A wise thought, indeed.

Near the Church of the Nativity is the Grotto of the Milk, which is the scene of a beautiful legend. It is believed that the Virgin was feeding Jesus here when a drop of milk fell upon one of the stones. And now when a mother cannot feed her baby, she makes a «pilgrimage» to this grotto to obtain a little of the powdered stone from the priest to mix with water which she drinks. After drinking this «holy drink» the milk is supposed to return to her breast.

There is no disillusionment about Bethlehem. The colourfulness of the East is proverbial and in Bethlehem we have it in all its intensity. In Bethlehem are all the quiet shades of the land and all the brilliant lights that gave their colour to the Gospels. In going through the streets we can see that its people are industrious and intelligent and its women good-looking. The inhabitants are supposed to be
descendants of the Crusaders with a mixture of Arabic and Syrian blood. The picturesque headdress of its women today is that of the period of the Crusaders.

Standing as it does in the midst of a fertile district that produces wheat, barley, olives, vegetables and grapes, Bethlehem, today is a busy market town. As I walked up the village street I saw the quaint shops, open to the street, where they carve mother-of-pearl into crucifixes and brooches for the pilgrims and tourists and make olive wood covers for Bibles. Children offer us, in pleasant and somewhat plaintive voices, stars of Bethlehem and strings of beads; and, a fifteen-year-old boy, slender and brown-eyed and eager, tells us that «my father made these by hand» as he offers us his collection of mother of pearl stars.

Here the shepherds heard the angelic announcement of the Saviour’s Birth.

Not much more than a mile and a half distant from Bethlehem to the east, is the village of Beit-Sahour said to be that in which the shepherds dwelt, to whom the supernatural announcement of the Saviour’s birth was made. We approach it by a steep descending
road, with fig and olive trees scattered on every side. The soil is very white and chalky. All around this place the eye wanders over scenes beautiful in their natural charms, and hallowed by sacred memories. On the slopes down, the story of Ruth had its scene. Yonder lie the Fields of Boaz where he allowed Ruth to glean after the reapers: and the path by which she and Naomi climbed up to the town is still the same as that which leads to the village from the glen.

We wind our way down the road to the Fields of the Shepherds in order to reach the spot where the angels proclaimed to a little group of shepherds on a hillside the message of «peace on earth and good will toward men.»

Sitting among the olive trees we try to hear re-echo the «Gloria in Excelsis» of the angels. As we stand here it is not difficult to figure the shepherds keeping watch over the grazing flock. Here we can dream of the night long ago when the shepherds were awed by their bright visitors.

The field on which a glory seems still to shine is enclosed by stone walls with many olive trees to shelter it. It is a tranquil and grassy plain, making with its surroundings a pleasant picture which helps the imagination to realize the scene described in Luke 2. One could see the grotto, a small, square tower now filled as a church. It was to this fold that the angels came to announce the wonderful news to the shepherds that a Saviour was born. Old gnarled olive trees, the trunks riven, twisted and pierced by age and disproportionately large for their crown of green leaves, give a touch of beauty to the boldness of the landscape and afford shade to the peasant while tending the long-eared, broad-tailed sheep. I am much inclined to think that it
may be really the place in which the shepherds kept watch by night. Of course there has been great change in the surface of the surrounding country in the course of so many centuries, but at the present this is certainly the most pastoral-looking plain in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem. All we know and all we need to know is that it was somewhere within the circuit of the hills that the shepherds watched, that it was in these skies that they saw the multitude of the heavenly host and heard yonder the song. I sat down under the trees and looked up into the sky where once the multitude of the heavenly host made glorious harmony; and then across to that quaint and picturesque town of the Nativity, pleasant from any point of view.

The Field of «Good Tidings»
CHAPTER IV

PALM-ENCIRCLED MATTARIA.

BEYOND THE REACH OF THE TYRANT HEROD

As the days passed by and the Magi failed to return and acquaint Herod with the new-born King, his terror increased and he presently ordered the massacre of the male infant of Bethlehem. Herod probably thought that his object had been accomplished and that the dreaded Child had perished among the infants slain. But Joseph had been warned in a dream to take the young Child and His mother and withdraw with them to Egypt.

One may point out that at Bethlehem, Joseph would get all the necessary information for the journey and full instructions as to the route, for the great "Inn" where Christ was born, was the starting place for Egypt, where the caravans were made up.

The painters who are great conservators of tradition have made us familiar with the idea that the journey was performed by the aid of a donkey on which the mother and the Child rode, while Joseph trudged on beside, before or behind. An ass or a mule might easily have been purchased for the journey with the gifts of the magi, and the probability that they travelled not alone, but in company with others journeying in the same direction, whom they may have joined on the road.

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Palm-Encircled Mattaria

It is an easier journey now than it was for the Holy Family. We will leave them plod on their weary way, which must have been a rather sweet journey even though it was made hurriedly and under sad conditions.

We will board the train. We are off on our journey to Cairo in a railway coach. We just wonder what Moses would think if he knew how quickly the Children of Israel, after all their vain journeyings through the wilderness, could get back to the «flesh pots of Egypt» by taking a cheap ticket from Jerusalem to Cairo. The railway journey is a trip of fourteen hours. But it is a wonderful journey!

We start from Jerusalem. In wild tumultuous hills the country of Judea tumbles down into the Valley of Philistia. We ran through rounded rocky hills and gorges, the reputed scenes of Samson's birthplace and exploits. Gradually we come to Ramleh, the home of Joseph of Arimathea. Then we go sweeping down the valley of the Philistines and gradually reach Ascalon and Gaza, where Samson carried off the iron gates. Our last memories of the Holy Land were the shrill calls and whistles of the women and children gathered at the Station of Gaza to speed the contingent of Mecca pilgrims who boarded the train. Sand, sand, sand, now spread out before us as we speed toward Egypt. We traverse good many miles of the desert, a veritable ocean of sun-bleached sand-hills with occasional peeps between them of the purple blue sea beyond.

Mount Sinai comes into sight, where Moses received the Law. Up to here we had travelled by the modern routes, but from here for so many weary miles we are to travel over one of the most ancient routes in the world. Routes which until recently have only been
trodden by camels, mules and other slow animals, doing ten or at least fifteen miles a day from sunrise to sunset.

Such a caravan may have been travelling on the route to Egypt on the night of the "Flight to Egypt."

Coming at Kantara at seven o'clock at night is rather eerie and very exciting. At last the Suez Canal comes into view. The sun is just setting over this knife-like wedge in the heart of the desert. Hurrying figures are vaguely outlined in the dusk: a great clatter of luggage and porters.

We are bundled into a large Customs House where priests with flowing hair, brisk merchants and tourists are opening their bags spreading various possessions on the counter.

Within one hour after our arrival we board the train leaving for Cairo. During the next few hours we become actually aware of two things — water and vegetation. With what abundance is Egypt blessed! Outlined in the moonlight, the villages and
towns along the way seemed veritable gardens. Then at about eleven o'clock at night, we pulled into the still wide-awake station of modern Cairo.

In imagination we arrive with the Holy Family into the Land of the Pharaohs. Probably the Holy Family when crossing the Land of Goshen would make their way to the «City of the Sacred Lions» where Onias the priest had built a temple like that of Jerusalem, but on a smaller scale. Here Joseph would find no difficulty in earning his living among people of his own community.

Beersheba was a sanctuary associated with the patriarchs of the Old Testament and may have been a resting place of the Holy Exiles on their «Flight to Egypt.»

There are legends in the Coptic Church that the Holy Family visited several places far up the Nile. The only legend, however, which bears the signs of probability claims that Joseph lived for a time at a place called Mattaria, close to the Obelisk of On. It was here the Holy Family spent those years of which the Gospel is silent.

Let us visit this place. It lies about eight miles
from Cairo. Reaching the place we knocked at the wooden gate which, after payment of the required fee, was opened to us. Clover grows in the meadow, flowers in the banks, palms and firs and eucalyptus throughout the whole garden. Here for centuries an immense sycamore has been venerated as the tree under which the Virgin rested with the Child in her arms. The tree itself is within a round walled enclosure. It is believed to be not less than two thousand years old. Much of it is now a mass of dead, gnarled branches joined in tortuous tangle, grey-white like wind-swept rocks. But one huge arm thrusts itself from the stony confusion and waves its fruits with an air of pride and will do so for generations to come. From many of the knobs and stumps coloured rags hang fluttering, torn from garments and tied here by the sick folk of these parts who come to cure their ailments by the grace of this venerable tree. They offer to it the cloth which covered the affected part of the body and thus contribute in adorning it. The patient is further required to pluck two leaves from this wonderful tree and bandage them with another piece of cloth on the affected part.

One of the roots of the tree is visible over the ground in the form of a little arch. The keeper asserts that a barren woman passing through this arch will be blessed with fertility!

Even today the ancient garden is still visited by pilgrims. The old grey sycamore tree is propped with timber. I could not help gazing with great interest on the gnarled hollow trunk of that great sycamore whose branches are still believed to have miraculously bent down in order to form a leafy tent of shelter for the «Holy Exiles.» They saved them-
selves from the soldiers' violence by the favour of a spider's web, that covered them suddenly and appeared very old, though it was made in an instant by a miracle, so that the soldiers imagined not that any person could be hid within, much less the persons whom they were seeking.

Another legend asserts that this tree spontaneously bent itself to the Virgin when she wished to eat of its fruits and rose again when she had gathered them. The Saracens seeing this, cut the tree down, but the following night it sprang up again, as straight and entire as before, and consequently the Copts now venerate and even adore the tree.

Traditional Trace of the Holy Family's sojourn in Egypt is a Sycamore Tree at Mattaria.

Devotees have not been deterred by its holiness from cutting in their names and initials on every available spot on its withered trunk. Yet neither such folly nor time, which has left it only a cluster of vast fragments, has been able to check the luxuriant foliage of some still vigorous and spreading branches which mark its truly perennial character.
There is a well fed by the springs of which the water is sweet: all others in the neighbourhood being brackish. The Holy Family arriving from the Desert of Sinai, weary and worn and having for many days tasted only the foul water, one can well imagine their delight in welcoming the sweet clear and cold water of Mattaria.

When the Holy Family arrived here, they went from house to house asking, but in vain, for a glass of water. Faint, thirsty and sorrowful the Virgin sat down to rest herself, when suddenly the sacred fountain sprang forth at her side. This fountain, is said to have been originally salty, but converted to a pure and sweet spring by the sanctity of those who were sheltered here, and whose waters were drank by the Holy Family. It is further said that when the Virgin threw the water away, a rich crop of balsam plants grew in the place. The balsam, it is said, with fond and amiable superstition, refused to yield its produce to any irrigation save that of the Fountain of the Virgin. These grew for many centuries thereafter, and were distilled into a fine oil, which was much prized for use in the baptismal font of the Coptic Church.

Under the tree a girl-mother was nursing her child. Here I was reminded of the Virgin and her Child. She must have been about the same age that Mary was then. The little one laughed and crowed as they rested under the tropical sun. On the rug at her right hand was a heap of maize she had been shelling. At the same time a score of other children gathered round me and posed for my camera in front of the tree. The sacred tree seemed to tie the past and the present together, and the children brought to my mind those of the times of the Saviour.
Out here under the shade of the tree on the spot where Joseph and Mary rested they cared for nothing!

Just outside the garden the Jesuit Fathers have built a modern little church. Bright frescoes on its walls tell the story of the «Flight into Egypt.»

In the glow of sunset, along the border of a green field, a woman was riding a little donkey. Her loose garments fluttered in the wind. Her head was bowed. No one was near her. She was evidently on her homeward way to one of the huddled mud villages which lie along the Nile. Suddenly I seemed to see another woman of an older day, perhaps returning in like manner to her temporary dwelling place, where a Child awaited her coming.

So with the Holy Family we come up again out of Egypt for the Saviour’s work to be done. The time of exile in Egypt was short and Herod was dead. In his mother’s arms throughout the weary journey, rocked by the swaying of the patient donkey, Jesus was brought back to his father’s house at Nazareth: back to the humble dwelling with its workshop where the noise of the hammer and of the file ceased only with the setting of the sun behind the Hills of Galilee.
CHAPTER V

ALONG THE HIGHWAY TO NAZARETH
THE HOLY FAMILY MAKES HER PASSOVER PILGRIMAGE

ON leaving Jerusalem for the north, lying sometimes on the right and sometimes on the left of us, begin to unfold objects of history memorable to Christians and Jews. Far away over dipping gorges and climbing hill rises the high point known as Nebi Samuel, for long the reputed burial-place of Samuel and the site of Mizpah. Here the Crusaders with the noble-hearted Godfrey, first saw Jerusalem and named the spot the «Mountain of Joy.» Just below Nebi Samuel may be seen El-Jib what today represents the former home of the cunning Gibeonites.

On our other side, in desolate rock-strewn country scarred and seamed with stony height and hollow, in near full view lies Gibeah, the royal residence of king Saul. Beyond, hidden deeper in the hills are Anatoth and Michmash. All these are within five brief miles of Jerusalem. Poor, miserable ruins without trace of dignity or glory today! Whatever their former estate was, it could scarcely be lower now. «Bean’s Hill» — Tell el Ful — as it is called today, was the palace and town of Israel’s earliest king. And what a country. An odd grass blade struggles to live beneath a burning sun amid the treeless, heartless mass of stones. Utter indifference

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to man and even hostility to itself seems to be breathing from the ground. Such blasted scenery persists through all the Judean hills from ten to fifteen miles from Jerusalem.

A breathing space in the desolation is met as we approach Beeroth, the modern Bireh. There Joseph and Mary once pitched their tent, after a single day's journey from the «City of Security», and missed the Child Jesus. In this village is the ruin of a Crusader's Church built in 1164 and dedicated to the B.V. Mary. It marks the place where Joseph and Mary are believed to have begun the search for Jesus amongst «their kinsfolk» returning with the Passover pilgrims from the Holy City to Nazareth, and «when they found him not they turned back again to Jerusalem seeking him.» Their search ended in the Temple at Jerusalem. The village, anciently a much frequented halt for caravans, is barely ten miles distant, but the «day's journey» of the Gospel account may refer to the first recognized stopping place on the main north road from Jerusalem. Here the Galilean pilgrims reached the northern boundary of the environs of Jerusalem. A pleasant air has Beeroth, a fragment of respite from dour barrenness.

Here between us and the furnace-vale of the Jordan Valley, and still surrounded by an inhospitality of nature scarcely conceivable with seeing, gloomed about by despair without promise of dawn, are spots of mighty history in the divine design, Bethel and Shilo, forsaken and fallen.

It was in Bethel that Abraham encamped with his nephew, Lot choosing the Plain of the Jordan for his resting place. On all sides there are ruins of churches, altars and towers, but Bethel is still rich in Old Testament recollections, and a standing monument
likewise to the fulfilment of the prophecy against her that she should «come to nought.» Such in the main are the Judean hills through which our smooth road runs.

The landscape is still composed of great lifting ridges, and deep-boring gorges, but the hard heartedness and rough refusal of nature is becoming palliated by the olive tree. It is dappled in singles, on sides of heights and in bottoms of hollows. Here, in a morsel of reddish pebbly soil, it bravely and unalteringly grows and offers its grateful shade and fruit to passing men.

In a deep and lengthy valley, bursting with green fertility, the olive trees grow profusely with other foliage. The vale has continuous watering from an unfailing spring. We could be very happy but for the ominous name the flowing waters bear. This indeed is the «Robber’s Well», and here they dwelt, not only of old but of modern days, birds still to be watched for in the dusk at times. Up again to the utmost height and on to the brow of a long ugly, hostile ridge, whence down we go spiraling, twisting, turning, slanting, conquering its precipitous face, to reach the flat below and gaze sadly at all that remains of Lubban, whence once rich wines were brought for the temple services.

Across open spaces, which we may call meadows we approach Nablus, the modern Shechem, taking little glimpses even of the High Priest Eleazer’s tomb away in the right distance, with that of Phinehas, his son. A site of more attractive fame, comes to the eye, Jacob’s Well of undying story, famed through the Christian, Jewish, and Moslem world. Also Joseph’s Tomb reveals itself. Gerizim towers above on one side, the well in the valley at its foot, Sychar and Mount Ebal rising behind.
Leaving Nablus we have now in the distance a view of the "Hills of Samaria", the terraced sides of which with its foliage and verdure at once attract our attention. Tourists agree in extolling the beauty of its situation as unequalled in Palestine. It is an oblong elevation, rising some five to six hundred feet above the valley that surrounds it and is not far from three miles in circumference at its base. It is environed with mountains and hills and must have been always dependent on its wells, cisterns and sometimes springs. Long the capital of the ten tribes, its history and vicissitudes have a distinguished prominence on the sacred page.

Nablus always greets the visitors with its green framework.

The drive through the hills on the borders of the Plain of Esdraelon is in spring one of delightful beauty. A few miles farther on we strike on our left a fine patch of pastureland surmounted by a little green hillock, on the slopes of which are the ruins of a large ancient well. We are on the plain of
Dothan, where Joseph's brethren came to feed their flocks, and the well is called to this day the »Pit of Joseph.» It requires no stretch of the imagination to reconstruct the story.

As in the days of Joseph, the Plain of Dothan is constantly used for pasture.

Then we reach Jenin, with its solitary mosque and beautiful gardens at the southern boundary of the great plain or the frontier between Galilee and Samaria. It was one of the Levitical cities. This town has a legendary connection with our Lord's healing of the Ten Lepers. The tradition does not appear to be very venerable. In Luke's Gospel the only indication of the locality of the village, near the entrance to which one Samaritan and nine Jews cried »Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us», is that it was approached while passing through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. The Plain of Esdraelon was neutral ground between these hostile districts. It has, therefore, been thought that the «certain village» was
more probably on the plain itself, since nine Jewish lepers would hardly have been tolerated close to a Samaritan town. Flourishing orchards and palm groves by a brook support the identification with Hebrew Engannim, as the name means «Spring of Gardens.»

Not all of Palestine is rugged and hilly as we see by continuing north through the Plain of Esdraelon. This is a very fertile valley, on an average of twelve miles wide and perhaps forty miles long. Here the Jews have bought land and have settled.

The Plain of Esdraelon is crammed with historical associations, chiefly of a fighting character. Here is Megiddo, the obvious place for decision of struggles between empires not only of the immediate neighbourhood, but at the far ends of the great road that must run through it from Babylonia to Egypt: so that Armageddon becomes typical of the battles of the nations of the world.

It is because Palestine has been a bridge for the nations of East and West from ancient times, that great conflicts have taken place on Esdraelon. The Egyptian hosts, the Canaanites, the warriors of Israel, Gideon and Barak, king Saul, Greeks and Romans, Crusaders and the host of Saladin, Napoleon, and in our own days, Allenby, have heard and saw battles on this great plain. We simply look out and ponder on this plain, whose name is familiar to most of us from our Sunday School days.

Dimly visible, far below towards the Jordan Valley is Bethshan, the modern Beisan and the guardian fortress of Palestine. Memories of Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian and Hebrew warriors are called up by the sight of it.

A mile or two further on is a thin, low line of
buildings, making a slight irregular line on the horizon, which is Jezreel. Here Ahab and Jezebel established their palace, from the window of which Jezebel was thrown into the street to be devoured by dogs. Well it looks a poor enough place now, and there is no king's palace about it.

On Gilboa to the east king Saul died. Here meanders the Kishon, and if you are caught out in the plain in a storm you will readily understand the discomfiture of Sisera's chariots: Endor is close and Nain and Mount Tabor. High above glistening in the sun rises the conical peak of Hermon, «white as snow», while to the right lies the long low range of Bashan, beyond the Jordan. It is a magnificent panorama and brings before one, of the imagery of the prophets and of the psalms more strikingly than almost any other parts of the Holy Land. To the north-west runs the ridge of Mount Carmel, at once calling up the most vivid of Old Testament stories about Elijah — the most fiery of its personalities.

Sitting in a modern car looking out over these scenes, it is thrilling to imagine the traffic and the conflicts that have crossed and recrossed this area of ancient civilizations.

There is much interest on this wonderful road. We realize the wealth of Bible history that opens to us with every mile as we perceive the white houses of modern Nazareth nestling in a gorge between charming hills.
CHAPTER VI.

THE TEMPLE AREA IN JERUSALEM
WHERE THE GREAT PASSOVER WAS KEPT

The crowning point of interest in Jerusalem today is the same which was the centre of life during the sojourn of Christ — the Temple Area, that for centuries witnessed the worship and ceremonials connected with God's ancient people. There is hardly any spot on earth where so many memories may crowd upon the mind as the place where once stood the Temple.

Venerable and deeply venerated is the site known to Moslems as Haram Esh-Sharif — Noble Sanctuary — to Christians and Jews as the Temple Area.

The Temple Area brings the mind closer to our Lord's life than any other site in Jerusalem. Not least, it lies open to the free wind and sun, and we can understand how it was that he was able to look up into a cloudless heaven and the face of a Father. All is friendly here: from the circling pigeons to the grass which knits the stones.

Exclusive of any Biblical or secular historic interest attached to the place, there is sufficient in the character of the buildings, the massive masonry, and elegant decoration to charm even the most disinterested of travellers; but when connected with its wonderful history, no enclosure is more worthy of a visit. Here the ark stood. Here Solomon built
the Temple. Here at least dawned the Light, and the predestined day when the Roman eagles were borne across it, and the hallowed temples of Jehovah went up in flames of fire to heaven. Here the veil or curtain was rent, and the sanctuary desecrated while the blood of its votaries ran ankledeep into the vaults below. Men have worshipped here by millions. The shouts of the visitors, the screams of the conquered, the moans of the dying, the solemn sound of the sacrifice, the blare of ceremonial trumpets have all been heard in turns. No spot on earth, however, has witnessed greater tumult than this sacred enclosure. It is strange amid its quiet to recall the destruction of the First and Third Temple in smoke and flames and the fierce strife at the taking of Jerusalem by Titus.

The Dome of the Rock is one of the most Oriental things that falls under the eye of the visitor. There the great edifice stands in the centre of a white platform, glistening in the sun, with eight massive
sides, surmounted by an impressive dome over a hundred feet in height. Its octagonal shape, its particoloured marble, its glazed tiles of bright colours, and intricate figures, its Arabic inscriptions, its pointed windows, its graceful dome, surmounted by a gilded crescent, and rising from among the tall cypresses around, are a genuine vision of the East. The dome is so aerial and elegant that the eye lingers to see it float away or dissolve in the ardent noon. But the chief interest is found in its central object.

Eleven gates lead into the Temple Area, all guarded from profane feet. One comes suddenly upon an arched entrance through which he has a glimpse of lovely fountains, amid olive trees and tall cypresses, of a wide terrace with its steps beyond leading up to a building of fairy-like beauty glittering in the sunshine. This is the Dome of the Rock.

To enjoy a real thrill we must stand in the Temple Area when the sun is shining and throws its million coloured lights through the glorious windows. We will see men squatting on the ground chanting the Koran with these coloured lights playing about them.

Reaching the gate to the Dome of the Rock we are asked to pay for the pleasure of entering: but the piasters will be well spent. When we enter the Temple Area we will be amazed at the sudden change. From filth to cleanliness, from narrow alleys to a broad expanse. From lack of architecture beauty to a feast of architectural loveliness.

We took our shoes from our feet and put on red morocco slippers furnished us lest we defile this consecrated area. We entered the holiest sanctuary in Islam, second to Mecca itself. The lavish Persian carpets on the floors secure the most restful contrast to the irritating heat and bustle of the city. The
subdued light, changed to red and purple and yellow in the exquisite stained glass of the windows, relieves the eye and the head. The stately old-fashioned oil lamps still give their dull and awesome glimmer.

The solemn, quiet interior is like a place of enchantment, so richly decorated it is. The columns are green and yellow porphyry, and the capitals burnished gold. The arches are black and white, and its fifty-six slender windows are decorated with stained glass of great splendour. On all sides and in every available space there is glory and a harmony of colour not surpassed in the East. Simplicity is blended with magnificence around the rock inside. Chandeliers and lamps that hang in the arches are but material signs of devotion.

There was one thing we wished to see, compared with which all else is uninteresting. That was the sacred rock! We slowly made our way along the serpentine corridors. The temple is built on two concentric circles the outer wall of the structure being one, and a corresponding screen the other, while in the centre just beneath the mighty dome is what? — A precious shrine? By no means. Some noble work of art? Not at all. A bare rough rock! There is a railing around it but we can look over or through as long as we like. The old rock itself — the genuine rock of ages — is as bare and rugged as when Isaac lay upon it bound. What could not this rock tell us of Bible history if it would but speak! Here Abraham laid the wood for the burnt offering and prepared to sacrifice his only son; here stood the Ark of the Covenant; here was the altar of burnt offerings of Solomon's Temple.

But silence and its rugged face impress one as little else in all the land. It is a mass of rock, the
sole remnant of the top of Moriah, some sixty feet high, by fifty-five feet wide and twelve feet high on the lower side. All the rest of the ridge was cut away when levelling off the platform for the Temple and its courts. No tool of iron has left its mark upon this rock.

The preservation of such a rough rock through the ages in a place where everything else in bygone days has been elaborately levelled and cut away is a thing inexplicable, except on the ground of some ancient and venerable history or tradition. In the heart of this stone lie buried annals of more than a thousand years.

The rock has been there since the beginning and it is likely to remain there until all religions are forgotten and the world is dead and the stars are dark. The Moslems regard this rock with peculiar sanctity.

In Solomon's Quarries
four score thousand
hewers cut stones
for Zion's Holy Shrine
and their tradition is that it descended from heaven when the spirit of prophecy was withdrawn from earth. But that when Mohammed took his flight to Paradise, he ascended from this rock, which attempted to return with him to its glory, and was only restrained by the powerful hands of the angel Gabriel. In proof of this they show us on the rock the footprints of the prophet and also the prints of the angel’s fingers on the stone, for he had to hold the rock down with considerable force. The rock, although its ascension was prevented, refused to touch the earth again, and there it remains suspended in mid-air. The whole rock, as the Moslems say, «is supported in the air by an unseen palm tree.»

Underneath this rough mass of rock is a cave. We are allowed to go down and enter. Maybe we are in the place where Araunah and his sons hid themselves from the angel of the Lord when they were threshing wheat. For thirty centuries at any rate, this rock has been a sacred place.

In the crypt is shown the different spots of prayers. To the right is the place of Solomon’s prayer, another to the left is where David prayed, a small excavation in the left wall will show where Elias prayed, and finally to the north is the place where Mohammed prayed. Above it is a round opening, which tradition says, that when Mohammed came to pray here, he in his prayer rose suddenly and hit the rock with his head. Because he was a saintly person it yielded to the blow as if it were wax and received with veneration the imprint of the prophet’s turban which is still to be seen.

The odd thing in the little cave is that on tapping the floor, we find there is a hollow sound as if a hole were in the floor. It is believed that the opening,
seen there was to carry off the blood and water of the sacrifices in olden times.

In spite of legends of buried treasures, no Moslem would profane the sanctity of the place even to gain the fabled wealth of Solomon for there is a tradition that the round slab in the centre is the gate to hell, and here at the Judgment Day the Last Trumpet will sound when God's Throne will be planted on the rock from which Mohammed ascended into heaven.

The Golden Gate now walled-up was once a main entrance into Jerusalem through which Christ made the triumphant entry into the Temple.

In the Temple Area a church stood for generations under the Crusaders, and Frankish kings offered up their crowns to Christ before the rock on the day of their coronation.

The Mosque of El-Aksa, which stands at the south end of the great enclosure, was originally a church built by Justinian in the sixth century in honour of the Virgin. The noble façade of arches is however Gothic and appear to have been the work of the
Crusaders. Within there are seven aisles, pillars and a dome rising over the centre of the transept, but the effect is poor, for the building, though long, is whitewashed and coarsely painted. There is one point inside this mosque where two pillars stand about six inches apart. The good Moslems believed that in order to enter heaven it was necessary first to pass through between these pillars. Certain stout Moslems had difficulty in accomplishing the feat, some even being seriously injured in the effort, so the space was finally closed. The pillars are shown to the visitor.

Between the Mosque of El-Aksa and the Dome of the Rock stands a fountain, the water of which comes from the Pools of Solomon by Bethlehem, and is used for bathing of the head, hands and feet of worshippers before they go to prayer.

Directly under the plateau on which Solomon's Temple stood is a great catacomb which once formed a part of one of the Jerusalem of the past. A small doorway under a little dome, which one of the numerous mosque servants opened, admitted us. A flight of forty-seven steps lead down to a small chamber called the Mosque of the Cradle of Christ, from the existence of the hollowed stone which somewhat resembles a cradle, and a tradition that the Virgin remained in this chamber for some time after her purification in the Temple. This little mosque was also the place where Simon took up the Child in his arms and blessed Him, and also the room where Joseph and Mary found Him with the doctors asking and answering questions. Zacharias the aged priest, lived here also close to the Temple and the Virgin stayed in this house when she brought her Infant Son to present Him.
Through a door from this room we passed into the celebrated and much debated spacious vaults which extend over an acre of ground of the Temple Area. They may originally have formed part of the precincts of Solomon's palace or the Temple itself: bearing all the marks of the builders of the first Temple.

These are vaulted avenues supported by immense pillars of massive stones placed singly one above the other. There may be twenty of these avenues exposed and each avenue may have a dozen of these pillars of enormous height and size which support the whole, each pier being five feet wide and composed of large marginal drafted stones. The rows are connected by semi-circular arches, the intercolumniations of which range from ten to twenty-three feet. The floor of these vaults is about forty feet below the Temple Area, and more than one hundred feet above the great foundation corner stone.

It seems evident the original design of these huge vaults was to support the flat area of the courts above. For we must recollect that when Solomon began to build, the present area of the Temple Courts formed the top sides of a hill. The vaults are chiefly interesting as showing what vast substructures were needed to bring this part of the slope of the hill to a level to form the platform above.

It is a most imposing sight to stand at a corner which commands a view of the columns. Certainly it left us dumb with amazement, for if this place, capable of taking thousands of horses, was only a small part of the stable of king Solomon, there is no wonder that the Queen of Sheba had «no more spirit left in her.»
Chapter VII

RIVER JORDAN
WHERE JOHN BAPTIZED THE REDEEMER

Many years had passed between Jesus' visit to Jerusalem at the age of twelve and his emergence into active ministry. What happened in that intervening period we can only conjecture. The Gospels are silent about it. But we may be sure that those years of youth and manhood brought to Jesus an increasing consciousness of His Divine vocation.

Jesus in far-off Nazareth was pondering over the religious revival in Judea. Had the time at last arrived when He must give vent to all that for years had been welling up in His heart? In obedience to an inner prompting that could not be denied, Jesus joined the bands of travellers to the south, and one day took His place among the fervent crowds by the banks of the Jordan.

* * *

A drive of one hour and a half from Jerusalem through the palm-city of Jericho over long tracks of pink and golden sand where nothing grows but a small, silver-gray shrub, brings us to the Jordan. The Jordan is the river of rivers, the emblem of life's last passage to the spiritual Canaan. Of all rivers in the world it is the most celebrated and the most honoured.

Every schoolboy knows that the Jordan is the principal river in Palestine, that it rises in the valley
at the foot of Mount Hermon, and flows through the Lake of Galilee and then winds tortuously down the ravine, till it loses itself in the Dead Sea. And every school boy knows too, that there is something more than mere geographical interest attaching to the river. Who is there, I wonder, who would not like to see it for himself, and why, and what is the reason that thousands of way-worn pilgrims and wealthy tourists from distant climes come to visit the stream and bathe in its sweet water? What is the dynamic attracting force that draws so many to stand on the banks and cast a wistful eye? It is because three times have these waters been miraculously divided and these events took place where we stand! It was over against Jericho where the Israelites crossed when the ark remained in the midst. Here Elijah and Elisha came, watched by the young prophet from a neighbouring hill, the day Elijah was taken up to heaven.

The Jordan is the most celebrated and the most honoured of all the rivers in the world.
Here too the proud Naaman bathed his leprous person and was made whole. To one unacquainted with the rivers mentioned in connection with his cure, there is the appearance of pride and contempt in his language, but in recalling in the moment of disappointment and chagrin, the clear waters of the Abana and Pharpar, in contrast with the yellow, turbulent waters of the Jordan, the Syrian warrior but indicated the correctness of his taste in preferring the «Rivers of Damascus to all the waters of Israel!» But after a cure so miraculous, notwithstanding its inferior beauty, the Jordan must have been to him the noblest and most sacred of rivers!

But here a still more momentous event transpired — one that fills the mind with wonder and amazement, one on which heaven looked down with approval, and the Holy Ghost endorsed by his visible presence, one sanctioned by the voice of God himself — here Christ was baptized. This last event stamps the river Jordan with everlasting preeminence over all the rivers in the world.

* * *

Of a sudden, with no inviting green to herald him, one comes upon the waters of the Jordan. The breadth of the Valley of the Jordan is said to average about fifteen miles and nearly in the middle of it is the bed of the river. On the east are the Plains of Moab, bounded by the range of Abarim, with Mount Nebo looking over the valley.

The course of the Jordan is on both sides quite concealed by the thick foliage which it nourishes. In the Bible the wild growth of vegetation on either side of the Jordan is termed its «pride». The jungle in the moist tropical climate of Palestine's great rift
affords a luxuriant contrast to desert regions beyond and shelter for many wild beasts. Here the tufted reeds grow to a height of twelve feet. Blown by the wind they lie almost flat on the water, and spring upright again when the gust is past. The young shoots are collected by Beduin women to provide fodder for the cattle.

Where Jordan springs from snow-clad Hermon.

In such a landscape the Jordan pushes its fresh waters forth into the Dead Sea. It is the most impressive symbol of hopeless endeavour I have ever looked upon. These waters come down from the fountains of Lebanon and the snows of Hermon, and here they invade the brine, as though the Jordan were making a desperate endeavour to sweeten the bitumen Dead Sea.

The whole length of the Jordan is about one
hundred and fifty miles. As it proceeds onward, sometimes with great noise and force and at other times with a smooth and silent flow, its stream receives contributions on its way from many rivulets which trickle from the hills of Galilee and Judea.

I drank very copiously of its water, which has the softness of milk. It was not easy to know when I had drunk enough. The water has always been believed to be endowed with holy qualities. In the Bible days the sick used to bathe in the waters, hoping to be healed.

Perhaps the greatest refreshment I have experienced was a delightful dip in the waters of the Jordan in a lovely, secluded spot. And it was a pleasant thought, as the sweet waters passed over my head, that perhaps that very spot had been hallowed by the presence and baptism of our Redeemer and had witnessed the ministry of that distinguished person who was «the voice of one crying in the wilderness prepare ye the way of the Lord.»

The river is filled with various kinds of fish and the thicket along its course abound with bird-life. The bottom of the river is anything but pleasant because it is covered with stones and slime. The water here is not at all clear. It is muddy, and the colour of clay, hence many tourists are very much disappointed in the appearance of the stream, which they think should be clear and bright. But the fall of the river is great, it rushes down between its banks with such force that it washes a deal of mud from its sides and so the water looks stirred up. But although the water is muddy the river is a beautiful one. Lovely trees and shrubs, as oleanders, willows, poplars, acacias, line its banks and the reeds rising more than twelve feet high, with their
feathery plumes waving in the breeze. Beautiful birds with a plunge like a pheasant flew up as we approached, and we saw wild ducks and geese in abundance.

As the baptismal station of John the Baptist, and the scene of our Lord's baptism, the Christian contemplates this traditional spot with deeper, sweeter interest. But, however, sincere and intense may be the desire to identify the scene of an event so hallowed, it is difficult to ascertain with certainty where that greatest of all baptisms occurred.

On Epiphany crowds of almost every nation visit the banks of the Jordan. Many centuries ago the Christian believers began to hold a festival on the date on which Jesus first revealed Himself to the world as the Son of God. Since such testimony came from heaven on the date of His baptism, it was on the baptism date that they held the festival.

I attended the three o'clock morning service held in a little crude chapel. There were reading, praying, chanting, incense and much ceremony. Many of the people showed sincerity. Just before dawn a procession was formed at the chapel-altar and slowly moved along the river bank. At a fixed point possibly fifty or more feet from the chapel they descended to the water edge and a number of the priests entered several waiting boats. A blessing was pronounced on the Jordan waters and then the officiating priest dipped his hands into the water and sprinkled it over the people. The boats withdrew from the shore and rowed into midstream until nothing but the candle and torchlights remained visible in the darkness. The weird chanting by the priests together with the moving lights on the river and the awaiting, expectant throng on the banks, cast a
strange, unexplainable spell over us all. Added to this, someone had made small wooden crosses out of sticks, and, fastening a lighted candle to each point of the cross, floated them down the stream. A few minutes later the light of the sun as it slowly climbed into the sky from behind the Mountains of Moab drove the darkness away. There was then a brief benediction, and the service was at end.

Local converts are still baptized in the Jordan. But gone are the opulent days of the monasteries that are by Jordan's flowing bank, days of the great processions of pilgrims from Russia. Few pilgrims come, singing solemn chants and robed in white shrouds to bathe in the sacred water. They submerge their bodies three times below the surface. This bathing in the sacred stream performed, they secure from it a small quantity of the water and a staff from the trees along its banks.

The Jordan will always be an unforgettable memory, beautiful in the extreme and sacred with the remembrance that out of this river came Jesus Himself and was baptized of John and «Lo the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him, and lo, a voice from heaven saying this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.»
Chapter VIII.

MOUNT OF TEMPTATION
THE WILDERNESS WHERE CHRIST
EXPERIENCED SOLITUDE, FASTING
AND TEMPTATION

The road from Jerusalem to the Scene of Temptation lies over chalky hills and through the bleak Wilderness of Judea. Neither pen can describe nor pencil sketch the forbidding aspect of this dreary spot. Judea is some forty miles from north to south and only some fifteen miles wide. The eastern slope forms the justly-described "Wilderness of Judea." From a point not far from east of Bethany, that is within some four miles of Jerusalem the land becomes dry and rocky, when the heat scorches in the summer and the rains scour the surface in the winter; and scattered little flocks hunt between the rocks and some of the valleys for sparse vegetation.

The influence of geography on history through the wilderness has been direct and continuous. The wandering desert Beduin has brought his flocks over these hills and thus carried the primitive nomad life continuously almost to the very gates of Jerusalem. Conversely, the prophets and psalmists, living at the royal court in Jerusalem, found within a short walk of the great city, the solitude and the silence, the circling of the eternal stars overhead, the awe of
the sense of the Eternal. They felt man's need to be able to say, alone and unprotected in the stark desert and among its wild beasts «the Lord is my Shepherd.»

We can see the mystic Mountains of Moab rising up from the shores of the Dead Sea, the Wilderness of Judea on the west and a number of strangely-shaped, almost conical, low hills along the western slopes and down toward the south. As we went nearer we discovered that what appeared to be cone-shaped hills were almost mountains of sulphur and salt. The sun was blazing by this time and the water shone with a deep blue brilliancy.

The hills are broken into a thousand rugged, barren peaks, and in colour are a mixture of yellow and of dull red and white. In summer the intervening valleys are dry and stony, and on all that blighted soil there is neither shrub, flower, blade of grass, nor any living thing to relieve the dreariness of the accursed scene.

High, high up on its cliffs are caves here and there, some natural and some artificial in which hermits dwelt, where they solemnly believed their lonely Master was tempted in all points even as they!

One or two had sometime ago been inhabited by anchorites, who sought to get far away from temptation by abiding in the desert, but they surely found that Satan came to them even there! Fit abode of the devil and his angels, the counterpart of Pandemonium, it was hither the Spirit led the suffering Son of God to encounter the evil one.

Entering Jericho we make our way along the road leading to the Fountain of Elisha and Old Jericho. Looking westward from here the Mount of Temptation is pointed out, although there is no special authority for the belief that this is the «high mountain» that is
spoken of in Matthew regarding the temptation of Jesus after His baptism. It fits very well with the description given, and any way one can easily imagine that this was the vicinity of that momentous occasion.

![Image of Mount of Temptation](image_url)

Sheep graze on verdure and drink from Elisha’s Fountain while springtime lasts. Then they move into the wilderness.

A long lane of oranges, and poplars and eucalyptus trees brings us to the foot of the Mount of Temptation: a very delightful stroll in spring-time. Over the thorn hedges there were bean fields in flower. We passed lemon gardens and almond trees, all in blossom. And along the hedges at intervals rise tall, slender, silent-stemmed poplars and winging rosy catkins.

It is a long but easy ascent from here to the Mount of Temptation, and with every step upward the Jordan Valley looks more terrible in its hot bleached barrenness. When I reached the top of this mountain I was still two hundred feet below sealevel!

As we look northward from here the distinct mark can be seen dividing the wilderness or barren country
from the fertile land of the Jordan Valley. The climate here is tropical and the valley is covered with a growth of tamarisk, poplars, willows and other shrubs.

At the entrance of the monastery I rang the bell. A shabby brother in black gown came and opened the door. We followed him and the room, where we are to spend the night was shown to us.

Just as the sun was setting we sat on the balcony and studied the history of the spot.

* * *

Called Quarantania to indicate the «forty days» during which the Son of God endured the assaults of the evil one upon its summit, the Mount of Temptation is sterile and gloomy. The rocks are white and naked; the sides are perforated with the cells of hermits, who, retiring from society, hoped by all rigors of a solitary life to obtain a better world. They retired for fasting and prayer, and sought free quiet life in this desolate country, which they could not find among the busy citizens. They evidently resided there and passed their lives in these caves and hollows of the mountains. They thought that in this way they followed the example of Christ who fasted and led a hermit life for forty days and nights; and though tempted gained the victory. They evidently forgot that although He fasted for forty days in loneliness, He lived among the people for thirty years.

The summit is covered with an incomplete small chapel, ruins, tombs and forsaken images, the only monuments of the Redeemer's triumph over the Prince of Darkness. In the lower caves some Bedouins with their families had taken refuge, and near them were shepherds guarding their flocks.
An old monk took us through the labyrinth passage of the monastery, cut out of the living rock, to the church with its dust, its dim, gaudy icons, its unlit candles and its air of decay and neglect. He pointed to a cavity beneath an altar, telling us in a solemn voice that it was the cave in which Jesus slept before He was tempted by the devil. There is an altar-piece representing Christ sitting on the very spot, where He is supposed to have lived, and surrounded by wild beasts and Satan fleeing from Him into the darkness. Lest there should be any mistake on the part of the ignorant sightseer, a printed and framed announcement on one of the walls runs as follows: «And immediately the spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. This is the place, gentlemen!»

Then we tip-toed off to some other shrine. The air of death about the place and the old monks who tottered about in their black robes, were rather depressing.

Later we went out to a balcony built over a sheer drop of more than a thousand feet. From here we obtained grand views towards the east and north.

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Now then let us reverently place here the scene of the conflict on our behalf between the Captain of our Salvation and the adversary of our souls. On the result of that combat hangs our fate as well as our Master's. We ought to watch it with breathless interest.

After the exaltation of the baptism of Christ came the testimony in the wilderness. Christ was for about six weeks the subject of the ceaseless attacks of his devilish adversary. Satan felt that now was his
chance to wound God, for God was manifested in flesh, and the flesh is weak! God's word maintains a holy reticence as to the character of the temptations of those forty days and forty nights, telling us only that He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

The waters of Elisha's Fountain once made sweet by this prophet, give beauty to the arid neighbourhood.

Thus it was with the Christ in the lonesome caves of Mount of Temptation, as the sun beat upon Him, or when the moon came up over Moab and was reflected on the waters of the Dead Sea! Satan was there always striving, tempting and luring. The wild beasts were there also.

When the devil had ended every temptation «he left Him for a season,» intending no doubt to return soon. But the strong and tender angels who proclaimed His birth are now permitted for once to minister to the Master. He had come out of the
conflict victorious. He had each of the three times used that sword of the spirit which is the word of God and had prevailed. The Father has watched it all with tender care, and now permits the angels for a space to minister to the Beloved One. That Man did eat angels food.

* * *

With an enormous key the abbot unlocked for us the door which opens the way to the summit. More flowers, more stones, and more cliffs pigeon-holed with hermits' caves are seen as we climb. The view is glorious. Steep red cliffs, like battlements had a mossy verdure on ledge and in cranny. The whole vast Plain of Jericho is stretched out before us, with a wide oval of rich green in the centre where the white and pink houses of modern Jericho gleam in the sun, pricked out with dark cypresses and encircled by groves of orange and banana trees. One can take in at a glance from the summit of the mountain the whole Jordan Valley and Mount Hermon, until one loses count of distance amidst sky and horizon on the mirror of the Dead Sea in the south. Below lies the green and fertile oasis that surrounds Jericho of today. At the foot of the mountain are the mud walls of Jericho of Joshua's time. A dark and winding streak in the middle distance marks the tropical foliage that overhangs the river Jordan. The plain beneath was the scene of our Lord's fasting and the topmost peak of the mountain that of His temptation. This sombre mountain seemed on this sunny winter morning to stand out like a magnificent memorial to Him who here gave the lie to the devil and who here proclaimed that
the world was God's—the world He would shortly redeem on another hill—that of Calvary.

We went down to take our dinner. An old monk who sat opposite me and whose sad face spoke of better bygone days, told me in solemn words how, while a young man he used to frequent cinemas, theatres and other places of entertainments, but now consecrated himself to solitary life. Another monk, thickly-set with ruffled hair and whiskers said he came from the Isle of Crete. He has fulfilled all mundane duties, begetting many children and after he has given them a start in life, he has retired here to «care for his soul.»

Clinging to its mother-rock, the Monastery of Christ's Temptation invites visitors to enjoy the view on the kingdoms of the earth.
Sitting thus I felt an impulse to challenge the monks. What wind of fate has impelled them hither from their land of forests and cool springs? But I refrained. It is not right, perhaps, to awaken home-sickness when the monks were so eager to tell me about their past life and present monastic duties. But I pitied these poor creatures most heartily.

It was the habit in ancient times to treat any stranger as if he might be a «wandering Christ» and this beautiful courtesy still exists in out-of-the-way parts of the world. But most of us have lost it and with it something fine has gone from our lives. That night I lay awake in the oppressive sweet-scented air listening to the frogs and wondering whether it could possibly be cold up at Jerusalem. It was January, and so delicious to feel warm. I forgave even the mosquito who sat on my nose and sipped blood. «Fresh blood » thought the mosquito and went off to tell its fellows. . . .

At two after midnight I woke up and at three o'clock heard the morning bells chiming. I at once remembered the early mass. I sat in my bed and saw the recluses each carrying a lighted candle passing by my bedroom with solemn, soft steps to the little rock-hewn chapel. And the full moon shone brightly throughout the night showing them their way.

After breakfast I had to say good-bye. The monks bade us farewell and the key of the huge iron gate grated harshly in the lock. As the aged monk led us to the main gate and once more said good-bye, adding a blessing in Greek, his eyes still held that antique wonder in them. With a tear in his eyes he continued « May be we shall not see each other again. I am an old man and am preparing my way to the Jerusalem of above. » It was a touching farewell.
It was indeed with very profound regret that two months later, I heard of this venerable monk's death and with an almost pious thought I recollected the few days I spent in his company amongst the mountains that witnessed the temptation of Christ. Everything then came into real life! I remembered how at three o'clock in the morning, the candles for prayer were lighted in the chapel till close on day-break: and how before recommencing the prayers for the day, the monks linger for a moment on the verandah, to give food to the birds whose companionship only the solitary know how to look for and appreciate.
CHAPTER IX.

THE LAND BEYOND THE JORDAN
CHRIST’S MINISTRY IN PEREA.

Who that has ever travelled in the Holy Land has not longed to cross the Jordan Valley to those mysterious hills which close every eastward view with their long, horizontal outline, their overshadowed heights, their deep purple shade? They are the most novel feature of Palestine. The eye is arrested by a long range of intensely blue mountains that rise as a barrier on the farther side of the Dead Sea. The mountains combine all the elements of ever-varying beauty, of historical associations, that cry out an invitation to go and visit them. Let us, therefore, go over among these hills and uplands.

I close my eyes against the dust of the car, the glare of the sun and dream of what I shall find in Perea, the Land of the Ammonites.

The more important cities across the Jordan originally were Greek. These cities lost their freedom to the Jews during the age of the Maccabees and regained it only when Pompey seized the whole land from Rome and gave Trans-Jordan a large measure of autonomy. Ten of these foreign towns consolidated their joint interest in a league called the Decapolis. We hear of it in the Gospel. Folk came from thence to hear Jesus in Galilee, or returned thither to spread His fame, or welcomed His own coming into their bor-
ders. On the chief roads of Trans-Jordan, these flourishing centres stood, and if the ruins of two of them, Philadelphia and Gerasa are typical, they must have been populous and wealthy towns.

For nearly a century before Jesus ministry, the Romans had been masters of Palestine. Under their steady, strong administration with its relentless policy of consolidating the Empire and its ambitious programme of lavish building, we may be sure that more than one city in the land had been splendidly embellished.

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By automobile it is only four hours from Jerusalem to Amman, but it is a change from West to East. We leave the Jordan Valley — in the whole world, the deepest thrust into the earth’s surface and the most completely desolate. Behind us frowns aloft the Mount of Temptation on the top of which is shown the very place where the devil tempted Christ. In front as we travel is the fair seeming oasis of modern Jericho, surrounded by plantations of bananas, oranges and other green growing things. Jericho has a parable of itself at its door. Step aside and pluck that Dead Sea apple, large and soft and round and green. Put it under your foot on the ground and with a pressure discover the empty lie!

Hasten on! There across eleven miles of Jordan plain and valley rise the forbidding Mountains of Moab, clothed in exquisite pink mists, a shimmering fairy land at a distance. Away on the right the waters of the Dead Sea mirror the blue of heaven.

But still what a marvellous scene! On all sides craggy mountain ranges, the great white plain, the sodden, broken-hearted earth, the cones of burnt
marl, the glory of the blue and golden sky, and the blue green waters. Unforgettable!

We soon reach the Jordan Bridge which is guarded. A policeman stops our car. Palestine ends and Trans-Jordan begins at this bridge. After the toll has been collected, we bumped our way over the new bridge, the connecting link between the Holy Land and the Land beyond the Jordan. We enter Perea and the Land of the Ammonites.

The river separates two people that, though they speak the same language and call themselves by the same name, yet are different in ideas and ideals that even belong to different periods of civilization.

Arrived over the Jordan by the bridge, the road runs up into the Mountains of Moab. Nature has been far more bountiful in this land beyond the Jordan than she has been on the west, and the country smiles from all sides on the wayfarers. We have now to climb and regain all the heights we lost on the Judean side. This is Trans-Jordan. The road is rocky and tricky. It runs high up alongside a grievous wide spreading chasm, with a merry stream in its hollow and delighting the eye with masses of pink oleanders.

The eastern bank of the Jordan is clothed with thickets which are really dense, and which even to recent times must have harboured wild animals in their brakes such as we find mentioned in Bible stories. There is, perhaps, no cluster of ancient Biblical associations connected with this road. It has its own beauties and it has memories of the Great War connected with certain spots as we go along.

The road is bordered by pomegranates and vineyards. Today it is a sparsely cultivated country but in ancient times it was prosperous and important,
inhabited by a variety of races—Israelites, Moabites, Greeks, Romans and Ishmaelites. The last hold the country for the past one thousand years or so.

Once we have crossed the Jordan, we seem to have stepped back through the centuries to the days of Abraham, and the wandering tribes of the Semites. We are now traversing the country of the nomads, the tent dwellers, the masters of innumerable flock and herds whose wealth goes wandering from pasture to pasture bleating and lowing, browsing and multiplying over the open moorland beneath the blue sky. Not that the country has no modern conveniences: there are cars on the road, telegraph wires beside it, well-built houses of stone in the towns and often aeroplanes flying overhead. But the atmosphere of the country is patriarchal! Herds of camels wander over the wide spaces and come down in long files to drink at sunset from spring and stream.

Camels quench their thirst from wells they encounter on their way into Trans-Jordan
By the side of the road is a delightful mountain brook of water deliciously noisy amidst the silver fingering of its pebbles and shading itself from the heat with its own luxuriant growth of tall and tufted reeds of oleanders; sight and sound charming to the sense after brookless Judea. From here until we reach Es-Salt we shall not lose this pleasant companionship.

After an hour’s continuous climbing, the town of Es-Salt is reached: a considerable place of twelve thousand inhabitants, possibly Ramoth Gilead of old. Es-Salt is considered by some to be the place which provided the thought in our Lord’s parable of the man standing idly in the market place. I saw such a scene there: men idly «standing» perhaps waiting to be called to work in the famous vineyards around. Here, too, some think is the place where Jesus took the little children in His own arms and blessed them.

A belt of vegetation surrounds this ancient Christian town, vineyards and olive orchards, groves of figs and apricots, hedged by pomegranates, with corn and barley fields beyond. The hills of Gilead are extremely fertile, giving one some idea of what Palestine was like when it was described as flowing with milk and honey. Some of the bunches of grapes were more than a foot long! The raisins that I so much admire come mostly from this neighbourhood.

A visit to Es-Salt would be quite incomplete without ascending the Jabal Hosha, where it is believed the prophet Hosea lies buried. The shrine of the prophet is surrounded by a wall of loose stones in the crannies of which the shepherds have struck their crooks when registering a vow; at the opening is a
dolmen on which sacrifices are still made on great occasions, and the usual rags, odds and ends of votive offerings are to be seen. The Moslems still sacrifice a sheep here and register vows before a witness.

But the interest of this climb is not to see this poor shrine! It is the majestic view that one beholds from a height of over four thousand feet. We come on this view quite unexpectedly after a long but gradual ascent from the town, through vineyards and other terraced cultivation. When we first see it, the strange weird beauty of it takes away our breath! Almost the whole of Palestine lies at our feet. There is our view, surely one of the prize views of the world! It will remain in my mind as one of the dramatic scenes of the Old Testament.

* * *

Once away from the city and heading east we find ourselves on a track lying on the spur of rock mountains. Below are wonderful defiles, none too pleasant to look into from the seat of a car.

We now pass through some very fine scenery when the hills open out and assume grander proportions. The houses are one-storied, low and rectangular, with protruding roof poles and they are white as white-wash can make them.

From here is but one hour's motoring to Amman, the Rabbath Ammon. Presently we see the vague outlines of some shrouded things, the walls and gateways of Amman. Without being aware of it, and upon turning a hill we find ourselves at Amman. In the name of the town the Ammonite still survives.

The chief Biblical interest in Rabbath Ammon centres about its capture by David and Joab, when David
came in person to place upon his own head the rich, golden crown of the king of the Ammonites, while he destroyed the people with saws and hatchets and threw them into the furnace to burn. Horrifying details of cruelty which stain the pages of the Old Testament.

The empires of the past which chose Amman as a capital built well. They and their rulers have gone and are forgotten. The mighty power which ruled it are a memory, but its life goes on just the same. Now it is chosen again, the kingdom has been baptized with a new name.

The Roman ruins scattered over a considerable area are important and well preserved. The chief of these, both in interest and magnificence is the amphitheatre which rises in a great semicircle, evidence of the past of no small brilliance. It was not built for a day but for all time, and magnificently constructed. What sculpture! What care for solidity and beauty! What pains and toils they took! Eight of the fifty columns which marked the entrance are in place, and the semicircular rows of stone benches rising above one another, forty in all, form an amphitheatre, capable of seating some eight thousand persons. This theatre is the largest and best preserved of its kind in the country. It is almost entirely excavated in the side of the hill and partly hewn out of the overhanging cliff.

Today a theatre of the size of this ancient structure in this country would be an anomaly. The country has undergone great changes since the Roman legions trod its hills and victorious generals here held their triumphant celebrations.

For picturesqueness of situation I know of no ruins to compare with those of Amman. The most striking
is the citadel, which formerly contained not merely the garrison but also an upper town and covered an extensive area. We climbed to the citadel and the little Roman temple and looked at that Ammonite and Roman foundations, so very strong that they have remained almost as they were in those far-off days—a sad reflection upon the present day ephemeral work.

Amman is a picturesque town in the heart of Trans-Jordan.

The citadel in all probability contained a temple to Moloch — the flame god — who was supreme object of Ammonite worship, to whom they offered up human sacrifices. The carving and ornamentation inside are very beautiful. Judging by the accounts of sieges the citadel seems to have been largely dependent on the lower town for its water supply.

* * *

The drive to Jerash, the modern Gerasa is varied and beautiful. The country opens out and is often
cultivated. The descent is very steep in spite of which we are mounting all the time! Presently we hear the music of water. We are following a bright little brook, sixty miles long, crossing and recrossing it as it leads us to Jarash. It is Jabbok of the Bible, the ancient boundary between Ammon and Bashan. Here the people of the nearby villages come to fill their pitchers and water skins and to let their animals drink.

Down in the valley where the smooth meadows spread so fair and the little river curves and gleams through the thickets of oleanders, somewhere along the stream there would Peniel be — the place where the name of Jacob was changed to Israel. Here is the famous little river, a swift current of gay blue water — dashing and swirling merrily between the luxuriant growth of wild oats.

The ford is somewhat deep, but our car splashed through gaily scattering the water around in showers which glitter in the bright sunshine. This is the brook beside which a man once met God!

It is no minor event in one's life to visit a ruined and deserted city where over three hundred columns are still standing amid fallen temples and other splendid monuments of a former prosperous age. It is difficult to decide which is the most attractive feature of Jarash: its forests of columns, its ruined buildings or its beautiful situation.

We neared this town of fame. The ruins of Jarash rise like a dream in the desolation of the wilderness, columns, arches and vaults, amphitheatre and temples suddenly appearing in the bare but lovely landscape. For twelve centuries they have stood in unregarded splendid in the wilderness seen only by the nomad Beduins.

Jarash has many wonders for us. As we enter it
through the magnificent triumphal arch and pass under the huge rows of columns up to the temple, we realize a little of the grandeur of Roman civiliza-tion. The gate itself is nearly perfect.

Jarash was one of the cities of the Decapolis and has often been visited by Christ during His sojourn in Perea.

We went off to explore the ruins. Their great extent and the beauty of the surrounding country make one of the unforgettable visions that remain with one afterwards. A wall encircled the town, portions of which are still perfect. Churches, cathedrals, baths, temples, theatres and the remains of elegant structures make up the variety of architectural grandeur now crumbled which one meets when traversing this «City of Columns.»

In all directions well-paved streets cross and recross each other all being flanked by pillars supporting arches. The niches are empty but in the days when this spot was a busy thoroughfare they held the bust of Gerasa's worthy men and warriors. At some
points along the paved road appear the ruts which were worn by chariot wheels.

The only purpose that the fallen city serves now is as a hunting ground for the Bible scholars, and a silent reminder and witness to all that greatness and beauty do not last for ever!

* * *

Did Jesus come here? It is not impossible that He did. More impressive to me than the lovely columns the exquisite carvings or the superb proportions of the magnificent ruins was the dominating thought that this represented the life which Jesus knew. He itinerated the Decapolis. Through this land of Perea He came on His way to Jerusalem. Again and again He visited this region. It is altogether reasonable to suppose that He and His friends trod this colonnaded thoroughfare. Perhaps in this very forum, encircled by these still standing pillars so stately, so exalting, Jesus preached the word of the kingdom and ministered to the suffering of Philadelphia and Gerasa. Jarash even in ruins speaks of the splendours of the background of the ministry of the Master. As we look upon its treasures we are uplifted by the thought that He saw them also, and when they were at their unbroken best.

However it is very interesting to hear that the earliest sculptured head of Christ was discovered amongst the « fallen grandeur » of this mighty city. It is a wonderful portrait showing a face of deep suffering and patience, such strength and manliness, a square firm chin and a high forehead. It was engraved in the beginning of the Christian era, when the memory of our dear Saviour was still fresh and clear.
CHAPTER X

CANA OF GALILÉE
WHERE THE FIRST CHRISTIAN WEDDING
WAS CELEBRATED

We see the little group of Jesus and His disciples leaving Perea, and climbing up out of the Jordan Vale. They are crossing the fertile district of cornfields, wending their way up the rugged ravine from the Plain of Esdraelon, and then passing into Nazareth and making for the house where Mary lived. But Mary is not here. Perhaps a message awaits Him to go on to Cana. It is only five miles further, and on the way to Capernaum.

Christ hears that the marriage festivities of a friend, perhaps a relative, of their family are going forward, and that His Mother is taking an active part in helping with the arrangements. Will He go to the wedding? Yes, He will.

So they climbed up the hill at the back of Nazareth and down the other side by that stony path that leads to Cana. They pass up by the olive-yards, and surely would pause for a drink of the pure refreshing water at the spring below the village, after their long walk of more than twenty miles.

* * *

The drive from Nazareth to the Lake of Galilee early in the morning of a spring day offers us a fine
scenery. The ruins on the way and small scattered villages have their principal historic interest from the Jewish wars. We pass the usual way through which our Redeemer most probably crossed. It is manifestly a very ancient road, and full of interest on account of its associations.

To the left is a straggling brown village on a hill with a Crusader's castle on the top, ruined but still dominant. This is Sepphoris, which Herod Antipas made the capital of his tetrarchy in the time of Christ. Half-way down the hill is a village called Raineheh, which has never recovered from the earthquake of 1927. Its houses still lie in ruins and its walls have fallen down. If anyone wants to know what a Biblical town must have looked like after it had been conquered by warriors like Saul and David, let him go and look at Raineheh. This village is without any historical associations, as far as is known, and nothing to attract attention save an old sarcophagus, richly ornamented which stands by the roadside, and is used as the common water trough of the village. Bare hills interspersed with sparse wheat fields surround it. Beyond lies a wide green plain which the pilgrims of the Middle Ages believed to be the place where Jesus gathered the ears of wheat on the Sabbath.

We were now within a quarter of a mile of Cana and, sitting down under a tree we had a quiet opportunity of observing its position. It lies on the slope of a hillside, looking down on a broad open valley, up which the road comes from the lake, some seventeen miles distant. I confess few spots moved me more than this.

Many olive orchards, cactus, figs and pomegranate trees greeted us as we reached Cana. We saw
olive-trees on a hillside close by, real curiosities they were and of such great age that it is highly probable they were standing there in Christ's day. The mud-built hamlet looking much as it must have done when our Lord walked down to it with his mother to be present at the wedding.

Of the eight hundred inhabitants of Cana, half are Moslems and the most of the remainder are Greek Orthodox with a few Latins and a still smaller number of Protestants.

This is Cana of Galilee where the water was made wine.

Cana is the village of the traditional scene of our Lord's first miracle. St. John is insistent that this miracle was the first performed by Christ. The event itself is unique among all the recorded miracles in as far as its only purpose was to contribute to the festivities of a merry party. It is pleasant to remember that unlike the most of His mighty works, it was called forth by no great exigency of sorrow or distress.
But perhaps St. John really recounted it because it exposed, in a kind of acted parable, how Jesus can transform old things and cold things as if into the wine of life and the joy of a wedding feast.

Here at a subsequent visit, the Lord of life exhibits His power in healing the sick. How charming the associations of this place. The Master was met by the «nobleman of Capernaum» whose son was sick, and though twenty miles distant, He healed the youth and commanded the father «Go thy way thy son liveth.»

* * *

The first building on the road as we enter Cana stands over the traditional site of the house of Nathanael, whose wedding Christ attended. It is generally believed that Nathanael is none other than Bartholomew whom Philip brought to Jesus.

A broad lane of prickly pears leads to the group of houses which represent the New Testament Cana. It has the additional interest of furnishing an example of the perishable houses of sun-dried clay which are the usual habitations of the poorer classes throughout the East. How these humble, windowless habitations have helped preserve so many foundation walls and other relics of the past which the spade of the modern explorer is continually bringing to light is indeed marvellous. The flat roofs are broken by booths of supple boughs of oleander interlaced with a few twigs, in which the villagers spend the hot nights of summer. Loose stones are scattered thickly upon the slope around and indeed everywhere. The houses are generally of a very rude description but we can discover in some of them a pillar or sculptured lintel, the fragment of earlier greatness, like a piece of silk cloth sewn into a woollen garment.
The narrow street has refuse heaps at almost every corner; and cow dung, which is the fuel of the poor village is drying on the mud walls of the houses. No one can envy them their huts of mud and stone with dung hills at every corner. Huge mud ovens like great beehives stood at the side of some of the houses; and on a little shelf on the outside of the hut I noticed a petroleum tin, which has been used the year before as a flower pot. It stood beside the one small window as if someone had put it there, to get a sight, now and then, of something green and beautiful. We went into the house of the chief. As I sat in the room on the raised divan, covered with bright carpets, the men of the family in their bright dresses sat round, and I thought of the Divine Guest who entered a house like this in Cana.

Rival churches of the Greeks and Latins are here each claiming to be built over the site of the house where the Saviour graced the feast with His presence. We remember that somewhere here it was that Jesus with Mary, His mother, sat as guests and shared the hospitality of the assembled marriage party. It was here the Man of Sorrows rejoiced in the joy of others. Here the Son of God made Himself known as the wonder-working Son of Man.

Here our Saviour performed what is called His «first miracle», at the marriage feast, when the water in the six pots was made into wine to the astonishment of all guests at the wedding. He thus rescued His young friend the bridegroom, from an embarrassment which would have brought severe criticism upon him for the remainder of his life. There is a beautiful significance and fitness in this «beginning of miracles» by Jesus, not only as indicating how His presence and blessing transmute
even the most common things into a higher good, turning the water of earth into the wine of heaven, but as giving a new and divine sanction to wedded love.

A Greek priest hastens ahead of us to the church which he opens. This chapel is of a very pretentious description which is said to cover the house of the marriage festival and where the hidden power of Christ blazed into miracle. Over the doorway of the modern church is an inscription which translated reads thus: «If you wish you can see two of the six waterpots of stone that were used for the miracle at the wedding over nineteen centuries ago.» The priest meets us at the entrance and is very courteous and quite willing to show us whatever he thought would interest us. The room in which they say the company met at the marriage is now a little bare-looking chapel: a few pictures of the marriage and miracle hang on the walls. We are shown within this church, two waterjars which we are assured are the pitchers in which when brimful the water was turned into wine. The monk will tell us this as seriously as if he expects us to believe it. But though he tells us they are the real vessels used at the feast they could not give us faith to believe. The kindest thing one can think about him is that he probably believes in them himself and thinks himself fortunate enough to be the happy possessor of a «real waterpot» that once contained the wine made by Christ!

As far as I knew these huge waterpots were originally used by the Jews for purposes of purification. They could never be lifted or carried in the ordinary way, so it is easy to understand that when Jesus commanded the servants to fill the waterpots with water, he meant them to fetch the water from the village spring which they did.
The Franciscan church on the other hand is very interesting. Here tradition says that it stands on the spot occupied by the house of the wedding feast. In the judgment of the friar, the waterpots were not filled from the common spring but from a cistern of the house. This cistern, he thinks, he has found and he shows it to us!

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The village fountain itself is connected by local tradition with the miracle. It is said that at this spring the servants filled the seven stone jars with the "unconscious water that saw its God and blushed into wine," and thus enriched for many years to come the newly wedded pair.

Surrounded by a wall and orchards, the well is a pleasant place near which to rest. Women were engaged in washing garments by beating them upon a smooth stone with a flat stick, which seems to have been a primitive mode of washing. In front of it is the trough where the horses or donkeys slaked their thirst with water drawn from this same spring. Hundreds of black goats accompanied by a few sheep were gathered round the carved sarcophagus. Young women, dark-skinned and sun-scorched were filling the jars and pitchers then as of yore. Beduins were watering their thirsty animals and refreshing themselves on their long journey. Here we opened our Bible and read the Second Chapter of St. John's Gospel. The incident it records is strikingly illustrated by the waterjars which the women were bearing upon their heads to their homes.

Heaps of fallen buildings are overgrown with grass, and where the nuptials of the beloved John were celebrated, the silence of death reigns unbroken,
and rank weeds grow luxuriantly where Jewish maidens were wont to gather flowers to form the bridal wreath.

In Cana as elsewhere we were besieged by boys and girls offering postcards, lace and numerous fruits for sale. We bought some quaint little models of waterjars such as the women carry on their heads. They were made of pottery with an impress of the village fountain. We can barely escape these shrewd salespeople, so eager are they to supply us with their wares.

Traditional sites are common enough in the Bible Lands and one is not obliged to put credence in all of them. It is quite enough to visualise the surroundings and the people looking at the visitors with equal curiosity. It is quite enough to know that in these same little huddled villages our Lord of Glory once moved among folks just as these.
CHAPTER XI

CHRIST MUST NEEDS GO THROUGH SAMARIA

The Passover was kept in the spring. Perhaps the summer and autumn months had passed while Christ was teaching in Judea, and the winter had now come, when the grain had yet four months to harvest. The fields were bright with the tender green of springtime. The wide expanse of pasture and the patches of young corn were inexpressibly refreshing to the eye. In due time «the sower and the reaper would rejoice together.»

The Lord was determined to preach that same Gospel to the Samaritans who had been rejected by the Jews, so we read «He must needs go through Samaria.»

As they cross the Vale of Encampment, two rounded mountains face them like a huge gateway, and a broad and fertile valley runs between them westward. In that noble valley with its olive groves and well-watered gardens, and about a mile beyond the entrance from the plain, stood and yet stands one of the oldest cities in the world. Nablus is its name today, but in the Lord's time it was Shechem. Shechem was here many centuries before Jerusalem was built.

* * *

Shechem was the capital of the kingdom of Israel
before the seat of government was transferred to Samaria. It is today a town of fifteen thousand inhabitants almost entirely Moslem and one of its principal industries is that of making soap from olive oil.

Nablus is a curious mixture. Its charm is undeniable. Shut in between lofty parallel ranges at least 2,500 feet high with copious springs and streams of water, it always wears a green and flowering face. Trees and shrubs flourish. The houses are of clean white stone, well-built and commodious, lying among the greenery, or terraced happily in the sunshine on the slopes. As we wander about in the more populous parts, we come to wide courtyards, broad house windows, and sharp, high arching of doorways and entrances.

* * *

But the Samaritans are of far greater interest to the visitor, for here are a people who may be the direct descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel.

We soon come to the Samaritans' Ghetto. The Samaritans number now about two hundred according to their calculation. They are a folk strictly apart, living in their own quarter, approached through long, dark, defensible tunnels and archways. When the Jews returned from captivity, they commenced to build a temple at Jerusalem but refused to allow the Samaritans to assist in any way, and from that day to this the Jews have had no dealings with them. So this people erected a temple of their own on Mount Gerizim, for they say that this was the place chosen as the Mount of Blessing. Here, they maintain the tabernacle rested for six generations of the priesthood.

Of the manuscript treasures that this people hold,
all the world knows but few ever see the most sacred one, the famous Samaritan Pentateuch. They recognize no books of the Bible with the exception of the Five Books of Moses. No Psalms, no Isaiah, no prophets! Note with what eagerness and reverence those Samaritans hug that ancient manuscript folding and unfolding on its two large rods. See how their eyes glisten as they unfold it, and how they watch for our responding looks of veneration, and donot tell me that those Samaritans are anything but sincere in their faith they profess. The Samaritans themselves assert that their most ancient copy of the Pentateuch is over 3580 years old, and written, some say, by Joshua, others by the great grandson of Aaron.

The High Priest of the community with his treasured scroll
But to see the Samaritans in their holiday best we must visit them when the Passover is performed on Mount Gerizim. It is an interesting excursion up the sacred mountain. We decide to make the ascent which affords a fine view of the city from the time that we leave the valley. The mountain is nearly three thousand feet above sealevel. It rises above Nablus and after a steep incline becomes a tableland similar to that of Mount Ebal across the valley. It is certain that from remote antiquity it has been a place of pilgrimage. To the Samaritans, Gerizim is the «earth’s centre»; the house of God; the only mountain not covered by the flood; the site of altars raised by Adam, Seth, and Noah; the Mount Moriah of Abraham’s sacrifice; the Bethel of Jacob’s vision. That the Tabernacle was first set up here, and, they also point out some massive stones, identified by a legend with the twelve stones brought up from the river Jordan and erected at Gilgal as a memorial. They look for a prophet under whose direction the «Ten Commandments» will be found under the twelve stones on the sacred mount, and under the stone of Bethel the golden vessels of the Temple. It is the sacred place of the Samaritans, towards it they always turn in prayer. They never approach it with uncovered feet. They really made an idol of that mountain. Here are evidences that its slopes once were covered with dwellings, churches and other buildings and the Samaritans have identified most of the excavations and foundations with passages of Scripture. Slightly below the summit of that hill is the plateau where the Samaritans pitch their tents during Passover week.

Nablus lies between the Mountains of Gerizim and Ebal. These are the two mountains mentioned in
the 27th of Deuteronomy, as the Mountains of Cursing and Blessing. It must have been an imposing sight. A million Israelites dividing in two, to take their allotted stations on the slopes of the mountains, and these stand face to face, with the Ark of God in the valley betwixt both and the voice of Joshua as it rose amongst the vast assembly distinctly reading out of the law, clause by clause, the curse and the blessing and at every pause the whole multitude responding with «Amen.» In contour and appearance both these mountains are alike, the valley being narrow, and a voice can be distinctly heard from hill to hill. Awful must have been the sound of Amens that day!

* * *

With much pleasure we left Nablus for a visit to Sychar that spot of blessed memories. If we admit the identity of the present Well of Jacob with that mentioned by John, there can be little doubt that Sychar was a small town not far from the spot. There is a village north of it called Askar. This is so like John's Sychar that I feel inclined to adopt it. Mount Gerizim in his stately grandeur reminded us of so many Biblical and historical associations. The fertility of the surrounding country made us feel that Jacob was surely wise in settling with his family in such a beautiful spot. Here Jacob lived with his sons, save one whom he supposed to be dead. To that long lost son, in memory of his filial devotions, Jacob gave this very piece of land in which two-hundred years after his death his body was laid to rest. The Tomb of Joseph is located in this «parcel of ground» on which he was wont to play when young. There are few more touching illustrations of
a love for one's early home, such as to make him desire to be buried near the spot where he was born, than the last command of Joseph.

And though the spot is unmarked by stately granite or marble shaft, Ebal the mount of his boyhood, is his imposing tombstone and over the whitened wall a vine is now creeping, luxuriantly and touchingly recalling the symbol chosen by his dying father to pre-intimate the prosperity of a beloved son.

This tomb is a place of frequent resort with the Jews and many are the Hebrew inscriptions in the interior. The tomb itself, a simple building with a low dome, is within a rude enclosure. It resembles the common Moslem graves of the country. It is deeply moving to heart and mind to stand upon the spot beneath which lie the remains of this prince of Israel and by the sleeping dust of this great hero of faith.

Close by is the cool, clear sweet fountain of Sychar, whither as of old, the maidens come for water, and around which shepherds linger with their flocks. In numberless rills the waters flow, in pearly brightness and perennial music, the live long day. From the fig and almond bowers birds of elegant plumage awaken the gentler echoes of the vale.

* * *

Leaving this hallowed place we soon come in sight of Jacob's Well, which together with the surrounding ground is enclosed by the Greek Church.

This is the spot acknowledged by Christians, Jews, and Moslems to be beyond dispute the «parcel of ground» containing Jacob's Well where Jesus uttered the words of one of the most precious messages of His lifetime.
The Greek Church has built the wall for the protection of their property and possibly for entrance fees. We arrive at the gate and pull the bell. An old monk welcomes us. We find ourselves in a plot of ground raised above the level of the plain so that a good view can be obtained all around.

The Well of Jacob linked with the Biblical story of the Samaritan woman.

The well today is enclosed behind a wall and covered by a little Greek church. All round it lie the pillars of other churches that once stood on the site. Over this well, in early Christian times, they built a church. The altar was elevated, and was just above the well. The mouth of the well then was in a crypt. In the troublous times of the Moslem invasion, or in the wars and defeat of the Crusaders, this church was wrecked and laid low. Many of the stones fell into the well, which was said then to be one hundred and fifty feet; others were cast in during the centuries that followed, until it is only eighty feet deep.
But is this the only well near Sychar on the way through Samaria to Galilee? Are there not others which may equally claim to be the Well of Jacob? Certainly there are other wells but not in the direct road and not really answering the description given by John, who speaks of it as being «deep». Besides all this the identity of the Well of Jacob is sought through a Moslem tradition that appears never to have been disputed and it seems, time out of mind, to have been called «Bir Yakoub» — the Well of Jacob. It is by this name they now universally designate it.

No story of the past equals the interest of the story of Jacob’s Well. Half a mile away at Sychar there is a supply of water. Whence came the tradition of the Samaritans that Jacob gave them this well? Why did the Samaritans in Jesus’ time come hither to draw water when there was a brook not fifty yards away, which they must cross to get to the well? Perhaps the people of Sychar had some superstition about its water which had made them prefer it; or perhaps the stream was owned and used for other purposes, while the water of the well was free. Or perhaps on account of its great depth and the consequent coolness of the water, at all seasons, it has been highly esteemed from the beginning.

The priest led the way down a flight of stairs into the crypt of the church. The wellhead is about eighty feet in depth and still contains water. He held a dripping candle over it and the grease dropped down and cooled in grey spots on the stone. As the candle slowly descended, it lit up the old stones placed there in the days of the patriarch, and which actually were there when Jesus rested here. These very stones heard His sweet voice.
The wellhead is scored with marks of ropes, and many beside the Samaritan woman came here to let down their pitchers. The priest lets down a bucket containing a candle which illuminates the well, and then lets down another bucket. We hear it strike the water.

The well is cut through a thick bed of soil swept down in the course of ages by the rains from the hills on each side, and beneath this, passes through soft rock, the water filtering in through the sides. The water that is there bubbles up from the same spring that supplied the Samaritan woman, from whose jar Jesus would have refreshed Himself, even though He had no dealings with Samaritans.

From the well where the great heroes, prophets and saints have drunk and whence the Saviour Himself drank, we also sip the precious fluid offered us by the kindly priest. Generation after generation of Jews, Moslems and Samaritans have drunk of that water and have thirsted again, while a still greater host have taken the water of which Jesus spoke as He sat by that wellside, and the water that He has given has been in them a well of water, springing up into eternal life.

One may sit in the open air outside the church and make the events of John’s vivid chapter seem virtually real. When I came up into the sunlight I sat under the fig tree in the little garden and read the Fourth Chapter of John.

Standing in the place which tradition and history united in pointing out as the spot where this wonderful conversation was held with the woman of Samaria, our attention was arrested by the emphatic language of the woman: «Our fathers worshipped in this mountain», and pointed out to that mount with its glittering temple shining on the summit.
Reading St. John beside the Well of Jacob, one realizes how the conversation grew out of the surroundings and could not have been imagined by anyone. The water, the mountain, the road to Sychar on which the Samaritans appear, drawn by the news which the woman carried to the village, are all so life like, so vivid!

Never, perhaps, have I experienced what I experienced there. The wonderful reality of it came to me. There in the countryside, with the well just close, I could see everything, realize everything.
Chapter XII

FALLEN REMAINS OF ONCE-PROUD CAPERNAUM
CHRIST'S OWN CITY

VISITORS come to the Lake of Galilee to see the ruins.
It is the past of these shores that attracts them
not the present-day life. We must go over to Caper-
naum and see the synagogue they are reconstructing
there, considered the very one in which Jesus preached.

We were staying at the German Hospice at Tabgha,
which is the only place where those desirous of
visiting the ruins at Capernaum and the other historic
spots in the neighbourhood can find accommodation.
Here we must remember that in the days of Jesus
mighty and populous cities lined the shores of the
north end of the lake and that it was here that he
called His disciples, taught, and wrought miracles.
Today the shores are desolate, marked here and
there by ruins.

We went to see the ruins of Capernaum. It was
a somewhat hot walk — this lake lies about seven
hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean —
under a cloudless sky. But the banks of flowers on
each side of the way and the hillsides blazing with
gold and blue and crimson made one forget all
discomforts. The tale of the flowers of Galilee has
not been exaggerated.

We passed, just outside the hospice grounds, the
remains of an old aqueduct and mills. Tabgha means «springs», and no doubt busy tanneries stood here when Capernaum was a flourishing city. I was pointed out what is believed to be the spot of the «feeding of the five thousand». Near by is a little creek with gently sloping hills around it — perhaps the very place where Jesus addressed the multitudes from the boat. It is the only natural creek in the neighbourhood and the spot fits in acceptably with the narrative.

Tabgha is really a haven of rest and a place to meditate

There was something indescribably happy in this leisurely stroll along the shore, as we thought what voice the music of its soft ripples had once accompanied and whose feet its waves had bathed. We walked for sometime between the lake and cultivated land, pacing leisurely over the sandy beaches that border this part of the lake, the little waves rippling up and bathing the pebbles, and shrubberies of
oleanders in full bloom leaning towards us on the other side. Every now and then the beaches widened into little sandy coves, through which little brooks trickled into the lake. A few oleanders with pink flowers on the edge of the lake, wild beans growing here and there, flowers in odd spots, and watering-shrubs and palms are the sole relief of the lonely sadness.

We came soon to a quadrangle of bare, roughly-built sheds around a desolate courtyard. Around it, as so often in this land of desolations of many generations, are scattered ruins of an earlier date. They are certainly the ruins of a city in whose streets the Saviour taught and under whose roofs he rested and at whose gates he healed the sick. And as we stood, we thought ourselves actually on the site of this city which was so habitually the resting place of our Lord, when near the Lake of Galilee, that it is called «His Own City.»

On our arrival at Capernaum a very cordial brown-clad monk with a large umbrella appeared to greet us and escort us to the ruins of the synagogue. Bedouin children were quite prepared to follow and sell us sea-shells, but the Father, after a few vigorous words and an equally expressive wave of the hand, sent the whole band flying and we proceeded in peace.

Capernaum is unknown to history except through the Gospels. There is perhaps no site in Palestine so pathetic and awe-inspiring in its desolation as the once-exalted city of Capernaum, the «home of the missionaries», as its name denotes. No one who has seen these ruins can have turned his back on them at the last without a haunted shiver and a stifled sigh. Capernaum with its towers and temples is now but a name! The word Capernaum is on the
lips and in the hearts of all people. No other name appeals to the heart, no other reminiscence is so dear to the soul of every religious tourist.

It is striking when we remember the denunciations against these places where Christ spent so much time in preaching, to find them just heaps of ruins all level with the ground — Capernaum, Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Magdala.

I climbed a peak which commands the lake. The principal scene of Christ’s public labours lay around me. When He had his home at Capernaum, the whole country was teeming with life, and bustle and industry. No less than ten large cities, the numerous villages, studded the shores of the lake, and the plains and the hillsides around. The water was all speckled with the dark boats and white sails of Galilean fishermen. Eager multitudes followed the footsteps of Jesus, through the city streets, over the flower-strewn fields, along the pebbly beach.

Here was one of the busiest quarters and also one of the loveliest. The pinkish-yellow hills of Gilead opposite came steeply down to the water along the eastern shore, almost as far as the eye could see. To the south and west the landscape was rich with tropical vegetation and, some ten miles away refulgent in the brilliant sunshine was the beautiful city of Tiberias.

What a woeful change has passed over the land since that time! The angel of destruction has been there. From that commanding height through the clear atmosphere, I was able to distinguish every spot, in that wide region, celebrated in sacred history, or hallowed by sacred association. My eye swept the lake from north to south from east to west. Not
a single sail, not a solitary boat was there. A mournful and solitary silence reigned triumphant.

* * *

Between Bethsaida and Capernaum there must have been perpetual "going and coming" by our Saviour and His disciples. It is about our Lord's life in Capernaum that most is known; at the time of his sojourn there it had become a notable city: civil representatives of the Roman power were stationed there. Our Lord spoke of this town as "exalted to heaven" and although this may have had mainly a spiritual significance, it is not improbable that the height and magnificence of the architecture displayed in many of its public buildings may have suggested the exaltation to which our Lord referred.

Of all cities in Palestine none had so great opportunities as Capernaum and Bethsaida. The manifestation of the life of Christ is to be found here. Every path and slope of the mountains, every street around the once busy lake is saturated with his presence, his teachings and his miracles. He seems to have been honoured and respected in Capernaum. All the sundry came to listen to His words. Today nothing is more striking than the contrast between these shores in the time of Christ, such busy scenes of traffic and life, and what they are now, a "spectacle of loneliness and desolation."

While sitting in this spot of holy memories, one may well count up those who lived at Capernaum or near the place. Our Lord and His mother, James, John and Zebedee, Andrew, Philip, Nathanael, and Mary Magdalene. Simon Peter was a married man and probably his father-in-law has died, since his wife's mother lived in Peter's house. Again the house-
hold must have been poor, for his brother lived there also. The surviving ruins of the houses crowded round the synagogue show how small were the dwellings and how mean the streets! The friends of Jesus Christ were of the poorest classes. Here had also been the home of Jairus, whose only daughter had died and had been recalled again to life by the voice that called the dead from hades with such tender, quiet words as those with which the mother would have waked her child from sleep. And in the streets once standing here the trembling woman had touched the hem of His garments and had been healed.

And here the city was once at sunset emptied of its inhabitants, empty as it is now, for every house sent forth all its inmates, «sick and whole» thronging to the gate where Jesus stood and healed all who had need of healing. Fancy the tears and smiles and broken words of gratitude and joy as the multitudes returned to their homes from which all suffering and pain were banished.

Perhaps the greatest scene of all was that which occurred towards the end of our Lord’s residence at Capernaum. It was after the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, as it marked a parting of the ways. There can be no doubt that it was Jesus’ regular practice to take part in the life of the synagogue in this way. The Sabbath morning service goes forward and Jesus is invited to preach the sermon. The nobleman and his healed son would be among his delighted listeners. Perhaps the good centurion who built the synagogue was present, and Jairus may have been there as a ruler of the synagogue, occupying one of the chief seats. Not a word has been handed down as to what He actually taught on any of these occasions, though doubtless...
many of his words recorded later were first uttered within these walls. But the elders were murmuring in anger «Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that he saith I come down from heaven?» But Christ replied, «Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, drink His blood, ye have no life in you.» Here was indeed the parting of the ways. Only the disciples remained!

* * *

Near the sweet Lake of Galilee several old synagogues have been unearthed. The non-Jewish features are very interesting. The presence of stones on which carved Roman eagles have been defaced suggests that some of the material of that earlier synagogue built by the Roman centurion was re-used. The heavy mouldings and square lintelled doorways of so many of these synagogues show Roman workmanship. As you wander from ruin to ruin, the whole atmosphere seems full of history, struggle and the influence of nation on nation. Most of these synagogues seem to have been erected during the second or third century after Christ. The staunch Maccabean fight against Hellenism was not remote, yet Solomon's Seal and the Shield of David, the seven-branched candlestick and other Jewish symbols occur in the stonework combined with Roman designs and mouldings.

To follow or study the excavations in Palestine needs a really open mind. Let us just sit in this quiet synagogue and as we watch the blue water of the lake reflect the rich beauty of the peaceful shore, we can calm all other thoughts and reconstruct the history that has passed in this land.

Now let us picture the synagogue as it was during
our Lord's visit. In the majority of villages and towns of Palestine the synagogue was important equally as a centre of instruction as of religious worship. The Jews laid great emphasis upon adequate instruction of young and old.

One peculiarity distinguished it from the other Galilean synagogues. The ruined synagogue that identifies the spot with Capernaum Christ certainly knew. Can this be that very synagogue which a friendly centurion built at his own expense for the Jewish community, whose hospitality had won his heart? Can it be indeed the synagogue in which Christ preached the coming of the kingdom?

I think almost conclusively the truth of Luke 7:5. It is tempting to regard and has indeed been thought by some that these stones may have belonged to this synagogue and that we may perhaps have looked on the very prayer house in which He often worshipped.

As we wander among the ruins of Capernaum, the whole atmosphere seems full of history of the departed glory.

The interior of the synagogue shows the remains...
of what might be called a central nave, sixty-two feet long and twenty feet wide, and in the corners of the gallery are to be seen two square pillars, each flanked by half columns. Shafts over nine feet in length carry superb Corinthian capitals, with deeply cut foliage and the friezes which may still be seen profusely ornamented with sculpture, palms, foliage, fruits and flowers.

Indeed we might fancy the black, unshapen stones, strewn around us to be rather the debris of some volcanic convulsion than the remains of human dwellings. I stood amid the silent ruins wondering. I asked the good Father if he knew where Christ probably stood when speaking therein. Without an instant's hesitation he went and laid his hands on a low stone platform. «He stood here», he replied. I hope he was right. I felt as if he were and bared my head. Reconstruction has now been resumed and tourists and scholars may soon stand in the very building in which Christ addressed the people.

As the kind Father finished conducting us amidst the ruins and explained the dimensions of this once great synagogue, the words kept ringing in our ears «Woe unto thee, Capernaum.» A young lady near by remarked to the worthy Father «you must feel very lonely here.» «Oh no, Madam,» he responded with that sweet smile of his «it is a beautiful place to meditate on eternity.»

Busy Capernaum once beheld such wonders and heard such words as never blessed any other city. Of all the splendidous of that proud city of the lake, once spreading along a mile on the shore, nothing remains. The simple explanation is that the doom pronounced upon them by Jesus has wiped them from the map of man's knowledge. «Woe unto thee, Capernaum,» I said. The Father nodded his head gravely, «Yes, yes,» he said, «it is literally fulfilled.»
CHAPTER XIII

HORNS OF HATTIN
THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

AMONG the hills of Galilee about three miles from
the west bank of the sacred lake rises the
elongated height — Kurun Hattin — known as the
Mount of Beatitudes and usually cited as the scene
of the utterance of those sacred truths of Christianity
and of the Sermon that expresses the «living words»
of our Lord’s teachings.

The cool stillness of the morning should be chosen
for the visit to this spot. At Easter tide this walk is
perfect.

Come with me, therefore, up the Valley of the
Pigeons and climb the steep slope. It is a clear,
sunny bracing morning and we hum a tune as we
tram along the Tiberias road. The little flowers cover
the hills as with a garment of yellow and mauve
and green and scarlet. How nature combines her
colouring — and never alike for one minute to
another! Now and then we stop to pick some scarlet,
purple, or white anemones, or a narcissus, looking
like a lily with a golden heart in its centre.

It is a very difficult job to ascend the ridge from
the Valley of the Pigeons, because there are piles
of stones obstructing the way. This hill is about one
hundred feet above the surrounding land, a thousand
feet above the Lake of Galilee and about five-hundred
feet above the level of the Mediterranean Sea.
The two peaks of Horns of Hattin seem to have been protected by massive structures. The approach to the higher one is easy from one side, while to the north-west there is a sheer ascent of a few hundred feet. The white limestone hills, the basaltic cliffs, the modern village of Hattin in the plain below, the orange groves and fruit-gardens, the waving grain, the groups of farmers, present pictures at every glance.

We are coming to a spot which makes us pause and linger. The hill looks like a camel's back at a distance. Was not the «Sermon on the Mount» preached upon one of these horns according to ecclesiastical tradition?

To pilgrims it is known as the Mount of Beatitudes, where our Saviour gathered the multitude around Him, and spoke His new beatitudes on the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers, and the pure in heart. Though this name was given by the Crusaders many Bible students think it is correct. Its identity rests upon tradition but in this case tradition is so strikingly in keeping with the intimations of the Gospel narrative as to give great probability to the choice.

It is not a rounded summit, but «saddle-packed» with rising points at either end. The peak on which the sermon was delivered is one of the two peaks which shoot off from the ridge. There is nothing in this site to contradict the Scripture narrative. Between these horns is a small plateau to which Christ is supposed to have descended when «He came down» into the plain to address the people. The plateau is the bed of an old crater. To think that Christ should have preached the «sermon» on the crater of an extinct volcano! But the gulf through which once flamed the internal fires is filled up now, and grass
waves over the buried ashes. I went down from this «horn» into the crater-like plateau, and in a moment seemed to be shut off from the world, with only the blue sky of Galilee above me — in one of nature's cathedrals indeed. In this amphitheatre could be gathered hundreds and hundreds, and there would be nothing to interrupt. What an ideal sanctuary for the first ordination service.

The adjacent grounds are well adapted containing platforms and slopes on which they could sit or stand, though it would be a rough gathering place. Every one would hear distinctly the peerless voice of the Master as He flung out His «blessings» and His challenge of loving our enemies.

The solitude was almost awful. I felt I must cry out and hear the sound of my own voice. There were only the angels to hear me, or those birds wheeling high up in the sky. Was this indeed the very spot where the Sermon on the Mount was spoken? My voice seemed to travel through that rocky amphitheatre, and come echoing back to me.

I believe it is admitted that this immortal and transcendent sermon was preached in the springtime and whether or no its sentences were uttered among these rocks, certainly the flowers blooming in such profusion about the place seem to bring home to the mind with new force and vividness those sayings which begin «Consider the lilies of the field how they grow». That other saying also «Behold the fowls of the air, they sow not neither do they reap nor gather into barns», might well have been inspired by the sight of the flocks of storks which at this season visit the plains about Mount Tabor, and may perhaps have been wandering to and fro within sight of Jesus as He preached.
Surmounting one of the highest and grandest of the Galilean mountains, is the old Jewish city of Safad to which no doubt, the Saviour pointed when He compared His Church on earth to a «city that is set upon a hill that cannot be hid». Only those who had seen Safad can appreciate the beauty and appropriateness of our Lord’s allusion. From its moss-grown castle is not only obtained a view of the most panorama in Palestine, but the allusion amounts to almost absolute truth that «the city cannot be hid».

Walking over the ground to this point and that, looking off in every direction, I perceived that, though as seen from the high plain to the west by which we approached, the mountain is a gentle
elevation, yet it has a commanding position. Easy of access alike to peasants and fishermen on the shore, no point could have been a better centre to which to draw both classes. All the other heights are only members of a continuous chain. At this point alone we can speak of the «mountain» as an eminence detached from others and standing out from lower ground. Great multitudes from towns and villages among the wooded hills of Galilee, from Decapolis, even from Jerusalem and from beyond the Jordan might easily congregate there, whilst Capernaum is quite close at hand on the shores below.

Standing in the centre of a vast circumference it seemed to be in sight of all Galilee: and Galilee was then one of the most populous provinces of the Roman Empire. It is almost incredible, the number of cities and villages it contained. They hung on the sides of the mountains stretching downward to the shore of the lake below, so that Christ sitting on this mountain seemed to have the world at His feet, and to be speaking not to His disciples only, but to all mankind.

This hill here has certainly seen the face of Jesus, who loved so very much to go into the solitude of the heights. He who was so fond of the lake, the mountains and the flowers cannot but have been attracted by this spot which lay immediately above his road. It must have been dearer to Him than many others, for where are the flowers, the mountains and the lake more beautiful than here!

* * *

Here then we may «rest awhile» as if taking a seat with the multitude that once spread over this very
ground to listen to words such as never fell from human lips before.

Any passer-by would be excused for pausing a moment if he had heard the Beatitudes fall from the lips of an open-air preacher. They are very different from the facile and raucous complaints against things in general which form the stock in trade of the stump orator; and equally remote from the gloomy denunciations of the prophets who have seen deeply into the wrongs of the social order, and who feel calamity in their bones.

From the natural pulpit of one of the twin hillocks Jesus may have uttered the ineffable sayings on the Christian Law of Love preserved for us in the Gospel of Matthew. The sermon recorded in this Gospel contains more divinity than all the schools, ancient or modern, more humanity than all the laws of Moses, for it was grace and truth adorning the law. All the teachings and oracles or all the ethics propounded from the beginning of time in all nations, fall infinitely short of the fullness and grandeur and truth contained in that one short discourse.

If there be one word which fell from the Divine Teacher that impressed the mind more than any other at this place, it is «Peace» for there is so much to suggest it. Nature moves on in her luxuriant course, peacefully, calmly with no discord. The freshness of the morning, the repose of noonday, the golden tints and purple shadows of evening, the reflections of the stars on the bright surface of the sacred lake, all bring in continued succession the messages of peace.

This mountaintop is indeed a peaceful sunny place up above the busy world. It seems a fitting place for the Lord to lift the thoughts of the people to
higher things: to help them to look down on their every-day life, and to teach them the heavenly motives from which Christian people ought to live.

* * *

Yet upon this very plain more than once the roar of battle has been heard. In July, 1187 this plain was the gathering place of the Crusaders—that spot where they were hemmed in by the hosts that Saladin led against them. At early dawn the clash of sword and the storm of arrow and javelin began. Brave was the charge of the Saracens, and braver still the defence of the retreating Christians. Driven to and from the stronghold on Hattin, they were vanquished and the fate of their cause was sealed. But not without tremendous results both in the East and the West.

Thus the crescent won a victory which had been practically undisturbed until the British Occupation in 1917.

On this plain thousands of soldiers found their graves and still the bones are sometimes being turned up by the peasants when they plough their fields here.

* * *

To stand here and look at Galilee is an experience in life. It is a thrilling moment. I shall never forget the view that met my eyes. I stand speechless for a long time at this most interesting and historic panorama. Galilee in all its glory! Down through the rocky vista of the valley we see the caravans moving north and south across the Plain of Gennesaret. A thousand feet below glistening like a mirror in the sun is the sacred lake over which He sailed many a time. On its rippled surface there are some sails, filled by the:
morning breezes. Capernaum, the city of his adoption is in ruins. The multitudes are gone to rest. The synagogues are in ruins and the «cities wherein most of his mighty works were done» are no more. The mountains all around, clad in green after the rains, smile peacefully but deserted — uninhabited since the creation of the world we would imagine, did we not know the history of this sacred lake. There behind is the mount upon which He used to retire and pray. Though we do not see the lake from end to end yet the eye follows the eastern shore broken by creeks for many a mile till the mountains close in. Around us are the fields which doubtless our Saviour trod when in the flesh. Here on a warm summer day, He might have been seen, some nineteen hundred years ago, wearily treading His way through fields of corn.

On this plateau the multitude gathered to hear the Beatitudes.

Towards the south-east the Mountains of Gilead heave their majestic mass skyward, and it is like a
world in itself to behold their charming mountain range beyond the Jordan. Look down into the Jordan Valley and there we see the historic river like a crooked snake winding down its hollow. Think of the events that have taken place within the limits of the horizon from this very place.

Oh this is sufficient interest and I want no more. My eyes see enough to clothe my Saviour's earthly career with a life-like reality. There is no other place in the Holy Land which can be so truly called "The Lord's Own Country."
CHAPTER XIV

THE HEALING WATERS OF BETHESDA
THE MAN AT THE POOL

In order to explain the history of the unearthing of the Pool of Bethesda we must turn to the narrative mentioned in John 5, telling of the healing of the impotent man, at the pool called in Hebrew «Bethesda» which comes from Bezetha meaning a «town».

I stood alone on the lowest step of the pool with the water at my feet. My mind and heart went back again to the day when Jesus of Nazareth came here. Let us together think of that scene.

* * *

Nearly two thousand years ago a little company of pilgrims made their way from Galilee to Jerusalem. They were the companions of Jesus, the Teacher from the carpenter's shop whose fame had spread far beyond local limitations.

Jesus and the Twelve came to the famous pool called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda. Bethesda being interpreted means «a house of mercy». This account suggests a wide sheet of limpid water surrouned by a cloister of some magnitude, for it will be noted that the multitude who came to the pool was «great». It was however only a pool of water possessing curative properties. The four sides and the middle division may have been the «five porches» alluded to in the Gospel account. These alcoves
were built by kindly people to shelter the diseased and infirm folk who waited there day by day, watching with eager eyes the pool which might at any time show signs of movement, and then the unseemly scramble would begin. Friends or «hired bearers» would push their way through in an attempt to get in first.

Little is known about the pool. There is even no certainty regarding its exact location. What is known is simply that Bethesda was the name of the place where the waters were strangely agitated by some sort of intermittent, gaseous spring, one of those springs which still exist in different parts of the world and of which some today are famous for their healing properties.

Such a scene can be seen any day at the volcanic Hot Baths near the Lake of Galilee. It is impossible now for us to determine how the cure would have been effected by the «stirring of the waters» or why they would cure only the first person to enter.

It is not surprising to find Jesus drawn to this haunt of the infirm and the incurable. Jesus saw at the pool humanity in miniature — «sick, blind, halt, withered». The Great Physician looked upon the suffering with compassion and his gaze rested upon a certain man who had waited for thirty-eight years for his chance to be the first to enter the healing waters, but he had always been forestalled.

Jesus surprised the man by saying «wilt thou be made whole»? This question may have only brought out a mournful, querulous story of disappointment. The Master however intended to rekindle hope and faith that had long since died down. The man was surprised. He said «Sir, I have no man when the water is troubled to put me into the pool; but while
I am coming another steppeth down before me». Jesus said to the man «rise, take up thy bed and walk». And immediately the man was made whole and took up his bed and walked. The Healer has come. The «Holy Well» is not to effect the cure, but the Holy One Himself. At last the man was cured by a simple word from Jesus and sent home rejoicing.

There is no need of holy water or angel to trouble the pool. The Great Physician is close at hand. We touch Him in the throng and receive power.

So astonishing a miracle might have been expected to establish Jesus claims with all who heard of it. But it was the Sabbath when the miracle was performed, and the Jews were more shocked to see a man carrying a burden on the Sabbath than impressed by the supernatural one!

This is another of those incidents recorded by St. John in such a way as to exhibit Jesus as the Prince of Life. The deeper meaning of the incident must be sought for again by regarding it as a kind of acted parable. The poor fellow who lay there year after year, although angelic help was near, is a type of those who after almost reaching despair receive new life from Jesus.

* * *

We will visit the Pool of Bethesda. In through the crowds at the Jaffa Gate, along the Street of David with its bazaars, down the Christian Street and then by the narrow Via Dolorosa, we approach the Sheep Gate, which leads out through the walls to the Valley of Kidron. The Pool of Bethesda is situated close to this ancient gate of Jerusalem.

This gate is at present blest with four different names. By the Christians it is known as Bab Sitti
Mamie, or the Gate of Lady Mary, because it leads to the Tomb of the Virgin; by the Moslems Bab-es-Sbat, the Gate of the Tribes: by the Europeans, the Gate of St. Stephen, because through it the saint passed on his way to martyrdom, also because tradition points out the place of his stoning nearby: and by the Jews, the Gate of the Lions, on account of the rude sculptures of lions that adorn it.

The sheep gate was north of the Temple; and beside the great pool Birket Israel, there existed in the fourth century a very remarkable twin-pool, that is two pools, lying side by side and surrounded by cloisters and colonnades on the four sides whilst a fifth, making five porches, came between the two pools, and staircases led down to the water.

The Superior whom I met there took me around. It was he who has excavated the ruins of a Roman pool which today is known as the Pool of Bethesda. Only part of it is as yet discovered, as it was an enormous place capable of holding « multitudes » on its steps.

The pool today is far down in the earth at the bottom of a pit delved out of a deposit of vague ruins. At the summit of the excavation, in place of a sheep market, is a modern laundry with a corrugated iron room, and around it a quite extraordinary number of stockings hanging out to dry!

These pools are situated at the south-west corner of the church. The gate opposite the church leads to the excavations of the pools: and an enclosed staircase between the street entrance to the church leads down to the southeast corner of the southern pool. One is to the south of the other. They are forty yards square and seven yards deep, and are divided by a wall of rock about four yards wide.
They are cut from the solid rock, with an additional height of three or four courses of masonry wall added. The corners of each of these pools have been discovered.

The Pool of Bethesda, once a place where ailments were cured, is now only a sightseeing object.

We can go down the steps and touch the water today, and see the whole length of the great underground cistern. It is filled by rainwater and is used by the people for drinking purposes.

A stone stair, very steep and narrow leads down the side of the pit and finally ends before a small cistern or reservoir cut out of the rock and arched over by ancient vaulting.

Further as the crowning proof that the excavators
HEALING WATERS OF BETHESDA

regarded it as the Pool of Bethesda they painted on its walls a fresco representing the angel troubling the water with many patients around. Various old paintings and carvings have been unearthed, showing that in the early crusading ages, this place was associated with the pool into which the sick were plunged as soon as the angel stirred the water and were healed.

Often as I passed the Pool of Bethesda did my mind recur to that effective narrative «Now there is at Jerusalem by the Sheep market a pool which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches».

The Father then took me into the museum and showed me many curious things. But the most interesting object, I thought, is the model of a Roman lady's foot found near the pool with a Latin inscription on it, testifying to the cure.

* * *

Among the debris through which the shaft leading to the «pool» has pierced are the ruins of two churches. The present church which stands upon the spot is the ancient and interesting Church of St. Anne. It is dedicated to the mother of the Virgin Mary who is stated to have lived in a cave which is still shown to believers.

The mediaeval architecture of this church is religious. To impress upon worshippers amongst other doctrines, not only that the church was the ship in which the believers passed safely over the waves of this troublesome world into the land of eternal rest, but that it was also the spiritual body of Christ, the temple in the walls of which true Christians were the living stones.
Twenty-two steps lead down into the crypt, cut in the solid rock. This crypt is irregular in shape, at the end of it is a very plain altar said to have been the apartment where the parents of the Blessed Virgin lived.

In the garden round the church a friar was walking to and fro with his prayerbook, following the service in the church, for as I went down the steps to the pool their service was going forward and the voices rose and fell and the organ swelled and died away.

They were worshipping the same Christ whose Feet turned hither that He might comfort the miserable and heal the helpless.
Chapter XV.

Nain, Endor and Shunem
Cities of the Plain of Esdraelon

Our walk from Nazareth leads us directly across the Plain of Esdraelon. We descend by a steep and ancient pathway from the hills of Galilee into the plain. In very many instances we shall more intelligently understand the Scripture narrative, and they will impart to us a much higher interest, when we adequately apprehend the scenes of their occurrence. I felt sure that down that pass our Lord had often journeyed. We have Mount Tabor in full view on our left. The Little Hermon rises abruptly in the midst of the plain. High up on its northern side and directly fronting Mount Tabor are the villages of Nain, Endor and Shunem.

Nain whose name is suggestive of the most pathetic tender associations is a small and insignificant village. It, however, possesses an interest out of all proportion to its present appearance and size. Though fortune has lavished no favour on this quiet hamlet yet Christ has linked its memory with one of his touching miracles. It is thus invested with imperishable interest from the one solitary but touching event with which its name is associated in Gospel story.

* * *

On the day after the cure had been performed

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on the centurion's servant, Jesus and his disciples along with «much people», took their journey of twelve miles from the city of Capernaum. As the shadows of evening were beginning to fall, they found themselves approaching the village of Nain by its one entrance on the slopes of the wooded mountain.

The words of the sacred narrative touchingly describe to us a burial scene. A funeral was seen emerging from the gate of Nain as the sun was setting. The whole village had turned out to sympathize. Soon the tramp of the mournful crowd is heard pacing along the cobbled streets. In another hour she will have to retrace her steps to a swept household, leaving the prop of her earthly existence laid low amid the clods of the valley. They have reached the gate of Nain — they have crossed its threshold. The gloomy walls of the cemetery may be already in view. But the Lord of Life is approaching. There is only one in the wide world who can dry the tears of this widow and give her back the «beloved and the lost». That One is nigh.

How vividly did the whole scene appear to me now as I stand on the spot! The procession issuing from the gate; the men carrying the open bier; the women behind grouped round the poor widow, and rending the air with their cries, as they do still.

The Saviour of mankind, in His mercy-errands enters amid the crowd. All is done in silence. In silence he touches the bier: in silence he beckons to the bearers to stand still: and as the meeting crowds have mingled into one, amid the same hurt of silence he sounds the omnipotent summons over the sheeted dead, «Young man, arise». Life's pulses begin again mysteriously to beat. Well-known tones again meet a mother's ears. Yes, he delivered him to his mother
and wiped the widow's tears, as he has done to millions of widows since.

* * *

Nearing the village of Nain I heard a strange droning sound and saw a little group of women and children huddled together. These were mourners at a new grave. Close to the four sides of the freshly-made little mound sat ten women in an oval shape some with babies in their arms; while others sat in an ante-circle and children stood by on the edge of the grave. Three or four women were the leaders in the mourning. Over and over they droned their strange heart-breaking song. It was terrible to watch and listen to. There was nothing professional here: the village of Nain is not large enough to support «paid mourners». It was just the outpouring of the grief-stricken, desolate heart of a widow, shared by her closest friends and the friends of the son who had departed. We learned that the dead man was the «only son of his mother» and a humble member of the village.

Under the sun of the noonday they sat by the graveside, their songs of grief rising and swelling in volume, then dying away: and all the children were watching closely and some would try to imitate them with childish zeal. The women would turn toward each other and carry on a sort of antiphonal chanting and responsive talk. One finally beat her own face until the others seized her hand and forced her to stop!

Nain of the present, which means the «beautiful» is a restored ruin on the slope of a hill looking down on one arm of the Valley of Esdraelon and has a mixed company of Moslems and Christians living side by side. But we linger at Nain, where a rude cross
and a chapel marks the spot on which in ancient times a church was erected by the «gate of the city» where that wonderful miracle of love and tenderness was performed by the divine Lord. A fountain remains where the village maidens were filling their pitchers and poising them on their heads with their usual grace.

With a majestic grandeur Mount Tabor guards the little village of Nain, and ponders over its departed glory.

There are rock-hewn graves today in Nain, evidently ancient where the people now, as of old, bury their dead. It is in keeping with the one historic incident that renders it dear to Christian, that its only antiquities are tombs. The possibility is that in one of these the widow’s son might have been laid, but for the timely appearance of the Saviour. They are silent witnesses to the passing of lives through the centuries. On this
very path we are treading must our Lord have met the sorrowful procession as it passed out of the gate. But we think again of how many funerals since that time in Nain have been far more desolate because Christ was not present in body or spirit.

But Jesus came to bear their sorrows and to put such sorrows as we saw at Nain, forever in the past. Yet for two thousand years since He came and went the children of the world have been mourning. How often as our thoughts recur to those contiguous sites do we instinctively mingle the recollection of those dissimilar visits of which we have record on the sacred pages.

A little above Nain and on the slope of the Little Hermon, is built a little white Moslem shrine to the memory of Christ, whom the Mohammedans venerate as a very holy man and a wonder-worker.

** Three miles to the north-east of Nain located on a rocky acclivity is the small village of Endor. The path thither crosses the northern shoulder of the Little Hermon. The transition between Nain and Endor is too sudden to be pleasant. Tender-hearted mothers and beguiling old witches are too unlike to be grouped together in the same picture or visited the same day.

Endor retains its name unchanged and is the place where the spirit of Samuel appeared to Saul on the eve of his disastrous battle on nearby Gilboa and so solemnly told him of the doom which was soon to overtake him.

Endor is a wretched place of thirty huts and the noble view afforded from its rocks is the only natural charm of the village. The sides of the hills that rise above it contain many large and curious caves, some of which are used for human habitations.
As we tour the village we come in sight of a cottage, more tumbled down than the rest, in which sits an old woman who might very well muster as one of the witches mentioned in the Bible. Around her are grouped many cradles, in which lie the babies of the hamlets, left to the tender mercies of this helpless old soul, while their mothers are winnowing wheat on the threshing floors.

A young girl stole out of the village, bearing a taper and gathering the veil closer around her face as she saw the figure of a man. She drew from her robe a delicate vase and filling it with incense, she lighted it and placed it also in a tomb. Then regardless of me she drew away leaving me remembering the story of this doomed place.

Tradition has designated the most remarkable cave as the sibylline home of the famous witch of Endor. It is a deep and solemn cave. The entrance is guarded by two massive rocks between which there is a large fig tree, imparting an air of secrecy to the spot. Within the cavern is a spring of crystal water, and from the rocks above and on either side trail of maiden hair depend like curtains of lace. From its inner chambers come deep and mournful echoes, and the alternate light and darkness within give to the cave an air of witchery. Placed under the ban of the kingdom with a price set upon her head, it is not unreasonable that the witch of Endor should have sought a retreat so difficult of access in which to perform her necromantic feats.

Though sorcery was prohibited, then even as now there was superstitious belief and desire for divination by magical power, a medium before some critical event.

The witch of Endor has left to her female descen-
dants the impress of her brazen-facedness. There is an archness in their countenances and a boldness in their behaviour, not characteristic of women in any other parts of Palestine. These women may still traffic in unhallowed arts: for the necromancy of old times would seem to have left an enduring brand of blight and blackness upon the place.

* * *

A mile or so farther north we come to Shunem which was the centre of the Philistine army that came up against Saul. Shunem was the home of that «great woman» who built a «little chamber on the wall» for the prophet Elisha and here she embraced a son as a reward for her hospitality and received that son from the dead as a further expression of the divine regard. What Elisha could do in this village, but only after wrestling in prayer, the son of God could do in one quiet word of command at Nain.

Her house with the «little chamber on the wall» is gone, but yonder is the field wither the child of promise went to his father to the reapers when he received the fatal sunstroke and from which he was carried back to his mother, who beseeched Elisha to raise him up from the dead.

There is nothing to see in the village itself, except a wilderness of beautiful vegetation and the prickly pear surrounding all. It has a spring of delicious water where the village maidens bearing pitchers of water generally follow the visitors.

In the garden are olive and almond trees, date palms and the prickly pear, eagerly cultivated by the natives for its sweet and cooling fruit.
LIKE gems set round a ring are the cities glittering round the Lake of Galilee — full of men and women, boys and girls, to whom life would be full and rich and eternal, if they knew and if they welcomed what Christ had to give!

Right across the lake Jesus could see, gleaming against the skyline of the heights, the Greek city of Hippos. The temple, the amphitheatre showed Hippos as the northern brother of that astonishing band of gay and learned Greek cities that were leagued together as Decapolis. Shaped like a fan, whose fringes swept the edge of the desert from Damascus in the north to Philadelphia in the south, the League of Ten Greek Cities held the land from Jordan right to the eastern wilderness.

Across the lake from where Christ stood, the boat-building yard of Tarchieae was full of sounds of work — the hum of the saw, the swish of the plane and the beating of the hammers. The beautiful scent of the sawdust and shavings of cedar floated out from these boat-building sheds to be overwhelmed in the harsh smells from the leather tannery and the pungent odours of the fish-salting yards.
GAMALA AND GADARA

Such was the life in these cities at the time of our Lord.

* * *

We now leave the shore of the Lake of Galilee and make for the Hills of the Gadarenes which seem even more terrible and inhospitable as we draw nearer. They look as they must have looked in the time of Christ: thirsty, burnt-up hills scored with thousands of thin slashes, the marks of dried-up torrents, and invaded by dark gullies.

The name of this district, town or people, has been from the earliest times a question of much difficulty. But no other town having a similar name being known, it was long supposed that the Gadarene district was meant. There is a spot answering exactly to the narrative of the destruction of the swine, caves for tombs in the hillside, pasture suitable for swine, and a steep beach with very deep water quite close to the shore.

We are strolling in the Country of the Gadarenes and cross one of its most romantic valleys. Here and there are pathways leading up the plain. The mountains now become higher and the valley deeper and deeper. To the left of us is old Gadara, the capital of Perea. It is situated on a plateau to the southeast of the Lake of Galilee. The ruins that we see date from the time of the early Roman Emperors. Among other objects of interest there are the ruins of a theatre, and they are quite well preserved. The ruins of ancient Gadara are located on the top of a hill and at the foot of these are warm springs. The whole vicinity is called the Land of the Gadarenes. The first indications of our proximity to these interesting ruins are the traces of the Roman road where the ruts of the chariot wheels are deeply marked and numerous sarcophagi lie strewn thickly on either side most of them decorated with garlands and busts.
Around the ruins of the old city there are a great many sepulchres which are cut out in the mountain. One of the sepulchres which we entered is a spacious grotto, and at its farther extremity the ceiling has been pierced, probably for purposes of ventilation and as an outlet for smoke.

Along the sides of these subterranean excavations there are niches in which the bodies were laid. From these sepulchres a great many sarcophagi have been taken. At present these sarcophagi are used as water troughs for the cattle. Those sarcophagi which are still under shelter in the tombs form convenient repositories in which the natives store their grain.

But one is even more struck by the quantity of tombs than of stone coffins, which had been dragged out of many of them. The whole surface of the ground is so honeycombed with these that it looks like a rabbit warren. Many of the stone doors still swing on hinges in the massive basalt framework — or rather would if the mould which now clogs them were removed. These were the tombs in which the madman lived «who had devils long time, and wore no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs», and who was healed by Christ. These tombs served as dwelling places for those men who were possessed with unclean spirits.

Now the question is this: Is this the city that Jesus visited when He came across the Lake of Galilee in a boat to the other side of the sea? The synoptics relate that Jesus and His disciples came across to the Land of the Gadarenes. From the Scripture passages we learn that the Gadarenes were located on the opposite side of Galilee and that a man from the tombs came to meet Him. When the man possessed with the unclean spirit saw Jesus, he cried out, fell
down before Him, and prayed that He might not torment him. The evil spirit asked Jesus that he might enter into the swine. This herd of swine numbered about two thousand, and they were feeding on the hillsides.

The occurrence awakens dread in the inhabitants of the neighbourhood who, in contradistinction to what had been happening beg Jesus to take His departure. There is no suggestion that this request was inspired by the loss of the swine, the impression conveyed is that it was the outcome of superstitious fear.

Has it ever occurred to you to wonder why swine, unholy beasts to the Jews, should have been feeding around the Lake of Galilee? It was a kind of border-land in those days, abandoned to a mixed population of Jews and Gentiles, animals clean and unclean, the sheep of the Jews and the swine of the Gentiles grazing on pastures. It is noteworthy that the swine-herds must have been pagans: they could not be Jews. Christ bids the newly-healed man to stay where he is and undertake the work of reassuring his perturbed neighbours and friends. He is to help them to realize that what has been done for him is of God and fraught with harm to none.

Now where was this miracle performed? It is clear from the story that it did not take place altogether at the shore. The Land of the Gadarenes was located to the south-east from the lake.

Let us take our stand near the ruins of a fortress. A great herd of swine, we will suppose, is feeding on this mountain that towers above it. They are seized with a sudden panic, rush madly down the almost perpendicular declivity—those behind tumbling over and thrusting forward those before. As there is neither time nor space to recover on the narrow
through his land

shelf between the base and the lake, they are crowded headlong into the water and perish. All is perfectly natural just at this point.

One thing is however certain, and that is that the Great Teacher visited this section of the country and performed a miracle here, somewhere.

* * *

We will now make our way to a very interesting spot. There in front of us is Gamala. It is 1170 feet above the lake and we climb its giddy summit as best we can. So far from finding the road rugged and difficult it was easier than that on the western shore, lying entirely through meadows covered with corn that descend in a gentle declivity to the water's edge.

Barren and thorny is the Land of the Gadarenes today

We begin climbing the mountain of "Kalaat el Husn", which at a distance has the form of a recumbent camel very distinctly outlined, that I think there can
be no doubt of its being the ancient Gamala. The entire shape of the summit approaches an oval. Indeed the hump looks as though it had broken away from those gigantic cliffs, pushed out lakewise, and sagged down some five hundred feet below its original position, having only this narrow ridge to connect with the parent mountain. If the houses were built on the steep face of the mountain, we might well describe them «looked as though it would fall down upon itself». The hump was entirely surrounded by a strong wall which was carried along the very brink of the precipices, and in some parts arches had to be thrown from cliff to cliff to secure a practicable foundation. All traces of them have been swept away, and the mountain is now covered with thick grass. The top is sprinkled with trees and we find many ruins apparently of the citadel. Nothing could exceed the beauty of the lake and of the opposite mountains.

And now within its mighty ramparts, let us sit down on one of these broken columns and drink in the surrounding views and take a survey of this strange and strongest of Jewish fortifications.

The cool wind that tempered the heat of the day came from the majesty of Hermon that held the throne of the north. From Mount Hermon and from the high mountains of the Lebanon, where every night dew fell, the waters run to the lake, the waters that streaming from the hills made the valleys busy with music, gave tired workmen cool deep draughts from village springs, nourished the open hill woodland, fed the olive groves, the vineyards and the cornfields, and then filled and refreshed the deep sacred lake.

It was on such a hill as this Gamala that Jesus all His life loved to come — a high, quiet place
close to peaceful houses and men, under the open sky where He could have unbroken speech with His Father.

We take a walk around the castle of Old Gamala. It has been a place of tremendous importance and strength. Valleys deep and almost perpendicular surround it on all sides, except the narrow neck which joins it to the main mountain. At present no one, save the curious traveller, turns out of his path to visit ancient Gamala.

Passing a ruined wall and advancing eastward we come to the picturesque remains of the gate built of massive stones. It is really marvellous to see the ground thickly strewn with granite columns from Egypt—one at a little distance partly erected—and quantities of polish stones strewn in every direction. Further on we found a curious cone of basalt, then a well and the remains of a bath necessarily so because there was no other supply of water. Here are some Corinthian capitals neatly cut in hard black basalt, a curiosity in their way. Many stone coffins, part of a cornice and the disunited stones of a watercourse are lying. There must have been great wealth in the city, roads and machinery of which the present poverty-stricken occupants have no conception.

The story of its resistance and fall, and of the hurried butchery that followed are well known. Agrippa spent seven months in vain attempt to capture it. It was the last citadel attacked by Vespasian and Titus before the siege of Jerusalem. The soldiers were put to death, four thousand were slain and five thousand more perished by throwing themselves from the walls to the rocks below.
Thus lingering delightfully in the Land of the Gadarenes and musing on the Gospel narrative we went down to the lake and spent a lovely time on the pebbly beach. We then went down over a slippery road full of flint stones and on to a huge rock where it is said Christ sat when weary on his homeward journey from the Country of the Gadarenes. I feeling tired, sat on that «holy rock».

Here was also the scene of the extraordinary miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand. The noble plain which during most of the year is now, as then, covered with green grass. The outcroppings of basalt rock make a rich black earth abounding in spring flowers, red anemones and ranunculi, pale blue iris and royal blue lupins with daisies, wild geraniums and countless other companions of the warm west wind, but here the rough terrain has kept the land sacred to the flocks and herds.

The imagination dwells with delight upon this parting scene — the thousands of people scattered along the beach absorbed in deepest thought, and moving homeward with lingering step, turning ever and anon to gain another glance at the blessed Saviour; the ship upon the lake containing the twelve disciples returning to Gennesaret: while slowly moving up the mountainside towards Gamala the Master is retiring into solitude for meditation and prayer.

We had an opportunity to look out upon the memory-starting waters to see the fishermen at their unchanged tasks and to find in the outward calm the blessings of inward peace. Our blessed Saviour must have loved these hills, the everchanging surface of the lake, the pulsing life of abundant nature.
Chapter XVII

Magdala, Bethsaida & Chorazin.

The Cities of Woe.

The shore of the Lake of Galilee bends round in a series of graceful bays. The mingled pebble and sand is strewn with tiny, delicate shells of white, which are so plentiful that at times they almost resemble wreaths of snow. The vivid blue waters of this blessed lake sparkle in the sunshine and reflect the brown sails of fishing boats, the fishermen grave-faced, bearded men, identical in customs and dresses with Peter and Andrew; the little silver fish they catch, is still called Peter's fish.

About three miles to the north of Tiberias is Majdal corresponding with Magdala meaning a "tower". Near the village is a small plain, and with this we will associate the passage in Matthew 15:39 where after recording the miracle of loaves and fish, it is said Jesus «sent away the multitude and took ship and came into the coast of Magdala. Today the place is nothing but a pitiful looking village containing about twenty basaltic hovels and the ruins of an ancient fortress.

This village is shaded on either side by rows of stately eucalyptus trees, or thick hedges of yellow mimosa filling the air with delicious fragrance. On the plains close by are Beduin encampments of quaint little black tents, the inhabitants living the same
peaceful pastoral life of the great patriarchs of old. Their quietly grazing flocks and herds of sheep, goats and camels are guarded by brown-skinned shepherd lads in shaggy sheepskin coats, bearing roughly-shaped crooks or heavy clubs.

It was at Magdala that the Pharisees asked of Christ a sign. Its chief interest today lies in the fact that it was the birthplace of Mary Magdalene, the woman who was taken in adultery and out of whom our Lord cast seven devils.

Magdala lies sweetly by the waterside of Galilee

Romantic indeed must have been the situation of Magdala: the palms and balsams of Gennesaret around it, the blue lake infront, the hills beyond, and behind the stretch of valley with the picturesque Horns of Hattin terminating the view. Surely it was rich in all the «contributes of beauty and grandeur.»

Formed by the mountains suddenly receding inland, it is an open and level plain. Having the form of a crescent it is encompassed on the west by rugged
mountains, and on the east it is washed by the lake. No less than four streams flow through it to the lake, and wherever cultivated it yields abundantly. Portions of its shore-line consist of a thick jungle of oleander in whose branches birds of various forms and of brilliant colours carol the melody of their song. Were it cultivated with intelligence and taste, it would be the paradise of Galilee, producing the choicest fruits luxuriantly and possessing an eternal spring. Even now, notwithstanding its neglected state, it is dotted with magnificent cornfields and with groves of dwarf palms. In the days of our Lord it was the most densely populated part of the Holy Land, and through its beautiful gardens He was wont to pass, and in its thriving towns to teach His wondrous truth.

Magdala was once a big Jewish town and after centuries of ruin it is being revived like almost every place in beautiful Galilee. To the west of this village is a modern looking settlement of houses with red-tiled roofs. This is the «Farm Migdal» built in 1910 by a group of Jewish capitalists. It is beautifully situated and is planted with vegetables, bananas and eucalyptus plantations. These little settlements are a wonderful feature of this country, all over the hills where for centuries there has been nothing but the ruins of past civilization and the little mud villages of the Moslems. Now you see rows of bungalows surrounded with new gardens. One can easily see what wonderful country this might, and no doubt will be. Thistles and thorns cover the land and there are flowers in the spring and wherever men turn the soil over and plant things there it becomes like a Garden of Eden.

As we drew nearer, our way led between well-kept orchards, a stone-wall on one side, a barbed
wire fence on the other. One of the colonists
gave me a handful of almonds fresh from the trees
we were passing. They can be eaten shells and all
when they are green, the kernel itself being only a
bit of firm transparent pulp.

Beautiful also were the reed-fringed banks among
which hid water-fowl, and, still more beautiful, a
great green and gold halcyon that sat on the bending
bough of an oleander and at our approach flew
away like a flash of coloured light.

* * *

We walked from Magdala to Bethsaida a trip of
about three hours. Crossing the shingly beach we
came on a road hewn in the rocky sides — a Roman
road probably we thought, for since the Roman days,
since the New Testament days, since the fall of Herod’s
dynasty, what road-makers have been here? There-
fore we concluded we were in this rock-hewn road,
on the sure track of Him who went about the
lake doing good, from Capernaum to Bethsaida and
Chorazin. The thought made us walk in deep silence.

We reached Bethsaida. Under the grateful shade
of some fig trees we stopped to rest. Such were the
pleasing emotions I experienced as I stood amid the
ruins of the home of the fishermen and watched the
crystal water flowing into the lake. A stream of
water pours into the plain where it forms a luxuriant
marsh, close to the edge of the shore skirted with
oleanders. Here are traces of an extensive collection
of buildings, an ancient city now ploughed over. The
place lost none of its interest to me for its disputed
identification. Many times must our Redeemer have
trodden the path by the Jordan. Below the cliff He
doubtless often read the law and expounded it to the
crowds of a once busy city, the woe of which has
indeed been most literally fulfilled.
During the sojourn from Magdala to Bethsaida our Lord warned His disciples against the actions of the Pharisees and when Bethsaida was reached a blind man was brought for his healing.

Together with Magdala and Chorazin a «woe» was pronounced upon Bethsaida, because of the infidelity of its inhabitants and now its prostrate ruins and lonely, desolate shore are painful evidences that the woe has come.

Bethsaida will ever live in the recollection of the pious as the birthplace of those five apostles who have stamped the world with their influence and affected the opinions and destiny of mankind in all countries. No site has been more admirably adapted for the occupation of fishermen than this: a beautiful bay sheltered by hills behind, and a smooth sandy beach such as fishermen delight ground their boats upon. The stand forms a pleasant promenade, and so far answers to the description in Matthew 4:18-22 where Jesus walking by the Lake of Galilee first calls Peter and Andrew to follow Him, and «going on from thence» sees James and John with their father Zebedee mending their nets and calls them. Here no doubt is the scene of the miraculous draught of fishes, which astonished the disciples and convinced them of the divine character of our Lord. The locality also suits the details; the boats stranded; the fishermen beside them washing their nets; the eager multitude pressing upon Jesus as He stood on the shore. Then Jesus steps into one of the boats, pushes out a few yards and preaches to the people who lined the curved beach.

I then wandered amongst the ruins of Bethsaida. Several sarcophagi of white marble, fragments of marble shafts, some of the double columns, friezes,
pilasters, capitals and portions of elaborate carvings most of them in a debased style were unearthed. Yet excepting one large piece of an entablature, curiously carved, there was nothing to particularize, but quite enough to prove ancient wealth and importance. Not a living thing could be seen around it. That shore was swarming with fish as ever, but almost no boat disturbed it.

While Philip the Tetrarch had advanced it to the dignity of a city, both from the number of inhabitants it contained and its opulence in other respects, it was still in Jesus days a place where folk could walk the shore to see fishermen at their work. Neither signs of a fishing settlement, nor remains of a city's opulence are left today. The Jordan flows swiftly down toward the blessed lake, past nothing more permanent than Beduin tents — except everlasting memories! They always will cluster here, where Jesus walked with His disciples, where he retired for quiet when he heard of John the Baptist's death, and where with five thousand people following him on foot he withdrew into a desert place.

The impression was overwhelming as the great fact rose up before my mind in this retired quarter of the globe, in this Galilean village of humble pretensions, five inspired apostles were born, who from their boats went forth commissioned to evangelize the world and to be biographers of the Son of God.

But Bethsaida is desert and the only things to be found up the Jordan are turtles. No busy folks on the water edges, no fishing boats pulling in to the shore, no crowd of houses falling back from the lake — all are gone. Woe unto thee Bethsaida!
Two and a half hours from the ruins of Capernaum are the remains which as early as the fourth century have been identified from the similarity of the name « Kerazeh » with Chorazin.

The site of Chorazin where Jesus must have taught and healed naturally calls out the visitor's expectation. No more do the roads pass by it thronged with merchants. We cannot even find a path, but follow sheep trails or tramp across open fields where every footprint is a profanation: it crushes so many wild but beautiful spring flowers.

The surface of the ground lies well nigh buried under a rain of fragments of basalt of all sizes strewn here and there for untold ages before Christ's day, just as now. A mouth of a valley now opens to the lake — a sight never to be forgotten.

The path now leads over the slope of low hills, strewn with boulders of shining black basalt. There is indeed no path, nor could the country have been more utterly desolate. It is encompassed by such a dense jungle of thorns, thistles and rank weeds.

The situation of Chorazin still retains the indications of its old nobility, for it crowns the crest of a lordly hill with wide views both inland and lakeward. Chorazin itself stands in the midst of such desolations as must be seen to be believed. Climbing to the top of a shattered wall I am able to overlook the whole site, and find close at hand the black tents of the Beduins and shelters for their sheep built of rocks from the ancient walls. What a scene of desolation is that. Out of a wilderness of basalt on a terrace formed by the mountain spur jutting forth into the valley the stone huts loom. Millions of boulders cover the ground everywhere, as far as the eye can reach. We walk long in silence among the
tumbled stones, where without doubt the Master once walked too. Not a house, not a wall, not a solitary pillar remains standing. Broken columns, hewn stones, sculptured slabs of marble and great shapeless heaps of rubbish, half concealed by thorns and briars, alone serve to mark the site of a great and rich city. Here we are among the shapeless heaps of Chorazin literally covered with wild flowers and weeds, and which attest most impressing the fulfilment of that prophetic curse of our Saviour.

One building still is impressive in its wreckage — the synagogue which only by careful search and good look we find practically beneath the level of its surroundings. The synagogue of Chorazin is a repetition of the Capernaum building carried out on a smaller scale, and differing in the fact that black basalt has been used as working material instead of the white limestone. Huge shell-shaped ornaments are supposed to have decorated the sacred shrine which contained the law scrolls of the Old Testament. The shrine used to stand at a distance from the central floor. The «Chair of Moses» found by the excavators after the World War stands in the foreground of the ruin. How old these finely sculptured stones may be, or this stately seat where once the chief rabbi sat, no one can say. But it well may occupy the situation of the older building which Jesus knew and in which He may have taught.

Yet even in this vision of chaos the stones lie less thickly in some spots than in others, and there the poor peasants have sown with grain. Nowhere however, does rock crop out, the rain of boulders is entirely distinct from the hills on which they lie so thickly. How any considerable community such as Chorazin must have been from the extent of its ruins,
which cover as much ground as those of Capernaum could have lived in such a region. The inhabitants could hardly have gained subsistence from the lake, since they were not less than two miles from it, and as much as seven hundred feet above it. Yet the ruins speak of some wealth. Lintels, door posts and carved stones all of basalt are scattered about. Not a sound falls upon my ear as I stand amid these ruins, save the mournful sighing of the breeze through sun-scorched branches — yet that is the place where Chorazin — once a mighty city stood.

But the woe has fallen on Chorazin. What the «mighty works which were done» in her were we are not informed, but evidently they were of such character as to give light to her people, in the rejection of which has involved her ruin.

For rejected and abused mercies it is long since utterly blotted from view of men so that the exact locality cannot be identified. Tyre and Sidon less favoured and less guilty still survive the disaster of ages and retain a name and place on the map of human existence and activity. Without a single habitation, Chorazin is now a thorn-bed where adders crawl and jackals hide. Chorazin is a beacon of warning to us in this yet more privileged age and land.

As we turn to go, dropping a few coins into the hand of a Beduin woman who sat lonely among the ruins in sight of her tattered tents, we leave the forsaken jumble of stones with the Master’s words oppressively meaningful «Woe unto thee Chorazin!»
Chapter XVIII

COAST OF TYRE AND SIDON
CHRIST AMONG HEATHEN FOLK

The road that runs beside the Mediterranean through Tyre and Sidon to Beirut is, I think, the most interesting coast road in the world. No other road has such memories! Few coast lines possess so many localities of interest.

The palm-fringed road from Acre to Sidon is very picturesque.

Long before daybreak I was up, watching for the...
morning light to break over the hills of Galilee. The waves of the Mediterranean splashed on the shores; the olive trees stood in dark groves below me; the height of Carmel rose behind. At last the sun came up, gilding the hills and sparkling on the sea. Farther up the coast stands out clear and distinct the white limestone headland known best as the «Ladder of Tyre». Beyond it lie Tyre and Sidon.

This is one of the wildest and at times, the most dangerous pass on the Phoenician coast. The sides of the bluff are perpendicular, and the waves dash wildly against the base. The path is cut in the white limestone rocks five hundred feet above the level of the sea, and in places it skirts the very edge of the precipice.

I scaled the Tyrian Ladder, a bold headland which shoots far into the sea, and then I clambered up the dizzy staircase to the top of the White Cape, a perpendicular cliff of limestone rising hundreds of feet from the bosom of the deep. Along its brow the ancient and only road is hewn into the living rock.

Nearly the whole shore from the Tyrian Ladder northwards is strewn with ruins. Heaps of hewn stones and quantities of marble tesserae lie on the path, while broken shafts and mounds of rubbish are seen to the right and left—here crowning a cliff, there washed by the waves.

So I looked out in that early morning northward towards Tyre and Sidon. The sun reddened the slopes of Carmel. Birds twittered happily among the trees, and trains of laden camels passed by with dignified gait and melancholy mien, their barefooted drivers marching alongside in bright turbans and long dresses.

On one side the waves pound on yellow sands, on the other orange and banana groves lift them-
selves gently towards the distant snow-dusted Lebanon. Camels roped together in files, ten at a time, their necks hung with blue beads as a charm against the evil eye, slouch along led by fat men on donkeys.

Optimistic children hold out fish to motorists who are going forty miles an hour. Little girls extend bunches of orange with the green leaves still on them, calling shrilly to every passer-by. No one ever seems to buy anything from these children, but they never get tired of trying to sell something.

Haifa nestles peacefully on the slope of Mount Carmel.

The road is dotted with trellis work cafes on whose crazy little platforms men in baggy trousers, with red fezzes on their heads, sit cross-legged and suck at their hookahs, watching the blue waves curling over in white foam; watching everything that goes by on the road and talking all day long about money and politics!

Strung along this road, sharp and blinding in the
sun, are little flat-roofed towns standing with their
feet in blue waters, palm trees straggling on the sands
and white minarets lifted against the dark, hot sky.
They look very white and bright until you drive into
them, and then you find that their narrow winding
streets are all in shadow. But each little street is
like a row of peepshows.

The shops are small, windowless caves, and in
each one something is happening—a carpenter sawing
wood, a shoemaker cutting leather, a fishmonger
skinning a fish, a blacksmith hitting red iron. It is
all very intimate and friendly, and through the cool
shadows of the streets, a man with lemonade in a
brass urn on his back claps drinking cups together
and shouts that his lemonade is not only the best
in the whole world, but is ice-cold and packed in
snow from Lebanon.

There are crumbling towns on this road like Tyre
and Sidon, which are sunk in the ruins of their past.
The labourers in the fields around them never know
what the spade will turn up. They have found Roman
goddesses sleeping under the sands near Tyre. They
have come upon Egyptian graves, and have found
beautiful little green bottles and gold rings, and
silver images beside the sea at Sidon. An old and
brilliant world has crashed to ruins along this coast
road, and the men who live on it today seem like
a breakdown gang camped among the relics of a
noble mansion.

In this hot, bright world beside the Mediterranean
what gloomy stories the Phoenicians must have told
of the misty, cold island at the world’s end where
the small dark men mined tin.

Few cities can boast of a higher antiquity of
grander edifices and of greater renown than Tyre.
COAST OF TYRE AND SIDON

Founded by the Phoenicians, rebuilt by the Romans and again restored by the Christians, there have been three Tyres. The cradle of commerce, Tyre became the mistress of the seas; her merchants traded in every port in the known world.

The humble fishermen of Tyre and Sidon, which were the capitals of Phoenicia, had become rich and influential merchants long before the Christian era. By their enterprise they had made their cities the ports of the East, and had gained commercial intercourse with other countries bordering on the Mediterranean and with those beyond. Instead of being a barbarous people with unattractive surroundings, they possessed many of the signs of elegance and taste which marked the cities of the West. Theatres were numerous, baths abounded; and the shows, the games and the combats of wild beasts, caused the people from all parts to pour into the Phoenician cities.

Nothing can excel the accuracy of detail in the 27th chapter of Ezekiel on the wealth and glory of Tyre; and now after the lapse of twenty-five centuries her scattered ruins attest the truth of prophecy. Her walls are destroyed, her towers broken down, her ancient site is «a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea», and the remains of her marble castles, gorgeous palaces, triple gateways, lofty towers and spacious harbours are now seen half buried beneath the drifting sand or washed by the restless waves.

But little remains at Tyre and Sidon now to give evidence of their past. Seldom does a modern vessel touch at either port. The rapid traveler of today is content with a passing glimpse of them. When the weather is fair, the Mediterranean steamers pass...
near the shore and make such an opportunity possible though that soft artistic haze, so fascinating to the painter, is apt to obscure the distance, and shut from view the inclines bare, yet lovely, which stretch inland. But when Tyre and Sidon were in their glory how beautiful the scene must have been! Then the richly cultivated farms reached down to the very borders of the sea, and each cape, promontory, and

Tyre on the Syrian Coast Dates Back to the Dawn of History

hilltop exposed the glittering rays of the sun, the white walls of some prosperous towns on the sumptuous dwelling of a landed proprietor.

When Herod ruled Phoenicia, these harbors were continually crowded with vessels of all nations. The noise and confusion were scarcely less than at Rome! The cities and the ports, though not extensive, always teemed with life and were vivid with a wealth of colour. The moving vessels, the rude encounters of the sailors, the roarings of the wild beasts which
were brought from the far East and South for the public games, the songs of the fishermen, the busy movements of the merchants—all together made up picturesque scenes in endless variety.

How changed it all is now. Eastward are the undulating, fruitful plains, gay and bright with flowers and verdure, backed by the southern ridges of Lebanon. These plains extending from one city to the other, twenty-five miles, constituted the «coast of Tyre and Sidon.»

The present town of Tyre occupies the northwestern portion of the peninsula and is near the ancient harbour. A single gate admits the visitor to the city. Around it are the remains of old towers, and near it are two deep wells, from which the inhabitants obtain their principal water supply. As if to hide the fallen glory of Tyre, there are a few palms growing in the gardens.

In Tyre I found men building a ship on the edge of the sea. Somehow the sight seemed to blow away the centuries, and the ancient Tyre that sent its cypress wood to Solomon and its ships all over the world seemed to live again in the sound of the hammers and the saws.

The ship builders were not making a large ship. It was a fishing boat for the Mediterranean. They were sawing gopher wood from the Taurus mountains. It is a kind of pitch-pine and is the wood, so it is said, from which the ark was made.

Their method of sawing was very primitive. The wood was rested on two upright pillars. One man stood above it and one below, each holding the end of a long saw. One man pulled up while his companion pulled down, and the saw cut only on the downward pull.
For her sins God denounced against Tyre the severest judgments and today she is a mournful proof of the accuracy and fulfilment of prophecy. Her royal palaces have given place to the abodes of poverty; her magnificent navy with sails of embroidered linen from Egypt and ivory benches from the Isle of Chittim, has been changed for a few fishing boats. Even the hillsides, once rich in olive groves are now forsaken, and such have been the incursions of the sea, that the once fertile plain of Tyre has been transformed into a sandy waste.

A single historical site breaks the monotony of the journey from Tyre to Sidon, a distance of twenty-five miles. The path follows the coast along the Plain of Phoenicia, over which a mournful and solitary silence prevails. While the hills which bound it are carefully cultivated and the summits thereof are adorned with villages, this vast and rich plain is deserted. Along the way we passed Zarephath of the Old Testament, and the Sarepta of the New. Its site is now marked by a Moslem tomb and a noble fig tree. Driven by famine from his retreat by the Brook Cherith hither Elijah came and was received into the house of that poor widow whose «barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruise of oil fail», and whose son, as a reward of faith and charity, the prophet raised to life. And here an early tradition has preserved the site of that touching scene of the meeting of Christ and the woman of Syro-Phoenicia whose daughter He healed, during his first and only visit to «the coast of Tyre and Sidon».

The tower and minarets of Sidon soon appeared with the most luxuriant gardens in the world. In the intervening distance sections of the old Roman road
can still be traced, and along the highway are several milestones. Entering the famous gardens of the modern Sidon, we drove for some time through lengthened avenues of acacias and tamarisks, and amid mulberry groves and vast orchards of peaches, pears, apricots, plums, quinces, oranges, lemons, bananas, and citrons which filled the air with a delightful fragrance and presented to the eye a variety of finely-tinted and exquisite foliage. Interspersed through these beautiful groves are country seats possessing all the charms of an earthly paradise.

Greater than any memory of splendour and conquest shared by the sister towns of Tyre and Sidon, is the memory of the Man who departed into the "coasts of Tyre and Sidon," where he cured the girl who was grievously vexed with a devil.

We have come to a very important epoch in our Lord's life in the Holy Land. He has ceaselessly ministered for some twenty-seven months among His Galilean fellow countrymen. He has preached chiefly of the kingdom of God to them. He begins now to reveal in dim outline, and mysteriously at first, the Incarnation and the Atonement, His Deity, His power as the Life of His followers, His cruel death to take place at Jerusalem. The Galileans were bitterly disappointed in Him, because He, being the Son of David, refused the crown. They did not care much for His offers of eternal life. They wanted carnal things and an earthly kingdom and victory over the Romans. The happier days in Galilee thus ended, and days of conflict and exile now begin: He turns to the Gentiles for a while.

Jesus seems never actually to have entered Tyre and Sidon, although He visited the districts round about. Possibly from the country near-by He looked
down on the smoking chimneys, on the dye works of the Tyrian purple, and on the great glass works of Sidon.

Jesus came perhaps chiefly for rest and change. But there were in that vicinity folks who had been to Galilee and were healed by Him. So He was discovered, and a poor heathen woman distraught about her demonized daughter, ran after Him and pleaded with Him as the Son of David. «Have mercy on me,» she cries, «my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.»

She must have heard from some of those who came back from Galilee that this Nazarene was a descendant of the great king of the Jews. Jesus answered her not a word. Worse than that, His disciples seemed heartless and wished for her to be driven away. She only falls down and worships the Lord saying, «Lord, help me.» The Master, using the terms of the people of His day, calls the Jews the children of God and the heathen the dogs. I know what it is to be called a «dog» in the East. Dark, angry, scowling faces and muttered threats accompany the word. Most of the dogs lying about Jerusalem, Nazareth, Tyre, Sidon, or any other town in the East, are homeless, wolfish, hungry curs, which steal into the opened houses or shops to pick up anything dropped from the table. This woman will take her place as a dog, if only she may receive some blessing! But it is significant that Jesus used the word which indicates a pet dog.

Then Jesus answered and said unto her, «O woman great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.» In her Canaanitish home she found her daughter, but not the same.
CHAPTER XIX

AT CAESAREA PHILIPPI

PETER’S GREAT CONFESSION TO CHRIST

As the northern limit of our Saviour’s wanderings, Caesarea Philippi was the scene of one of the most interesting incidents of Christ’s life. Having restored a blind man at Bethsaida, He and his disciples passed up the same route we took as we made our way into this famous stronghold of Syria.

A steep hill clings to the side of a mountain for several miles and then the road drops into a green valley watered by the melted snow of Hermon. The shaggy foothills give no hint of the awful desolation that lies above them. They are, in spite of their desolation, comfortable hills, darkened here and there by fig and vine and olive. But they are lonely hills. No houses disturb their monotonous solitude; no terraces transform their primeval untidiness. Then across the plain, through pleasant forest glades, bordered with myrtle, acacia and oleander, up a rugged mountainside, beneath the shade of Bashan’s stately oaks, we came to the site of the old Greek city of Paneas, which Herod the Great rebuilt and renamed Caesarea Philippi. This is one of the very few really beautiful spots in Palestine.

Occupying a broad terrace in the mountainside, it is bounded by two sublime ravines, one on the north and the other on the south, between which, and in
the rear of the site, rise the castellated heights of Subeibeh, one thousand feet high. Behind it rises Hermon, steep, rugged, and grand. In front stretches out the broad plain of Merom, like a vast meadow, and away beyond it is the mountain range of Lebanon.

The teeming vegetation is extended downwards by the irrigation of the fields on the slopes and on the plain. The ruins are not remarkable except for their situation. The best preserved is the Roman bridge which leads over the impetuous stream to a gateway in the citadel within which the modern village of Banias is huddled up into a corner. How happily situated is the village in this verdant and sheltered nook of Hermon. Its fifty tottering huts, however, form a wretched representative of ancient grandeur.

Jesus, when in Caesarea Philippi, must have gazed at the niches which once held the famous statues of the god Pan

An inhabited ruin is more pathetic than one that is desolate. Banias, the modern Caesarea Philippi
today is a tangle of briars and a huddle of mud houses. There is nothing to remind us of the beautiful city that once stood there except a few Greek shrines to Pan carved in the rocks and the broken pillars that encumber the ground. A depressing object lesson in the death of Roman civilization is the chief’s house. It is a confused mass of stone nearly all of it Roman. Built into the wall, not upright but in parallel position, are dozen of lovely marble columns. At first it looks as though this place is built of round stones. Then one realizes that these are the bases of columns. There is something positively sickening in the sight of it. One sees in imagination the onrush of barbarians, the frightful destructions of beauty and the blind ignorant rebuilding by a savage race. When the Roman Empire fell, towns like Caesarea Philippi became stone quarries. One can see so clearly how a statue could be hacked to pieces to fit into the walls of a hovel. We all know that these things happened, but the sight of one building, with altars and inscriptions built into its walls and Corinthian columns used to support floors instead of roofs, seems to bring home more vividly the horror that attends the extinction of culture. In Roman times the city must have been one of the finest in the country. The sound of running water enlivened its streets: even on the hottest summer day the pale green melted snow water went through them into the valley. And today the tumultuous sources of the Jordan leap out from the roots of Hermon and go singing over the dead body of Caesarea Philippi.

The remains of old Caesarea Philippi over which we stumble are rather insignificant, consisting mainly of half-buried columns and traces here and there
of prostrate buildings among the noble oak trees above us on our right. Few and unimportant as they are, however, they prove that the city once extended a considerable distance in this direction, forming, no doubt, a beautiful suburb, amply supplied with delicious water and abundantly irrigated by the streams from the great fountain.

It will be observed that on the roof of nearly every house there is a booth made of green branches and raised upon stout pedestals of wood. This is the summer sleeping place and is designed for the inhabitants to be raised above the swarming scorpions, lizards, and vermin.

The remains of the walls and towers which surround the town show that they were constructed on a gigantic scale. The East gate, or portal, still stands and is approached by a stone bridge which spans the stream and is covered with maidenhair fern, growing wild, being watered by the dripping water from the channel of the old aqueduct which crosses the bridge and which with the massing clumps of oleanders make a refreshing sight.

Among its mighty ruins is a citadel of quadrangular form covering four acres and surrounded by a massive wall with heavy towers at the angles and sides. Guarded on the east by a deep moat, it is washed on the north and west by a large stream and on the south it is protected by a profound chasm, which is spanned by a bridge, from which a noble gateway opens into the citadel.

Several picturesque views may be obtained from the bridge and the citadel. These will not attract the visitor very much, and so we proceed to the spot where all the present interest centres. It is the fountain or source of the Jordan which bursts out in a series
of many streams and, forming a large basin, flows hence in one copious stream. That this fountain was the parent of the once grand city may be reasonably presumed as in thousands of other cases cities gather to rivers, and when cities to ruin run, the rivers still run on.

At the base of a precipitous red limestone cliff is a dark cave, now nearly filled with the ruins of a temple. It was formerly from this cavern the waters gushed out in one large stream from the mountain; but owing to a great fall of debris, which is said to have occurred at the birth of Christ, the channel through which the water ran was here blocked up and the imprisoned waters burst through the mass of rocks, making new channels just beyond.

Here is the site of Paneas, or Sanctuary of Pan, from which the town took its name. It is possible to read an inscription here and there. «Priest of Pan» is one. Pan was a Grecian divinity, always in my imagination associated with Arcadia, and it is unexpected and somewhat startling to meet with the name and the worship at the foot of Hermon and the birthplace of the sacred Jordan.

There is nothing singular in that. The gods of ancient mythology were known and worshipped among nations and peoples widely separated. It is quite possible that those indolent and effeminate Phoenicians who «dwell careless, after the manner of the Zidonians» may have selected this charming locality for the worship of Pan, the god of flocks, bees, and fishes. All three abound here. I have seen the great mound of rubbish above the fountain literally covered with long-eared goats, lying in drowsy repose, listening to the gentle murmur of the infant river. On the plain below us are more beehives than elsewhere:
and the brooks are alive with fish. Certainly if Pan
was in form half a goat, he could desire no better
habitation than this, with its rugged cliffs, deep
grottoes, solemn groves and gushing fountains.
Here were the statues of Pan and his peers and
nymphs which fell and shivered with a moan far
resounding over land and sea at the moment of
Christ's Nativity. It even was more than a moan, and
the words «Great Pan is dead,» swept across the
Mediterranean.
But the neighbourhood of Caesarea Philippi has a
peculiar interest in connection with the life of Christ.
We are now on ground much more sacred than
mere classic association can render any place. Our
blessed Lord has been here, has drunk of the same
fountain and looked upon this lovely scene. With his
usual compassion he taught the people and healed
their diseases.
We are however not told Jesus ever visited the city
itself but only that He spent an undefined period in
«the parts of Caesarea Philippi.» We gather that this
corner of the Holy Land was the northernmost limit
of the journeys of our Lord during his withdrawal
from public teaching after the crisis of his earthly
life: when, by his refusal to be proclaimed as king
and by his teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum,
he had alienated those who had clung to carnal
views of the Messiahship and when, no longer
followed by eager crowds, he had devoted himself
chiefly to instructing the apostles. To them, when
near Caesarea Philippi, he revealed his impending
sufferings at Jerusalem, his death and glorious
resurrection.
As we stand at the foot of the cave and look at
that grotto, where perchance in early days Baal was
worshipped, where, without doubt, the Greeks who always associated caves and grottoes with the worship of Pan, paid their devotions to that deity, we will recall with some emotion that scene recorded in Matt. 16:13.

Here Christ asked his disciples «whom do men say that I am?» Receiving their reply, he tested their faith by the more personal question. «But whom say ye that I am?» Ever ready with an answer and acting as the mouthpiece of his brethren, Peter uttered that extraordinary confession: «Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.»

Beside the fountain Christ uttered those memorable words: «Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.» May not the sight of the cliff overhead have suggested the peculiar form of the expression? Satisfied with an answer no less satisfactory than true he returned southward, and «after six days he was transfigured on the summit of Tabor» commanding a view of his native hills.

We will figure Jesus standing before the grotto of the god Pan: He would not have shared the very error he condemned in idolatry—namely, the confusion of the substance with the shadow, but whatever superstition he may have seen in those statues he would have recognized their significance. The idolatry he would not endure, but to him the statue was a symbol not an idol.

Above this shrine is a little white building with a dome. The Moslem sanctuary of Sheikh Khadder, as the inhabitants tell travellers, is really St. George. This is not quite true. Sheikh Khadder is a mythical prophet who, when on earth, discovered the well of life and, drinking of its waters, became «the green one.» That is the meaning of the name. The inhabitants
believe that his soul animated St. George, who is therefore worshipped all over Arabia as an incarnation of Khadder. It is certainly curious to find a Christian saint held in veneration by Moslems, and the explanation is that St. George, who was martyred in 303 A.D., became so famous throughout the East nearly three centuries before the Prophet Mohammed was born that even Islamism could not dislodge him from the category of holy men.

To the student of religion there can be few spots of greater interest than this grotto at Banias. Pan lives again in the name of the place, and on the spot where Herod raised a white marble temple to the deified Augustus the inhabitants have built a little domed shrine to the spirit of the patron saint of England.

I could easily understand why the people of Banias believed this eerie grotto to be haunted. A villager told me that on one night the whole village was awakened by a voice calling to prayer. «It was a prophet;» he said in explanation. The Moslem believes that while the souls of ordinary men wait for the resurrection, the souls of the prophets can move about and manifest themselves. He told me that someone in the village had caught sight of the spirit and that «he was very white!»

Banias with its surroundings, forms one of nature’s grandest temples in whose presence those made by men’s hands are a mere impertinence. Those oak glades and joyous brooks, these happy birds and frisking flocks all bear their parts in her service, and the mountains preach, the hills and valleys sing, and the trees of the field clap their hands.

In the scene and scenery around romantic Banias, impressive Jordan and sublime Hermon, there is not only poetry but solemn mystery, suggestive of rich spiritual representations of sacred truth.
IN the Land of the Druses lying south-east of Damascus about halfway between that city and the Mediterranean, rises majestic, snow-capped Mount Hermon in the Anti-Lebanon range, the highest mountain in Syria, whose praises were sung by the prophets of old, and which many believe to be the Mount of Transfiguration. It is the great landmark of Palestine and Syria, but seldom visited and climbed as it lies somewhat off the beaten track. It is impossible to make an ascent of the mountain before May and a guide is essential, for the climb is a fatiguing one. Then one must be prepared to spend a night on the mountain, for the climb cannot be carried out in a single day.

The little village of Hasbayya, which serves as the base for an expedition to the summit of Mount Hermon gives little inkling of the miles of natural beauty which await one.

The village of Hasbayya is situated on both sides of a deep glen which descends from a side ridge of Hermon westward into a valley. The head of the ravine being but a little east of the town, the latter is enclosed on three sides by high hills, which are regularly terraced and planted with vineyards, olive groves and fig orchards. Of its five thousand inhabitants, four thousand are Christians and the remainder Druses. Aside from its great fountain, the
only object of interest is a group of Druses chapels. Crowning some of the lofty summits, they are strongly built, and the only architectural peculiarity they possess is the smallness of the windows.

Hasbaya boasts neither hotel nor restaurant. Therefore the roof of an empty house had to serve as a bedroom while the Syrian Mission, fortunately, was able to supply us with food.

At two o'clock the next morning we scrambled down from our «hotel a la roof» to start out on our long ascent to the summit of the mountain. While the majority of the party chose to make the «climb» on the backs of asses, mules and horses, the more sportive members who rejected such means of transport were rewarded by more full and detailed views of the mountainside and the surrounding country. Starting in full moon and climbing until sunset we were able to see the country in a variety of moods and colour.

The path from Hasbaya commences among pretty woods and tangled vineyards, until it becomes very steep and has to be ascended in zigzag, the horses slipping continually and the saddles occasionally coming off. Reaching the end of the path the ascent is really difficult and very bad, a long steep slope of loose, small shingle.

While Hasbaya is not at the foot of the mountain it is the nearest village which is able to afford accommodation. Therefore, four hours were spent in walking up and down-hill to the actual starting point of the climb, which is the most beautiful and fertile little valley, I have seen in this part of the world. Wherever we look there is water. Brooks of delightful sound ran down the hill-sides. Clumps of myrtle were not infrequent and at some places terraces had been
built along the sides to retain the soil. The country abounds in high green poplar trees, cultivated fields and delightful paths of cool shade.

We found the ascent very long and tiring and the path rocky and steep. After gaining the summit of one of the jagged ranges, which first appear near the top, it is only to descend again into a wide valley and negotiate the opposite side, for the mountain is much divided and cut up. Thus as we climb we pass hill after hill, and only during the last half hour do we actually see the summit before us. For the first thirteen and a half hours we can do nothing but have implicit faith that there is a hill in front of us. When we reach the top of it, we see the next hill. If Hermon disappears behind a peak, it is to stand up in renewal of majesty when the road turns again. The valleys contain gentle springs and good pasturage for flocks. The springs consist of just a basin of cold, clear water, which percolate quietly out of the ground.

The Glory of Hermon and the Excellency of the Cedars are world-famous
Great flocks of sheep and goats fed on better pasture than is common thousands of feet below. Two Druses tended a flock, one of them carrying a gun to protect his charge from the wild beasts.

The abundance of the refreshing, clear cold water is one of the brightest features of the climb to the Holy Land traveller, who is accustomed to rely upon his water jug on such trips.

We reached the second summit from the north whence all the northern view is shut. Thence we find grassy dells and little hills along the lofty ridge to the highest and most southern summit. Here we stop to enjoy the magnificent views. The heat is tempered by a cool, gentle breeze instead of the terrible wind usual at this height and the distance is perfectly clear and cloudless.

Hermon did not look high as we were ascending it, and the snow, which at a distance had appeared an unbroken mantle, is now seen only to fill the hollows of the summit, with bare ribs of the mountain between. The vast mountain mass, which has risen so grandly to the heavens, is in fact only a long, awful slope of rock. There is no peak, but simply a great ridge, bare and terrible, rising a little higher at one part than another, with Druse villages far up the valleys.

As we ascended the air is still delightful. The snowy top is seen just above us to the north perhaps eight hundred feet higher than our rough track. The air grows perceptibly cooler as we get nearer the snow of the hills, but it does not prevent life of all kinds from enjoying itself, for there is a whole chorus of crested larks as we ride on. We have now reached the highest part of the pass, and from this point the mountains change their character. The onward track
lies across the wide crater of an ancient volcano, filled up with lava; spots sown with grain are not infrequent. A man riding a camel was the only creature that passed us beyond the wide stretch of lava, which is succeeded by a sandy plain, with good grazing. All over this plain “daisies” whitened the ground, though snow lies on many spots around.

We are now under the very top of Hermon — “the Lofty Height” famous in Scripture; and the “Mountain of the White-haired Old Man” among the populations today.

It is not Lebanon but Mount Hermon — the culmination, although an outlier at the south-east of the chain of Anti-Lebanon which runs parallel with Lebanon to the east — that is the special and constant feature and landmark in the various prospects of Western Palestine. It is by far the most conspicuous mountain in the Holy Land. It is visible from nearly every part both east and west of the Jordan. When “Moses went from the Plains of Moab unto the Mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho, and the Lord shewed him all the land of Gilead unto Dan”. Snowy Hermon dominates all vision. Hermon’s height a mere nine thousand and fifty feet rises superbly from flat plain, seven thousand feet below. I have seen Hermon from the Jericho depressions, his austere aloofness almost maddening by contrast with that dust-tormented desert. I saw it many times from Damascus. Out for full grandeur it must be seen from Coele-Syria, and better still from the nearer slopes of Lebanon. To one sailing along the coast towards Tyre, during the winter months, the entire range of Hermon, covered with snow in winter and streaked with it even in summer, its exceptional isolation and its snow cap
making up for the absence of characteristic peaks and points. Wonderful at dusk and sunset, Hermon is beyond words wonderful at dawn, a shining giant shutting the vale and towering into the clear heavens.

In every age it has had a name significant of some physical peculiarities. Its «lofty conical peak» suggested the name of Hermon: its rounded top, covered with snow and ice, and glittering in the sunlight, appeared to the Sidonians and Amorites like a massive «breastplate». Its ancient Hebrew names have much the same meaning: «Hermon» and «Sion» both signifying the «upraised» the «lifted upon high», the chief thing to express the fact of the loftiest mountains catching the most dew from clouds. It is natural that Scripture should mention names peculiar to these tribes of Phoenicians, as Hermon appears to stand over Sidon. Impressed with its majesty the Arabs call it «Jabal-esh-Sheikh: Mountain of the Chief.» Twice in Scripture the name Baal-Hermon is given to the mountain, no doubt the result of the worship of Baal in that high place.

At Bludan I have seen an oak, sacred in all ages, visible from afar. It holds a Moslem shrine, whose guardian worships, looking not towards Mecca, but towards Hermon. Questioned, the man replies that so his father did before him. Thus Baal-Hermon has his home today!

An old pilgrim says that every morning at sunrise a handful of dew floated down from the summit of Hermon and deposited itself upon the chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary, when it was immediately gathered up by Christian monks and was found a sovereign remedy for all diseases. It was of this dew that it is alleged that David spoke prophetically in his psalms.

Mount Hermon is about twenty miles long. There are three separate heights which form the summit.
and they are raised two to three thousand feet above the main chain. The loftiest peak is on the north, the second height is three hundred yards to the south of the highest one, beneath it about five thousand feet from the summit are the highest sources of the Pharphar. The third height is about a quarter of a mile to the west and is separated from the two former by a small valley. By its elevation, as well as by its snow, it condenses the almost tropical moisture arising from the well-watered slopes and the swamps in the basin of the upper Jordan at its western foot, so that it becomes a great collector of clouds and deppositor of dew. Perpetual winter reigns upon the summit. The snow never disappears. All through the springtime to early summer they resemble white domes standing out against the purple skies. In midsummer and autumn the intense heat melts the snow from the tops of the ridges, but, owing to its greater depth, does not affect that portion which fills the ravines. Thus Hermon appears, alternately streaked which lighter and darker lines, till hoary winter comes again to weave his mantle of white and cover therewith three majestic summits, the symbols of a purer world. The summit snows, condensing the vapours which during summer float around it in the higher regions of the atmosphere, produce abundant dew, which is a source of unfailing moisture to the adjacent country, while other portions of the land remain dry and parched. The melting of its snows makes Jordan to overflow its bank in spring, and generally the mountains seem to be associated in the Bible with the dew and streams so precious in waterless Palestine.

The dews of the mists that rose from its watery ravines, or of the clouds that rested on its summit,
were perpetual witnesses of freshness, the sources as it seemed of all the moisture which was to the land of Palestine what the frequent oil was to the garments of the high priests: what the refreshing influence of brotherly love was to the whole community.

Perpetual winter reigns upon the summit of Mount Hermon.

So long as the snowy tops of Mount Hermon were seen, there was never wanting to the Hebrew poetry the image of unearthly grandeur which nothing else but perpetual snow can give, especially as seen in the summer, when the firmament round it seems to be on fire. And not grandeur only but fertility and beauty were held up as it were on its heights, as a model for the less fortunate regions which looked upon it.

The drainage of Hermon forms the river Jordan, the headwaters being the Hasbani, a stream which
rises on its northern edge and joins the already united streams from its two other chief sources.

When we reached the summit shortly before sunset we have the unique experience of seeing the clouds far below us. The valleys, covered by these blankets of clouds, appear as snowfields, and, as the sun sank they were bathed in colours of indescribable beauty. There are still several snowfields in the vicinity of the summit which melt during the day and freeze again during the night. We were all exhausted when we reached the highest point, which stands about nine thousand and fifty feet above sea level.

Now in August, the kingly mountain carried only streaks of snow, but it did not need winter to enhance a magnificence already enrapturing. Suddenly the sun grew golden-faced, hastening to its setting on the Mediterranean: The mountain, not to be outdone, changed to a dim red, while the sky behind him softened with green. The horizon became all colours. To the north, Lebanon, lying between the rival splendours of sea and Hermon, with deep purple beneath a yellow heaven. Hermon reddened altogether, the sun sank, the clouds along the sea burst into an incredible conflagration, a fury of red and gold.

As night came upon us we were forced to forget the splendour of the scenery and turn our minds to the mundane business of keeping warm! The summit was cold — our meteorologist reported the temperature to be one degree below freezing. It was bitterly cold and a stiff wind was blowing that night. Though we selected a fairly sheltered spot for the night we had difficulty in keeping warm, in spite of the blankets and wraps we had brought with us. But owing to the fact that there was no wind we were able to pass a fairly snug night.
Sunrise gives us again the glorious rain-bow colours so that we are able to carry away with us an indelible picture of Mount Hermon.

The view from the summit, is of course, very extensive, deeply interesting and well repays the exertion. It embraces almost the whole of Palestine and Syria. To the south-east the Hauran lies mapped before us, blue hills on the horizon faintly bounding the far distance, deepening in colour as they swept round to the south. Damascus with its gardens and groves, lying gemlike in its verdure appears surprisingly near. Then comes the long, white ridge of the rugged Anti-Lebanon, the height of Sannin, all rosy beneath the snow, headed the confusion of peaks, slopes and craggy heights of the Baruk range, occupying the whole of the western country between Hermon and the blue sea. We look down into the very heart of the deep, narrow ravines of the dashing Litany, with its sharp sudden bend towards the sea, half-hidden in thick woods. Tyre and Sidon lie underneath the cliff, range after range of mountains filling up the space between the Litany and the coast till Carmel ran a deep blue promontory into the sea. Then come the purple and green Mountains of Galilee to the south, while paling in blues behind them lie the Judean Hills—the Mountains of Gilboa and Samaria. At our feet the waters of Merom seem close to us, and beyond that, shining in clear blue serene loveliness, the beautiful Lake of Galilee sunk deep down in the dark purple mountains, like sweet smiles on an aged rugged face. From thence one can trace the winding hilltops of the valley of the tortuous Jordan till it is lost in the faint distance of the Dead Sea mountains.

Round a rock which forms the crest of the second
peak there remains the foundation of a circular wall, composed of large stones. Old walls are mostly covered with a very minute lichen of a bright scarlet colour which had a curious effect, while between every stone grew tufts of a velvety thorny plant, very dense and tough, covered with the tenderest little pale, fragile blossoms, a kind of «immortelle» which blew away at a touch or a breath. Within the enclosure are heaps of well-shapen stones, which must have at one time formed part of a building; bevelling and moulding are still to be seen. There is also a fragment of a column and the form of a small temple can be traced. The ruins stand on the edge of the mountain and beneath is a great gulf, so that inevitably as the temple decayed, the columns and other parts of the building must have rolled down the declivity. The stones composing the ring appear to be of more ancient date than the remains of the temple. It would appear a strange site for a sanctuary as it must have been for so many months of the year covered with snow, if we had not the fact that the Syrians selected the summits of mountains for the worship of their gods. No one could stand on the summit and turn his eyes from east to west, from north to south without feeling that no worshippers of the sun could have left so grand a spot unconsecrated to their god. By sympathy one seems, when standing here, to enter into something of the feeling of the untutored child of nature who, daily witnessed the incomprehensible mystery of the sun's all-glorious course and believed his quickening rays to be the source of all the life and well being of the world around him.

Beside me in a hollowed rock the fire of Baal had often burnt in bygone ages and around me were
the great stones of Baal's altar and the shattered ruins of a later temple. There I was enabled to prove how accurate was the name given to this mountain by the sacred writers. A noble spot that was for the worship of the great firegod! His priests could see the sun rising from the eastern desert long before his beams lighted up the plains below, and they could see him sinking slowly in the western sea long after he had set to the shores of Phoenicia and then at night, on that commanding peak they could kindle a flame whose light would flash far and wide. Wishing to realize something of the grandeur of those days, we collected the dry, prickly shrubs that cover the mountain-side, piled them up on the rock where the fire used to burn and applied a match. The air was perfectly still, and the flame seemed to shoot up into the very heavens, while Hermon's icy crown gleamed and glittered in the ruddy light.

The Cedar crowned top of Lebanon are a beauty to behold.
The Glory of Hermon

We refreshed ourselves with a little snow or ice and then commenced our decent, which after some hours becomes very terrible. We were four long hours descending that gully, jumping and scrambling from stone to stone, the horses following as best they could. The walls of the ravine closed in boldly and sometimes quite perpendicularly on each side.
CHAPTER XXI

SACRED MOUNT TABOR
THE SCENE OF CHRIST'S
TRANSFIGURATION

We started from Nazareth one Sunday afternoon and drove to Mount Tabor along rough paths of the bare, rocky hills, white with rock and gray with bushes of Spina Christi. Far away to eastward, but very clear, was Mount Hermon. Around us lay a world of hills, bare except for an olive wood here and there and silent but for the larks. The intervening ground is tableland with a gently undulating surface and belts of plantation and clumps of trees and vistas of green turf bordered with shrubbery. Over it, to the height of 1,200 feet or more rises Mount Tabor. It is undoubtedly the most conspicuous hill in central Palestine—not from its altitude, for there are others much higher, but from its isolated position, unique shape, and unfading verdure. When seen from the north its curved outline breaks the dull monotony of the more imposing. Then its swells up like a vast dome from the Plain of Esdraelon and in the richness of its foliage and delicate green of its forest glades it presents a pleasing contrast to the brown, rosy summits of Ephraim and the bare white crown of Judah.

We drove to the uplands and over a long stretch of downs carpeted with flowers. All the April love--
liness is here in a prairie of wind-ruffled color. The wild pastures are in place rock-ribbed: but this merely means shelves where cyclamen and scarlet ranunculus supplant iris and grape-hyacinth. This is the month when a man may drive through «lilies» from the lake to the sea. Then come trees as the path drops from the heights: styrax, terebinth, tinged with red of new leaves, rhamnus, and oak — a shrubbery dotted over the hillside where the Crusaders found a forest.

A long dip follows, down a glen fledged with scattered copse. Across a dwarfed valley towers the wooded mass of Mount Tabor. Here is a sudden abundance of gladiolus and hollyhocks. The former are flowers of cultivation, lighting the cornfields and pastures which man’s hand has already shorn of the loftier luxuriance of thorn and shrub. But the later are mountain flowers, the glory of savage ravines in Moab and Gilead, abundant in Carmel and springing from the clefts of the Jabbok gorge. The loveliest hollyhocks in the world and those with the largest blooms grow in the Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem. All the way up Mount Tabor hollyhocks flower from the rocks — not red ones but an even greater abundance of white ones only seen in odd plants elsewhere.

The guide books say much of Tabor’s sylvan loveliness. I was prepared to discount this as the efflorescence of pious imagination, seeing in this solitary tower the site of «Christ’s transfiguration.»

We drove over a long stretch of land carpeted with flowers. All the spring loveliness is here in a prairie of wind ruffled colour and the wild pastures are in places rock-ribbed.

To make an easier approach to the mountain the
ancient mule path along the hills of Galilee was abandoned and from Dabburiye to the summit of Mount Tabor a road four kilometers long is cut for carriages and automobiles. We reached the foot of the mountain and the car began the perilous ascent. The curves are sharp and the car had to back up and go forward several times in order to edge around. We turned our back for a moment; then we rounded a curve and once again strode unto the face of exquisite crimson and inky blues daubed all over the sky with a carefully careless technique.

The great tableau that everyone has in his mind’s eye on reaching this mountain is the Transfiguration of our Lord. How often it has been duplicated by the artist! How often thought on by the devout. Tabor will always be a place of great interest. Its remarkable shape and striking position would attract admiration in any country, and the magnificent prospect from the top will always draw tourists hither. I have climbed to it many times, and shall certainly repeat my visits whenever I pass this way.

In older days of Canaanitish Baal worship Mount Tabor was a high place and the northern tribes appear in this case, as in many others, to have forgotten the divine command. They erected altars and images upon the mount. The people were then deceived and ensnared by the idolatrous practice of their leaders. Its pastures tempted the nomads of Arabia: its firm, flat surface attracted the chariots and horsemen of Philistia, Canaan, and Syria. From the top of this mount the light infantry of Israel could watch all their movements and take advantage of any fitting opportunity for attack. The graphic story of Barak and Deborah was here brought vividly before my mind: Barak eagerly watching the advance
of Sisera across the plain while Deborah, with the enthusiasm of a patriot, looked and prayed to heaven for the signal to attack. At length her eyes saw it, and she cried «Up; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the Lord gone out before thee?» (Judges 4:14).

It would indeed be hard for any man to set down thoughts that strike him in such a scene. Here, too, some of Israel’s warriors had been attacked and slain by the host of Midian before Gibeon’s victory. Even before the conquest it would seem that the great Lawgiver’s prophetic eyes had been fixed upon Mount Tabor when said of Zebulon and Issachar, «They shall call the people unto the mount; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness» (Deut.33:49).

Mount Tabor, the most prominent of Palestine’s Hills

Tabor is the Mount of Transfiguration, and being the real scene of that wondrous event it yields an interest to none of Palestine’s holy places. I could quite understand this mountain being chosen as this
exalted site. It is high and round-headed, stands in a remote position, separated from all the other hills. It is wrapped in silence—far from the world. Mount Hermon, tall, spirit-pale, shines on it: a fine, sweet air ruffles its close-growing flowers. It is clustered with memorials of crusading zeal in perpetuating the transfiguration scene. Peter’s unfulfilled desire here to make three tabernacles the spirit of superstition in a later age literally accomplished. And yet it occurs sometimes to me that the quiet and retirement of some spot would have been preferred to such an exalted scene of the transfiguration rather than the site whose entire surroundings only recalled scenes of sorrow and struggling. I confess I gave my mind up to it—surely “it is good to be here.”

Admitting the fact that the top of the mountain was very early occupied as a fortified military post it is by no means conclusive against the tradition. It is not probable that the camp covered the whole summit, and even if it did there was nothing in the visit of four “unarmed peasants” to attract the attention of the Roman soldiery. We see nothing in the narrative or in the nature of the transaction or in events in some degree analogous which we find recorded in the Gospels, that the transfiguration should be visible except to the three chosen witnesses. The bright cloud that overshadowed them may well be supposed to have obscured the view of others.

Roll back twenty centuries and again view Tabor. The day is bright and beautiful as today, and the same rich landscape is smiling in the same sun. But how different is the scene that is passing here.

Christ leaves nine disciples in one of the villages near; and taking the favoured three He ascends one of the lesser heights of the mountain to spend the night in prayer.
The Son of man stands on the height and casts His eyes over the quiet valley through which the Jordan winds its silver current. The Master is kneeling in prayer apart. The three had wrapped their cloaks around them, and lying on the grass fell asleep.

Christ begins to change before their eyes. It was not like the light of a moon but like the light of the sun. It was inherent glory.

When they fell asleep the little party consisted of four and to their astonishment they now number six. These are glorified beings.

Peter naturally cries then «Lord it is good for us to be here. » Confused by the scene and dazzled by the splendour, he was ignorant what he was saying. He knew not the meaning of this sudden appearance but he knew that heaven was near and God revealing Himself, and he felt that some sacred ceremony would be appropriate to the scene. As the cloud enveloped them all, there came a Voice «This is my beloved Son: hear Him.»

How long the vision lasted we cannot tell, but all that night did Jesus, with his disciples stay on that holy mount. As they sat on the high summit and watched the stars, as they rose one after another above the horizon, and gazed on the moon as she poured her light over the dim and darkened landscape, words were spoken that seemed born of heaven.

Standing alone, commanding such a magnificent view, it seems just the place for that wondrous scene. And yet that glimpse of heaven needed not any earthly surroundings to make it more impressive. It was so purely a revelation of heaven that nothing is gained by fixing it in the midst of beautiful or barren scenery.
But independant of tradition and superstition Mount Tabor holds rank among Palestine's celebrated mountains. Gilead and Pisgah, Olivet and Carmel, Tabor and Hermon, are all honored names in the sacred story.

When I reached the summit of the mountain, nothing could induce me to leave it. The view possesses a higher interest for the Bible student and the Christian traveler than its hoary and desolate ruins and its magnificent basilica. It is one of the wondrous panoramas which time can never obliterate from the memory and whose striking features and vivid colouring change can never dim. The notes I wrote on this mountain are before me but they are scarcely needed if I see the landscape now as I saw it then. On the north Naphtali's brown peaks running in a series athwart the glowing sky. Further to the east a little corner of the Lake of Galilee slumbering in its deep, deep bed. On the south the Plain of Esdraelon, Palestine's battlefield, sweeping round the base of the mountain and extending a sea of verdure owing to the hills of Samaria and the darker ridge of Carmel. In the distance, ranged along its opposite side, I saw dimly the isolated hills on which once stood the cities of Taanach and Megiddo. Directly facing me four miles distance beyond the eastern arm of the plain rises the "hill of Moreh," a gray, treeless ridge. The Little Hermon with its sloping villages of Endor and Nain present themselves as if bowing before it, and the great Hermon to the north seems as though it picks up and re-echoes the benedictions of Mount Tabor, eternalizing them in its mantle of perennial snow.

Naturally Mount Tabor was and is still a favourite place of pilgrimage and it has been described time and again in Christian travelers' literature. Multitudes
of pious pilgrims, heedless of authority and intent only on earnest belief with imaginations aflame, climbed to the top over a stairway of 4340 steps cut in the solid rock, traces of which are to be seen here and there along the winding path. They sang hymns upon the way and ceased only when they reached the plateau on the crest.

The Benedictine Monastery and church on the top of the mountain, built between 1921 and 1924, incorporated a portion of the ruined Crusaders church. The good fathers at least have no doubts as to the sacredness of their strange and beautiful home and magnificent basilica, and their quiet certainty adds a flame to the fire of the devotees from far-off lands.

The fame of the sanctuary and the imposing state-lines of the new basilica, which are continuously attracting growing throngs of pilgrims, necessitated the provision of a convent for the friars destined to carry on the divine services and to receive the numerous pilgrims coming to the holy mountain. To this purpose the ancient pilgrim house has been adapted beside which a spacious guestroom has been constructed for those arriving on Tabor to renew in spirit the wonders of natures and grace. Surely the stone monastery isolated on the mountain crest is an impressive pile and seemed true haven, reflecting peace and hospitality.

Here we are standing in front of the basilica — wearing the old ruins like a crown — and standing above them is the new building, a «transfiguration» in itself of the material elements therein displayed with new splendor in honour of the Transfiguration of Jesus.

Let us enter the great basilica comprising the chapel supposed to have been dedicated to Moses and
Elisha. It is a long building with a round apse. At the eastern extremity of this apse stands an altar built up again of the rough original stones and surmounted by a plain cross. This altar is by immemorial report believed to mark the spot where our Saviour stood during the occurrence of the ineffable event of Transfiguration. Who can look at it in dignity and suggestiveness? Now it is roofed in. The tendency in the Holy Land is to cover every sacred site with some dome. I prefer the infinite arc of the skies and for decoration the wild flowers and creeping ferns and grasses which grow amid the moldering stones. The mosaics are especially noteworthy. Particularly interesting and peculiarly adapted to the sacred crypt is the wide arch behind the altar through which a flood of light is admitted, offering at the same time a wonderful view of the Lake of Galilee, the Mountains of Bashan, and the Valley of the Jordan, a veritable and insuperable picture of nature. The rising sun scatters its first golden rays over the sacred rock and altar of the transfiguration.

In the central apse is represented the great historical fact, the mystery to which the basilica is dedicated. In the clear sky there appears raised and standing in the air the divine figure of Jesus, whose garments are swayed by the gently blowing zephyr. The face and eyes of the Redeemer speak of the glory in which his great soul is immersed in the vision of the Father and the Holy Ghost. Moses and Elisha in ecstasy and inundated with the radiant splendour of the Master, are with him: their look is one of wonder and adoration; while Peter, James, and John, awestricken, contemplate this celestial vision. The pose given to the single personages reveals the internal impressions and presents such a pleasing and harmon-
ious whole that spontaneously there comes to the lips the exclamation, «Lord, it is good for us to be here!»

Notwithstanding the construction of the new basilica, and in all that desolation the finger of God was visible, prophecy was fulfilled before my eyes. Every object I saw was an emblem and a result of the curse — ruins, thorns, and thistles. What a commentary upon the words of the ancient prophets, «I will destroy your high places»! The ruins on the summit of Tabor are extensive. The destroyer, however, has dealt so heavily with them and they are in places so overgrown with thorns and briars and thistles that any minute examination by a passing visitor is impossible.

We wander among the ruins and come suddenly on caves which at some period probably served as tombs but were afterwards, doubtless during the first few centuries of the Christian era, used as the habitations of hermits. In certain of these can still be seen benches hollowed in the rock, where year by year some long departee saint rested his weary bones, and other little hollows outside which the rain filled to serve him with drinking water. It is strange to look at this wretched place and reflect upon the passionate prayers, the nightly vigils, the pious purposes that hallow them. What a life it must have been which the old devotees endured for decades in those damp holes. There is something pitiable in that tale of useless sacrifice. Yet in their way how good they were, these men who deserted the real if fleeting and uncertain pleasures that the world has to offer to its sons, in order to wear out their lives thus like lichens withering upon an inhospitable wall, till at length some brother anchorite found them
stiff in their self-appointed tombs. When they were dead, others took their places and so on at intervals of ten or twenty or fifty years, others and yet others, till the custom perished and its scant memorials writ in stone were covered with the dust of generations, in due season to be reopened and read by us today. God rest them all, poor men, whom the bitterness of life, the fear of death, and a hope of some ultimate transcendent remedy drove to such spiritual and physical expedients. Then there are what appear to have been wine-presses, with hollows at a lower level for the collection of the must and great cemented cisterns where rainwater was and is still gathered. So much for the western side.

But I was content to drink in the evening peace of this height, garlanded with flowers, decorated with trees and shining green shrubs like some delicious garden, to steep myself in the sunlight, to listen to the languorous murmur of uncounted multitudes of bees, to feast my eyes upon the mighty view stretched out beneath me. Doves were cooing. By the high wall close to the sandcolored basilica the serene cypresses moved their solemn heads in the marvelous breeze that surely came to us from the sea.

The sun went down and deep purple shadows fell upon the plain. The wild, plaintive wail of jackals, mingled with the sharper howl of wolves, warned us to drive back to Nazareth. We went slowly and carefully down the mountain to the village Daburieh. Here stood the Canaanitish Daboreth, but it has long since disappeared and the only remain of antiquity now are the walls of a medieval church.

On our way down the mountain we went and visited the place where according to a tradition, Jesus said to the disciples «tell the vision to no man, till the Son
of Man be risen from the dead." A heap of ruins then, today one finds a small chapel that covers the sacred spot.

As we went down, we thought how different is heaven and earth. Can there be a stranger contrast than the Battle and Transfiguration on Mount Tabor? One shudders to think of Barak and the Son of God on the same hill — one with his wars and the other with Moses and Elijah just from heaven. But no after desecration can destroy the first consecration of Mount Tabor, for baptized with the glory of heaven and honoured with the wondrous scene of Transfiguration it stands a sacred mountain on the earth.
ANYONE looking over the landscape of Jerusalem across to the Mount of Olives, and knowing that Bethany is just below the hill on the other side, the desire naturally comes to him to visit that little hamlet where Lazarus lived and was raised from the dead. Bethany is within easy walking distance; a little over two miles from Jerusalem.

The eleventh chapter of the Gospel of John contains an account of the great miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. The first five verses carry back our thoughts to the village home in Bethany where Jesus often used to rest in the quiet evening when His labours in Jerusalem were over. I can imagine too that the walk over Olivet in the quiet evening air was very refreshing, soothing and pleasant to Him, while it was far more delightful to find at the close of His walk some listening ears and loving hearts, with Martha’s ready zeal to serve and make Him welcome and Mary’s quiet joy to sit at His feet and listen to His words.

Today we shall proceed to Bethany that quiet spot which meant so much to Christ. There are two ways from Jerusalem leading to this enchanting village. Leaving Olivet we are among the gentle, folded hills. We are sure that it was over the same hills and on
this very path that Jesus loved to come to the only spot on earth where «He had not where to lay his head» found a loving welcome and a peaceful home. Along the road came the country people — the men on donkeys with empty hands, the women on foot, skin tubs laden with huge cauliflowers on their heads. One or two of them had a baby in a camel bag on their backs. There are fig trees by the roadside before one comes to Bethany that recall vividly that experience of Jesus and the barren tree when He passed that way with His disciples.

Just east of Olivet, Bethany today is a picturesque little village of typical oriental houses.

We shall linger about the pastoral spot, recalling the walks through the fields where Jesus plucked the ears of corn by the wayside. It has always seemed to me to be not without meaning that our Lord on His ascension led His disciples «out as far as Bethany» so that the last spot His eyes looked upon and His feet pressed before He left the earth which rejected Him, should be where He had been a loved and honoured guest.
Bethany is now and apparently always was a small poor mountain hamlet, with nothing to charm except its seclusion, and nothing to interest save its association. Bethany means «House of Poverty». It is, however, a remarkable fact that Christ's great miracle has been to it as a new baptism, conferring a new name. It is now called «El Azariyeh», which means the «Place of Lazarus». The memory of the raising of Lazarus has lived so vividly in Moslem legend that the present name has supplanted the earlier and Biblical one. Its New Testament name may have risen from its having been a place frequented by lepers, who were and are still popularly called «the poor», as in the case of Simon the Leper who lived here, showing that it was a refuge for his unfortunate class.

From the numerous date-palms that once flourished in its environs the village was called Bethany, which also means «House of Dates.» The «palms» are all gone now. But the crags around, and the terraced slopes above it are dotted yet with venerable fig trees as if to show that its sister village «Bethphage» or «House of Figs» is not forgotten, though its actual site may have been lost.

This little village looks so sweet and beautiful and the luxuriant vegetation and smiling hillsides so calm and quiet that I scarcely need to tell you «This is Bethany!» It is situated in a semi-circular vale, with an opening toward the east to admit the morning's earliest light. Amid groves of olive, fig and almond trees are the houses of the village. The villagers seem to be quiet and happy and the children leap for joy on receiving a few piasters for the fruits and wild flowers they sell to visitors. All the Bible memories of the place are cherished by the people,
and an old man is always in waiting to point out
the traditional sites.

How delighted I was one day when seated on a
rocky bank beside the village to hear a passing
villager say «there is the Tomb of Lazarus, and
yonder is the House of Martha. » They may not be
the real places: but this is Bethany, and the miracle
wrought there still dwells in the memory of its
inhabitants. And when the unvarying features of
nature are there too—the cliffs, the secluded glen,
the Mount of Olives—few will think of traditional
« holy places! »

Bethany is a place of the most perfect seclusion
such as imagination would picture as a fitting scene
for that retirement which the quiet spirit of our
Redeemer loved and sought. It looks as if it were
shut from the whole world. The wilderness appears in
front through an opening in the rocky glen, and the
steep side of Olivet rises close behind. Much, how-
ever, is changed since those days which made
Bethany famous. There is no home in the village
now, only houses built of rude massive stones. Here
is no Martha or Mary or Lazarus now, but a group
of village maidens in their snow-white dresses who
were sitting under the fig tree.

The hamlets are all white, and they glistened in
the sunlight, surrounded by olive, fig and almond
trees. Bethany is still the Bethany we had pictured
in our Lord’s time. Here we are, as it were, in the
very home of our Saviour. When Jesus retired from
Jerusalem to Bethany no sound of the busy world
followed Him and no noisy crowd broke in upon
His meditation. Here was a house where they gladly
received Him. We remember how the Lord often
came to the house of Mary and Martha. They both
loved the Lord, and he loved them. And they had a
brother who was very dear to the Lord. How gladly
they welcomed Him. How happily they opened the
door to Him and gave Him the cup of cold water.
Their evening meal was sweeter when Jesus was with
them, and at night how they loved to sit at His feet
and hang upon His words. How He loved that
household.

Bethany has about eight hundred inhabitants, who
gain subsistence from their flocks and cultivation round
about. Until recently all were Moslems, but there are
some Christian families now and certainly the people
we see are very friendly. It is a collection of typical
Oriental houses built of light brown stones. The roofs
are quite flat and consist of long sticks laid across
from wall to wall with rushes on top and frequently
secured by heavy stones from being blown off in storms.
Instead of cottages there are mud huts rising one
above another on the slope of the ridge. Instead
of home-grown flowers covering the gardens
there is a plaster of mud. There are plenty of trees
in and about the village, but there is no room for
them in the village itself. The only garden of each
house is the courtyard, where the sheep, goats, and
other animals can herd. And Bethany must always
have presented the same sort of appearance. The
East changes slowly. Even in the best days Bethany
was an Eastern village. Narrow lanes, plain huts
such as we see today, flat roofs rising one above
another. Yet for an eastern village Bethany is
beautiful. Its position is not to be despised, nestling
under Olivet, with olive trees around and those
glorious hills of Moab in front. In some lights the
little village would be picturesque even though it
has only a few red-tiled roofs to give it colour. See
Bethany on a fine day in the early morning or about sunset and you will be very much delighted. There is a touching legend in the east that the father of Lazarus was a pious Levite, and his mother a Jewish matron, after the model of Hanna and Elisabeth; that Lazarus himself was a scribe, who gained a living by copying the Law and the prophets for the various synagogues in Palestine; and that Mary and Martha devoted their time to needle works, embroidering veils for the Temple, and garments for the priests; that previous to the visits of Jesus to Bethany the parents had ascended to their reward, leaving on earth their three orphan children; that the native sweetness of their spirit, the purity of their devotion, and their constant attention to His recurring wants, engaged His affection and secured His benediction; that here, in their midst He laid aside the awful grandeur of Teacher and Judge of mankind, and in all the refined amenities of social character, which were hidden from the common eye.

Of course, traditional sites are pointed out for all the events of the Biblical narrative. Our first visit is to the House of Mary and Martha. There is no doubt at all that this is Bethany although the House of Mary and Martha and the House of Simon the Leper, which the sheikh is only too happy to show you for a coin may not be authentic!

The traditional House of Mary and Martha occupies a commanding position on a scarped rock, and in its day was a building of some elegance. Formed of large bevelled stones, it was twenty-one feet square. The house is quite in ruins, but the doorway still remains near which there is a magnificent pomegranate in full bloom. I was given a spray from it, which pleased
me very much. I shall not ask you to believe that the building shown to us is the ruin of Mary’s house. From the remnants of carved marbles and the fine quality of the stone used in its walls, I imagine that this dwelling must have belonged to some one of wealth and importance. From the top of a remaining arch a prospect of singular beauty opens to view through the ravine on the east, and no doubt, often was enjoyed by the Master and His three friends.

This huddle of old stones, however, now inhabited by a few Moslem families, stands on the spot which Jesus knew as Bethany. All one can say is that somewhere on the hill was the house in which Martha, Mary, and Lazarus lived. I think that the character study of Mary and Martha is, as a piece of writing, one of the marvels of literature. There is not one word we could do without, yet the picture is complete and framed, as it were, by a kitchen door.

Sitting on the little hill above Bethany I could visualize the scene. The house with the smell of cooking around it; for the Feast of Tabernacles at which this incident occurred was a busy time for Jewish women; and the little arbour of green leaves — the tabernacle of the feast — beneath which Jesus would be sitting in the courtyard with Mary at His feet. They would both be able to see and hear Martha busy with her pots and pans, and she would see Jesus and Mary, so cool and idle while she was so busy!

Whether Mary or Martha ever crossed its threshold is a different matter. The sweet home of Mary and Martha is gone for ever! It does not matter, however, that all these dwellings are modern. This is Bethany and when we get away from its present wretchedness we remember only that we have seen the very place that Christ loved.
The sheikh of Bethany then took me in silence over a narrow path between the haphazard walls of piled boulders. We come to a little door in a wall which he unlocked, then groping in his robes, he found the end of a candle which he lighted and gave to me and, pointing down into the darkness, said «The Tomb of Lazarus.» This used to be a Christian church and one of the most hollowed and ancient of the holy places in Palestine, but at some later period the Moslems seized it and turned it into a mosque which still stands above the tomb. Entrance into the tomb was forbidden to Christians for centuries and the old entrance was blocked up. In the seventeenth century a new door was opened. We descended about twenty-nine awkward steps into a dark and dusty cave. The flame of the candle lit up a little vestibule and the ruins of a Christian altar. Two steps lower than this vestibule is a small tomb chamber which is the traditional spot from which Christ recalled Lazarus to life. Here we are on holy ground. We stood in the semi-darkness where Jesus once stood. We had to stoop to enter the actual burial place. But on that day no one entered: only there came one forth and Christ said «Loose him and let him go.» Now after the lapse of so many centuries the inspired story read upon this spot, has all the freshness of reality. We remember that sickness had entered in this home where the bonds of affection were so strong and tender. Lazarus was laid upon a bed of suffering. His sickness increased and Jesus was still in Perea. It must be a journey of many hours before He could reach Bethany. But before Christ arrived Lazarus died and was buried.

No more wonderful resurrection than that of Lazarus is recorded. In this case we get neither the beautiful death-bed of Jairus, nor the bier of the widow's
son, but a tomb containing a body which according to natural law and the whole experience of the East had already begun to decompose, having lain four days in the grave. The Almighty power of God raised him from the dead, but men were allowed to set him free by loosening his grave clothes.

The raising of Lazarus from the dead came vividly to my mind when I visited the enchanted island of Cyprus and stood by his «second tomb» where he was actually interred. What a difference. There at Larnaka over his tomb the Greeks had built a magnificent church, and here at Bethany the opening of his grave is left to be greeted by the rising of the sun.

Tradition has seized on the right spot enough to hush to silence the visitor who gropes into the darkness and stands at the very grave’s mouth where «Jesus wept», giving way to a burst of emotion such as overwhelms a mourner who bends over the tomb which has received the object dearest to him on earth. The recollection of the touching scene is enough to invest that place with a solemn interest.

The last scene in which the women of Bethany play a part is just before the Crucifixion of Christ. This time it is Mary whose sensitiveness sees what even the disciples do not see, and once again St. John draws a scene that, one feels, he must have witnessed no matter what some learned commentators may say!

How truly drawn again are the characters of the women: Martha busily supervising the meal, Mary forgetful of the material things, anxious only to pay a tribute to the spiritual.

The House of Simon the Leper overlooking the
whole village is today simply a mere heap of ruins that survivid the waste of ages.

Though time has marred the beauty of that mountain home, and borne to the grave the friends of Jesus, yet Mary's alabaster box of costly ointment and very precious spikenard is still fragrant with the odour of undying love; and «wherever this Gospel is preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.»
Chapter XXIII

THE WAY DOWN TO JERICHO
CHRIST’S LAST JOURNEY

Sunrise finds us one morning driving on the zigzag road leading from Jerusalem to Jericho. This road is full of suggestions. It is not the track by which Joshua and the Jews of old first came up into the highland moors of the Promised Land. Even after David had made Jerusalem the centre of national life and worship, the road did not run quite as now. When David fled from Absalom he would probably go from Jerusalem by the path that climbs the Mount of Olives and then bends down, joining the present road some miles beyond Bethany. Caravans still follow this track, and there are plenty of places where Shimei could have hurled down stones and curses from overhanging rocks. It was to Roman road makers that we owe the present track.

Gazing from the heights of Olivet towards the east we see our way spread before us as if we were looking upon a map. It lies through the «wilderness of Judea.» The Jews knew a wilderness when they saw it, and how to name it. You would be interested to know what a person who lived at Jerusalem, or anywhere along the backbone of Palestine, would call a wilderness. Nothing but the absolute nakedness of desolation could seem to him dreary. But this region must have satisfied even a person accustomed
to deserts and pastures of rocks. It is a jumble of savage hills and jagged ravines; a land of limestone rocks and ledges, whitish gray in colour, glaring in the sun. Even the stones are wasted by age, relieved nowhere by a tree, or enhanced by a single blade of grass. Wild beasts would starve in it. The most industrious bird could not collect in its length and breadth enough soft material to make a nest. This exhausts the language of description. How vividly in this desolation stands out the figure of the prophet of God, clothed with camel’s hair and with a girdle of skin about his loins, “the voice of one crying in the wilderness.”

We drove down a steep hill to the Fountain of the Apostles, which flows from a broken Saracenic arch and waters a valley that is altogether stony and unfertile except in some patches of green. Before the Great War it was a general halting place for travellers and presented then a most animated appearance.

For Christians the road has special associations. To Bethany it follows the most probable track of the entry of our Master into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. It is also the road which our Lord chose for that most vivid and touching of parables.

I thought of the parable of the Good Samaritan. “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves.” Certainly the road still retains the wild aspect of a scene of rapine and murder! Long before and even since a “certain man going down fell among thieves,” the road has been considered the most dangerous in Canaan. The road still follows close to the dry channel of a brook for several miles farther, as if descending into the very bowels of the earth. How admirably calculated for “robbers.”
Even in the present day where cars pass and repass, it is somewhat a dangerous road, being a succession of gorges and ravines, winding through almost bare hills and limestone rocks. Thousands of robbers might lurk unseen in the caves and dens on the broken rugged slopes. The Bedouins squatting round their black tents, with eager gaze looked down upon the passers-by as they drove down through the dismal defiles. I began to have a very high opinion of the Samaritan, who in this gloomy pass could care for any one but himself. The priest and the Levite took care of number one, while the insignificant, despised Samaritan did his work in caring for a brother in trouble.

It was not difficult to understand why the road from Jerusalem to Jericho has always been the haunt of bandits. It is a road where serpentine bends and overhanging cliffs might have been designed for highway robbery. At hundreds of points along the road are stretches lying between two acute corners and backed by towering cliffs and projecting boulders, where two or three armed men could hold up anything that came along. The robbery once committed, nothing could be easier than an escape into the barren trackless wilderness, where thousands of caves offer secure hiding places and where a searching party might wander for years without success!

For twenty centuries this region has borne a thievish character, and the lapse of time has not changed much its reputations. As in the days of our Lord, it is still infested with robbers, who from their undiscovered dens, and from behind some craggy bluff and beetling cliff, level their long gun at the traveller.

After thirty minutes' drive from Jerusalem we
reached the Inn of the Good Samaritan, amidst scenes still more desolate and extensive. The inn, now called the « Red Khan » takes its name from the colour of the rocks. Perched upon a high ledge are the ruins of an ancient caravansary. We alight from the car and take shelter for lunch in a natural cave opposite, exactly the shadow of a rock longed for in a weary land. Here we spread gay rugs, unpack the provisions and sit down to enjoy the wide view of the barrenness. The spot is famous for its excellent well of water.

The traditional inn that is linked with the parable of the Good Samaritan

It is said that there has always been a khan on this spot, and I should think it must be a very welcome place to tired pedestrians and lonely riders after the weary climb and long road from or to Jericho. Before the Great War pilgrims were wont to stop for refreshment, and a brisk business was done. But then before the War there were only two or three cars in all Palestine, whereas today there
are over five thousand, and the numbers are increasing rapidly. That explains why the Good Samaritan Inn, like so many other old-time country hostels, seems to have fallen an evil day.

The building is the usual Turkish Khan made to provide safety for men and beasts during the night and generally placed within an easy journey of a city. The foundations of the khan and ancient rock cisterns below it in which water is stored, prove that an inn has been on this site from Roman times and possibly even earlier.

This building is an oblong one-story house of indeterminate date, entered by a high arched door placed in the centre. A large courtyard, surrounded by a high wall, occupies a space of level ground at the back. In the middle of this courtyard is a well from which water is drawn by letting down a bucket on a rope.

We remember as we stand under the roof of this building that there can be no doubt that this is the inn our Lord was thinking of when He told the parable of the Good Samaritan, because there has never been any other khan between Jerusalem and Jericho. Here the poor man was entertained for «two cents.» There is seldom a caretaker at caravanseris in desolate places in the Orient, but some offer this advantage as did the one in the parable, which had a host who could even be trusted with the care of the sick.

We take our rest here, reflecting upon the great advance in hotel prices, endeavouring to recreate something of that past when this was the highway between great Jerusalem and the teeming Plain of the Jordan.

Soon the scene is changed in a moment. We
arrive over a rocky mountain ledge, where we must pause and survey the scene.

On our left we look down the deep recesses of a yawning gulf in the Wadi Kilt, and we find ourselves on the side of a mountain, twelve to fifteen feet high, overhanging the Valley of the Jordan. Now take your Bible and read the fortieth chapter of Isaiah. You will have little doubt as to what scenery the inspired prophet had in his thoughts when he penned the graphic predictions in the first nine verses of the chapter.

We notice however that while there is so much moisture as a drop of dew on the sides of the mountain, there is a brook of considerable volume and breadth flowing at the bottom of the valley thickly covered in many places with oleander bushes which grow on either sides of it, but in other places open and clear, moving on with a steady current of some force. What rivulet is this? Its modern name is Wadi Kilt. Correctly it is described as the home of the ravens which fed Elijah. Looking at the various natural conditions of the scene it is impossible to imagine any place more wonderfully fitted to be the refuge of that fearless «prophet of fire.» It is first the flowing water which makes this such an ideal camping ground and one can easily understand Elijah's hiding place. The waters of the brook are clear, cool and sweet, but in early autumn as in the time of Elijah, the black-winged raven crooks in its flight over the deep ravine.

Like a tiny doll-house on the other side of the gorge and looking as though it were tucked in a cranny and absolutely flush with the sides of the ravine, the Monastery of St. Elijah is inhabited today by those who feel called the «followers of the prophet's example.» The monastery which is dedicated to
Elijah is visible long before we come to it—an extraordinary pile of buildings which looks as if it were entirely cut out of the rock. One can see that there is a narrow footpath leading along the sides of the gorge to a door with little cells and windows in the front, and sides of the houses appear.

The most interesting point is the chapel with the ancient fresco paintings and a portion of its holy chronic mosaic pavements. According to tradition, Joachim, the father of the Blessed Virgin Mary obtained here by prayer the state of fruitfulfulness of his wife Anne.

A streamlet meanders through Wadi Kilt, and on its way refreshes the throats of peasants and animals.

Now the road drops again over one thousand feet to the Dead Sea. On the way we passed the place where the Moslems believe that Moses lies buried and where they come once a year to feast and pray for a week.

We then motored to the Dead Sea to the big modern «Kalliah Hotel».
The Dead Sea is the lowest point on the surface of the earth—we must certainly include among the wonders of the Orient.

This famous body of water is wonderful in many ways. First of all it has an in-flow but no out-flow. The in-flow is the River Jordan. For thousands and thousands of years this river has been pouring six million tons of water every day into the vast sink. Naturally there can be no outlet, for how indeed can water flow 300 feet uphill to reach the ocean! Then why, you ask, does not the sea fill up and flood the whole valley? This very thing would happen were it not for the fact that this valley is one of the driest spots in the world—so dry that six million tons of Dead Sea water evaporate every day. This evaporation keeps the surface at the same level all the time. If the Jordan were blocked off and its flow stopped, the sea, in no time, would dry up completely, and leave a great hole fifty miles long, ten miles wide, and one thousand one hundred feet deeper than it is now. The bottom of this hole would then be two thousand four hundred feet below the surface of the Mediterranean Sea.

The Jordan River has a tiny fraction of salt in it. As the river pours into the lake, the desert sun and heat evaporate the salt, which has no way of escaping. For this reason, the water that remains has become saltier and saltier, until it is the saltiest water in the world! The Dead Sea is five times saltier than the ocean. This of course makes it much heavier. If you try to swim it—well you will see for yourself before long what happens.

Because of the salt no form of life can live in this strange lake. Fish, snails, water weeds, washed down with the river, all die the moment they strike the
blue and beautiful but deadly brine. What a surprise it is for us to find that the Dead Sea has a wild and glorious beauty, and a colour brighter than any body of fresh water we ever saw.

Such a wonderful sea must have a wonderful history. Indeed it has. We sail over the water near the southern shore, beneath which lie the ruined cities of Sodom and Gomorrah of Bible fame. At least scientists believe that the ruins are still there, sunk below the briny waves. Up which of those steep barren mountain walls, we wonder, did Lot climb, fleeing from the fire and brimstone that rained down? We know that Lot escaped. But his wife failing to obey the Lord’s command, looked back at the flaming city and was turned to a pillar of salt. We wonder which of those rocky spires below is Lot’s wife?

On the traditional site of the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah we take a refreshing dip.
CHAPTER XXIV

THE LAST SUPPER IN THE UPPER ROOM

ON the southern brow of Mount Zion, outside the city-walls of Jerusalem, there is a little group of buildings distinguished from afar by a dome and lofty minaret. These, according to an old tradition believed in alike by Christians, Moslems and Jews cover the sepulcher of Israel's minstrel king. The Moslems esteem the spot as one of their very holiest shrines. No place about Jerusalem, not even the Temple Area is guarded with such jealousy. I visited the place frequently: I walked round it and through it. I peeped into every hole, window, and passage accessible to me. I tried soft words with the gentlemanly aged keeper, but he would not allow me to linger in this sacred «chamber» more than five minutes!

Inside this tomb is a large sarcophagus covered with green silk damask. On the wall which separates the Upper Room from the Tomb of David are inscribed many prayers written in different languages addressed to David and asking his protection for the soul and body of those dear to the suppliants.

Neither our Lord nor his disciples had a house in Jerusalem. So they were obliged during their stay in this Holy City to accept the offer of some friends in order to spend the festival season within the gates of the city of the Great King.
How is it possible to describe the thoughts which throng upon the mind in a site like this? First the remembrance of our Lord. Long before the hour came He had looked forward to that scene in the Upper Room. Having loved his own, he loved them to the end, and reserved the chief invention of his love until He had come to the very threshold of His Passion, and they were about to be parted. «With desire have I desired to eat the passover with you.» And, as if such thoughts were not already more than one could bear, there comes the whole vision of the day of Pentecost, that anxious, mournful, yet expectant group waiting for the «Comforter». And then he comes in with such vehemence of love as a «rushing wind» to bring «all things to their remembrance, to teach them adoration and fortitude and love and joy, that they might dare all things, and bear all things for their Lord.» And with His presence came the further certainty — the untold support of knowing that He «would be with us always even to the end of the world.»

So we read in the Gospel, that Christ ordered a room for Himself and His disciples to eat the Passover there. Yet what is more important to us than David's Tomb which is shown in close proximity, is that ever since the early Christians era, an unbroken chain of tradition supported by all creeds and sects located the Chamber of the Last Supper here.

The principal apartment in the group of buildings is a Gothic chamber evidently a Christian church of the Crusading age, though probably built on an older site, perhaps reconstructed out of an earlier model. The apartment is so clean, so well-lighted that one doubts its character and questions its antiquity. Yet its appearance indicates great age, and its
massive construction seems to guarantee its standing firm for many centuries to come. It is a medieval building but none the less a solemn and moving place. It is a large chamber thirty feet wide by fifty feet long. Underneath the window is a small niche where it is said Christ sat at the Passover feast.

The place where our Lord is reputed to have sat is pointed out. Here in imitation of our Lord the Franciscan monks washed the worn feet of the pious pilgrims, who, from the uttermost parts of the earth have come to worship at these holiest of earthly shrines. The fathers do this in memory of Him who taught that he who is chief of all should also be the servant of all.

Still the visit which recalled the event could not but deepen the impression of the service that follows. Listening to the reading of the account of the original institution, we seemed to hear the Master's voice saying «Do this in remembrance of me.» It was a touching thought that we were partaking of the «Last Supper» on the very night on which our Lord was betrayed, and not far from the spot where He sat down with the Twelve.

I am quite sure that everyone who has been privileged to visit this sacred place, must have been touched with the sense of awe which the «Upper Room» imparts, even though one's heart is sad and grieved that it should now be used as a mosque for Moslem worship. It seems too terrible to think that we are only just allowed to enter the room after paying the Moslem aged guardian a fee, and that we could not feel or show any act of devotion. Needless to say our silent prayers were all the more earnest! As we stood here in the reputed first meeting place of Christians and in the first of the churches,
we longed for the time when evidence of the love and care of our Lord's followers should once more be possible in this holy spot.

If all this is true, tradition has filled it with holy places. This enclosure witnessed the assemblage of the apostles on the day of Pentecost, the miracle of the cloven tongues « like a fire, » the washing of the feet of His disciples by Jesus, the giving of the sop to Judas. It is the place whence the sad company went down across the Vale of Kidron to the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of the betrayal. The path which leads to and fro between the city and that sacred garden is one of the most authenticated localities about Jerusalem, and cannot have changed materially since the first Easter morn. Along its way went the brutal band, led by the betrayer, startling the quiet of the night with the clash of their swords and the clanking of their staves. After the arrest the return was made by the same pathway to the palace of Caiaphas. Here the apostles chose Matthias and before departing to every corner of the world, are said to have taken leave of each other in this « chamber. » If this be really the place where the disciples met after the resurrection, the reference in Peter's sermon to the adjacent Tomb of David, was very appropriate. « Men and brethren, let me freely speak to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day! »

There are a score of medieval traditions connected with this sacred spot amongst which we may cite the « stone rejected by the masons. » When holding it against the ear one would hear the same noise as that of a shell, with the difference that it resembled more the subdued voices of a large crowd. There
stood also a column to which people attributed healing powers. When embraced it could heal throat troubles and other diseases, yet it would retain the impression of arms and hands of the people who touched it. Then they showed the pious pilgrims the horn with which David was anointed king of Israel. And beside it one could see the spear with which Longinus pierced the side of our Lord. A number of stones said to have been thrown at the apostle Stephen were near by. One could also see the Cup of the Holy Communion used by the apostles. Some pilgrims even say that there was also a skull of a «lady martyr» which was used by the «monks» for drinking purposes!

The only place accessible to Christians in the «Upper Room»

At the eastern end of this «Upper Room» is a little chancel where Romish priests sometimes celebrate mass: and on the south side is a niche where Moslems pray. It is thus a grand centre of tradition, superstition and imposture!
But the place of the Last Supper has never changed nor was the authenticity of it ever disputed. Although we know that every building in Jerusalem has been destroyed, if not more than once, since the time of our Lord, and this fact is fatal to any illusion connected with an "upper room" standing in the twentieth century, yet the so-called Church of God, or the Chamber of the Last Supper was left untouched. The church, however, was repeatedly changed, built and rebuilt so that practically nothing was left of the vestige of the original building. At the time of Queen Helena, there existed a church with two stories. The upper story dedicated to the apostles was maintained at one corner by a column to which, it was claimed, our Saviour was bound and where there were traces of His precious blood shown to pilgrims!

All we ought to know is that somewhere in the city of Jerusalem, David was buried; somewhere was the "Upper Room" where were uttered the immortal and immortalizing words recorded by John; somewhere rose the palace of Caiaphas where Jesus was mocked, scourged, and crowned with those thorns that symbolize the lot of all humanity. Whether it was here, or one hundred yards, or five hundred yards distant, what does it matter? Indeed it matters nothing at all!
CHAPTER XXV

MOONLIGHT CALM OVER GETHSEMANE

At the bottom of the valley leading from the Gate of St. Stephen the road rises over the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives, and a little to the right stands a clump of cypress trees with a wall round them. This is the Garden of Gethsemane.

Outside the gate we observe large flat stones. On these stones the disciples slept when Jesus was praying a stone's cast from here. The gate is open and I enter. It is very low. There is a reason for it. He who wishes to follow the Master in His sufferings must bend deep down in the dust and learn humility. This we will learn in the valley of sufferings.

The garden is a quiet spot and wears the air of sweet repose. It is the work of men trained in landscape gardening, who with untiring hands have made many small round flower beds amongst the cypresses and old olive trees.

The Franciscan friars who touch everything with beauty, grace, and reverence, own the little garden and, while they have built a church near by, they have not touched the garden except to make flower beds among the ancient olive trees.

This garden is a child's garden and intended with more than a childish devotion and tenderness. The monks who keep the garden, as it is, are so evidently
sincere in their care of it and so happy in the conviction that it is what Gethsemane should be.

As memorials of the past he has cultivated the graceful but bitter wormwood and also the beautiful passion flower the symbol of agony.

Dotted about the garden are eight aged olive trees of tremendous girth.

No tree in the world can look so old as an olive and therefore contorted and wrinkled veterans look older than any living thing I have ever come upon. They present a morbid realization of the most extreme degree of senility that it is possible to imagine. They are so grey, so bent, so sapless, that their deformed bodies and limbs, covered as they are by horrible outgrowths might have been already dead a century!

Those ancient trees themselves make the New Testament story very real. They are more like rocks than trees. Slim new shoots spring out of apparently dead wood, and the old trunks, vast as ancient oaks, are propped up with ramparts of stones and stout wooden poles. These trees still bear fruit from which the monks press oil.

There are a great many of these beautiful trees on Olivet now, and in the days of Jesus when the country was more flourishing than it is now, Olivet must have been covered with olive trees until it presented one of the most charming pictures to be seen anywhere. These trees were His friends. This was the Master’s rest room, His shady retiring place. He went over into the city to do His work and face His battles, but down the slope across Kidron and up Olivet He came to the quiet of the olive trees where His soul could find peace and where His Father could speak to Him while the leaves of the
MOONLIGHT CALM OVER GETHSEMANE

trees made soft music to His listening soul.

A Franciscan father with kindly, sun-tanned face came out and greeted me as I stood beside the oldest olive tree. « That is the Tree of the Master » he said « and over there, beside the small pillar of stone, is the place where the disciples slept. It is tranquil here, is it not? »

The special « Tree of Agony » is very interesting as the king of the collection which is said to be the indentical tree under which Jesus suffered when He looked across the valley, saw the city of Jerusalem and wept. But the branches are strong, the leaf green and from the aged roots young trees are sprouting—successors to these patriarchal shades. But we prefer to go on to the flowers. They are joyous symbols that are not reminiscent of the terrible hour of betrayal.

The Garden of Gethsemane after long centuries of change and of overturned empires still wears a garment of verdure. In the middle of winter, when elsewhere icy winds prevail, here the garden glows with adornment. I gaze insatiably as if it were the embodiment of miracle. There are wallflowers, stocks, pansies, baby breath, pinks, anemones of all colours, poppies, and all sorts of sweet old-fashioned flowers. Do you not think it is strange that the Garden of Gethsemane should produce such lovely flowers? The spot where it would seem as if the sweat of agony should have cursed the very ground on which it fell! Yet is it not to teach us that it is out of anguish that comes forth sweetness? Bunches of rosemary grow in the garden under the olive trees.

The Garden of Gethsemane is sacredly guarded now and jealously tended, and within the walls that enclose it are rainbow-coloured masses of flowers.
We said little but thought much as we walked under the shadow of those old trees, which pilgrims believe date from the time of Christ.

We sit down to rest and read the story of Christ's suffering in this garden. It was a very interesting hour. As we looked along the valley we had the Holy City to the left and the Mount of Olives to the right.

Hundreds of years ago this spot was recognized as the place where the Master came so often with Peter and James and the beloved disciple. There has been no such conflict of opinion here as there has been over the Holy Sepulcher. True the Greeks have made a garden just a few yards up the hill, but it might very well have belonged to the same estate.

Where Christ prayed and the exact spot of His capture are difficult questions left to the attention of the various Christians denominations. The Sister in charge of the Russian church shows us the remains of a staircase. «Here ran the road at that time, and if, as the Gospels say, He left the apostles on one side while He went forward, it seems as if He must have prayed just where our church stands today»! The golden domes of the church shine beautifully above the tall cypress trees. Behind the altar within the church is a famous painting entitled «The Angel at the Tomb.» Men only can view it because, according to custom, ladies are not permitted to step behind the altar.

In the moonlight shadows of these olive trees Christ experienced the greatest suffering ever borne by man. It was not alone in the temptation in the wilderness that the crisis of the divine life was enacted and Paradise was regained. It was here in the garden that this was fully accomplished.
It was in Gethsemane that the love of life in the heart of Jesus was conquered; the anguish of that struggle caused great drops of blood to stand upon his brow. It was here that He prayed to the Father that the cup of sorrow might be removed, if it were possible. His soul was exceedingly sorrowful — even unto death.

Here it was that our dear Saviour tasted the bitterness of sin, when He drank the cup of suffering for the sins of the world, that very cup, which we should have drunk to the bottom because of our sins and transgressions. This lonely vale, these ancient hills, these serene skies heard the Sufferer’s cry.

The disciples had tarried near the entrance to the garden; they had seen the lamps swinging against the darkness near the Temple. These lanterns descended into the valley of the Kidron and then advanced up the slight hill towards the garden. The disciples recognized the tramp of the Roman
soldiers. They heard the excited whispering of the Jews. Although the moon was full, the approaching men came swinging their lights so that they could see into all the caves and dark places.

Judas, after he had slipped away from that upper room where the Lord had eaten the last supper with his disciples, had gone to the priests, and together with the soldiers had descended the very same road that Christ had taken only a few hours before.

Jesus met the spirit of despair in the Garden of Gethsemane, and after that meeting, the cross had no terrors for him. He had conquered. How calm and gentle was the voice with which he awakened his disciples, how firm the step with which he went to meet Judas. We know this story and realize how he rewarded his blessed Master for love and kindness bestowed upon him. The reward of the world is indeed thanklessness. The bitterness of death was behind him in the shadow of the olive trees! The peace of heaven shone above him in the silent stars.

The friar then led me through the monastery into the Basilica with garish decorations. As he went he told me how the name Gethsemane had arisen. The place in Hebrew is called «Oil-press.»

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

The old monk then lifted mats in the mosaic floor and showed me portions of the old mosaic floorings, the design of which has been closely followed by the architect of the new church.

This particular place seemed much more impressive and more appropriately memorialized when it was without architectural monuments. In the older days the garden remained a garden, and it was tidily kept by the Franciscans, one of whom seemed always ready to receive visitors, walked and talked with them, and gathered fallen olive leaves which he gave as souvenirs.

Invariably the Christian turns here his thoughts to that lonely midnight vigil. One of my own most treasured recollections is in Gethsemane on the eve of Good Friday. Being in the garden on that evening both saddens and gladdens. Solitary light shone from the Mount of Olives, and along the quiet road people from Jerusalem were making their way towards it. It seemed at first to be in the Garden of Gethsemane, but that secluded spot was dark and silent, though shadowy figures moved here and there and in front of the ancient olive trees under which pious tradition asserts Christ stood on the night of his agony, the forms of Franciscan friars and women kneeling in prayer could be seen. The light was on the balcony of the Russian Church of Mary Magdalene, just above the garden where a Protestant service was being held. The wide staircase was thronged and impassable, and one wandered into the recesses of the garden occupied only by an individual here
and there in the attitude of prayer and meditation. But after a few moments a crowd came along with lanterns and staves, and the parallel seemed most real. Some of the crowd were aged bearded Franciscans who had come for the same purpose we had. All seemed to feel the solemnity of the occasion, and the crowd was silent.

A voice was heard distinctly through the stillness reading: "Then cometh Jesus unto a place called Gethsemane," and on to the end. Then pilgrims sang, "'Twas on that Night," and a soloist followed with "Alone," his clear penetrating voice sounding across the wide gulf and returning in a faint echo. The moon rose over Olivet, flooding the valley, revealing the olive and cypress trees and illuminating the long, steep wall surmounted by the Dome of the Rock. A short address was given, and the service closed with "Abide With Me." Many of the worshippers lingered afterwards in the shadows, gazing in reflective mood across the city.

The same moon that had looked down on the Saviour of the world now flooded the valley with light, and shone on the numberless graves on the slopes of the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

As the Franciscan let me out of the garden he gave me a little slip of paper, which I placed in my pocket as I walked back up the road to Jerusalem. Inside it I found a spear-shaped olive leaf and a blue flower from the Garden of Gethsemane.
CHAPTER XXVI

SILENT VALLEY OF KIDRON
THE VALE OF CHRIST’S SORROW

There is something wonderful in the scenery of the Valley of Kidron and the hills above it. It is silent as its tombs hewn in the rock long since tenantless, the gray gloom of its old fig and olive trees growing from the fissures of the crags, the overhanging walls of Zion, desolate almost as in the time of her captivity, forcibly recall the wild and mournful grandeur of the prophetic writings. Here is a magnificence in its outlining which lives in the memory. It cannot be forgotten. Thus the very air seems to whisper of treachery and blood. Independent of all the heart stirring associations which Scripture narrative gives rise to, this valley viewed from south to north, is a scene in which a gifted painter would delight.

Come along. Let us go through the little wood of olive trees below St. Stephen’s Gate, climbing over the rubbish of ages. In the time of our Lord the little stream of Kidron flowed forty feet lower than it does now, for the valleys all round here have become choked with the accumulated debris of the different ages. The tumbling, brawling stream of the Kidron that flowed past the eastern wall of Jerusalem in the deep ravine has left now an arid and rocky bed. The bed of the brook lies along the
lowest part of the valley and on either side fig, olive and pomegranate cast a lovely shade, while gardens of melon and cucumbers give an idea of fresh luxuriance.

The tombs now begin. This valley is one of the celebrated spots of the earth, and certainly the most famous cemetery in the world. The slopes are strewn with the gravestones of the dead Moslems and Jews. The Moslems believe that hereabouts will take place the Last Judgment and the Jews are just as certain that when the Last Trumpet sounds it will be heard first in this valley. To lay his bones in this valley has been ever the object of earnest desire with the devout Jew. Consequently more Jews are buried here than have been gathered in one place since the hosts of Israel left Egypt.

There are several monuments scattered through the ravine that are fairly authentic and have an ancient lineage; likely enough they may be exactly what they are represented as being. They are no more interesting, however, than the thickly massed tombstones, many of which are centuries old, and some of which crumbled to dust, while other bodies than those recorded have been buried on the sites occupied by the remains of the passing centuries.

To me the most striking monument in the Valley of the Kidron and one that is visible from a great distance is known as the Tomb of Absalom. It is a vase-like monolith cut out of the solid rock and rises almost fifty feet above the surrounding ground. The lower part is a huge cube twenty feet long. Above this rises a square surmounted by a spire. It is customary for the Jews to throw stones at the pillar and to show their contempt for Absalom's disobedience. When stones are thrown it is indicative
of the same feeling to spit in the direction of the pillar. There is a tomb chamber in the pillar and it is the opinion of many historians that while this may be the Tomb of Absalom, the ornate decorations and present form of the pillar were added at a much later date, as they show a mixture of the Egyptian and Grecian influence.

A little farther on is the Tomb of St. James. Tradition relates that the apostle when he had seen our Lord taken by the Jews, sought refuge in this tomb, and remained here without food until our Lord appeared to Him after His resurrection. In fact no safer hiding place was to be found, because those that only touched a tomb were impure for at least seven days; consequently discovery was not to be feared. Instigated by the high priests, the Jews cast him down from the temple and slew him. He was buried here. This monument is now used in winter to shelter lambs too young to follow their mothers. The principal chamber within the vestibule has served as a Christian chapel, and the inner caverns were used by the Jews as hiding places and as resorts for secret prayers.

Near by is the Pyramid of Zacharias, whose identity is a matter of controversy between Jews and Christians. The latter declare that this monument was erected to Zacharias mentioned in Matthew 23: 35, while the Jews maintain that it was built for the man referred to in II Chron. 24: 20.

The Jews, who having escaped from the sword and were carried away by king Nebuchadnezzar, here spread their hands and prayed in low, sad voices on each of the four sides of this ancient monument. No Christian who has a soul for the poetry of pathos can forget or even remain un
moved by this scene.

I had often been struck with the quaint and picturesque appearance of the little hamlet of Siloam whose houses seem to cling like swallows' nests to the gray cliffs of Olivet. It takes its name from the fountain at the base of Mount Moriah, and it alone brings down to modern times the sacred name of the «waters of Siloah that flow softly» and of the «Pool of Siloam» in which our Lord commanded the blind man to wash.

The village stands on a necropolis, the habitations are half caves, half buildings—a single rude porch being attached to the front of the house. It is a place that has lost its ancient charm. The large tombs, where the ashes of Israel's nobles once reposed, were now filled with sheep and goats. Once Siloam must have been a place of some importance, a kind of fashionable suburb village, for the daughter of Pharaoh and Solomon's queen had a palace here. Even in our Lord's time we conclude that it must have contained large and imposing public buildings, for it was here that the «tower of Siloam» fell by which eighteen persons perished an event which was reported to our Lord as the news of the day and on which He suspended great religious lessons and moral warnings for all times.

This is the village of Siloam. But where is the fountain and the pool by the same name? Let us go down along the slanting path. The fountain comes flowing «softly and silently» out from beneath a rock that rises precipitously fifty feet above our heads—it's water clean as crystal and deliciously cool. We descended the steps and came under the cool moist arch in the soft obscurity of the cavern. We
drank with the palms of our hands from the refreshing and limpid stream. The humidity occasioned by the spring has ornamented the walls with mosses and parasitic plants and gives to the spot a certain beauty which, apart from its associations would be attractive in the midst of the heat.

Here is the pool in which the waters are gathered before emerging from the rock into the sunlight and to which the blind man was commanded by Jesus to «go and wash that he might receive his sight». And have those waters flowed on ever since the day when the blind man washed in them and received his sight?

The water of Siloam is believed by the villagers to possess wonderfully curative powers and people come or send for long distances for it. Fever and eye diseases are supposed to become healed through the treatment with water obtained from this stream.

I am sure Hezekiah's Tunnel in the Pool of Siloam will never become a popular sight to visitors to Palestine. It is wet and messy and we have to explore it in the afternoon in order not to stir up the water of the Virgin’s Fountain in which the women of Siloam wash their clothes during the morning.

Every step of the tunnel bears evidence that it was indeed dug in an emergency. The work is rough and uneven, the walls rudely shaped and the tunnel itself of unequal width and height. Again and again in digging it the workmen ran off their course, and left behind as evidence rough cul-de-sacs from which they had to retreat and start again. We realized how those civil engineers of old—it is over twenty-six centuries since this tunnel was made—working from either end, had failed to meet. When they
heard each other’s pick, each party had suddenly changed its course. That the boring was done from both ends is evident. One can see plainly still the rough, uneven juncture where the workmen brought their two shafts together, not troubling to disguise the unequal levels of the walls and ceiling.

Time robbed Siloam of much of its Biblical charm. But in spite of these transformations, the ground is very impressive. We had a feeling that the Scripture was for us more than ever a living reality: that we have actually walked in company with towering historic figures.

* * *

Tucked away among the hills and caves, among the trees and fig groves of silent Kidron, lies the Field of Blood, bought with the thirty pieces of silver of the traitor Judas. It is a small plot of ground overhang with one precipice and looking down another into the glen below, on which is a deep charnel-house of the poor and unhonoured dead of Jerusalem. The field is now marked by a wall to distinguish it from the rest of the hillsides and belongs to the Greek Church. The monk in charge there takes much interest in showing the visitors the many and different kinds of skulls he possesses, of course after having obtained from them the customary tips. It is a long massive building of stone, erected in front, apparently of a natural cave, with a roof arched the whole length, and the walls sunk below the ground outside forming a deep pit. The dead bodies appear to have been admitted by apertures in the walls, through which we might see the bottom all covered with bones and skulls. It was a greedy grave and great enough to devour the dead of a whole nation, for the fabulous account is that the earth thereof within the space of
forty-eight hours will consume the flesh from off the bones committed to it. It used to be the burying place of strangers but is now no longer serving for this purpose.

As I sit on a pleasant green mound, it is difficult on this sunny day to realize the tragic scenes that took place in this peaceful valley. The whole of this region is inexpressibly desolate, worn-out, pale, uncanny. The height above this rocky terrace stuffed with the dead, is the Hill of Evil Counsel, where the Jews took counsel against Jesus, and to add the last touch to a harmonious picture, just above the Potter's Field stands the accursed tree upon which Judas hanged himself, raising its gaunt branches against the sky, a very gallows-tree to the imagination. It has borne no fruit since Judas. Just as we stand here we almost fancy him dangling there.

According to Matthew it was called the Field of Blood because it was bought with the blood money which Judas received for betraying Jesus to death, while according to Luke the name was given to it because the blood of Judas himself was shed there. But both agree as to the name of the field and that it was bought with the money which the chief priests gave to Judas. But to me it seemed that every grave, every thorn-bush, and every thistle was telling the story of misused grace!

Leaving this resting place of poverty and perhaps of crime I wandered among the tombs on the sides of the mountain, tombs ornamented with sculpture and divided into chambers, the last abodes of the great and rich of Jerusalem. Yet the beggar rudely thrown into the common pit in the Potter's Field and the rich man laid by pious hands in the sculptured sepulchre of his ancestors are alike nothing.
CHAPTER XXVII

MEMORIAL WAY OF CALVARY’S TRAGEDY

That by-way in Jerusalem which is best known, and to which the traveller will turn with the great expectancy is the Via Dolorosa or the Path of Pain, along which Christ is supposed to have walked in His weary progress from Pilate’s Judgment Hall to the Place of Crucifixion. No similar thoroughfare is as well known as the Via Dolorosa marked by the Fourteen Stations of the Cross. Did such a lane exist among the maze of the city it would indeed be the most dolorous and the most sacred footway in the world!

Yet in Jerusalem today few know where it begins and where it ends, since it includes parts of several streets, each with its own profane name!

The Via Dolorosa which pilgrims come thousands of miles to see is a quite modern lane. For some distance it is a paved passage between walls, it then changes to a mean street and at last ends ignobly in the bazaar in a vaulted passage full of shops. Along this street the Stations of the Cross are marked by inscribed stones let into the walls.

* * *

Among the seas of uncertainty which surge round the sacred relics of ancient Jerusalem, it is refreshing
to stand upon something that is beyond doubt, even if it be clearly connected with the event of Bible history. It is so closely connected with our Saviour’s experience that it claims a visit from every follower of the Man of Galilee. Let any traveller who visits Jerusalem in the spirit of a pilgrim go and view the Roman pavement laid bare on the premises of the Sisters of Zion.

Interesting are the remnants left us of the Arch of Ecce Homo. It is indeed a stirring place. One can yet see across the narrow street that leads in from the Gate of St. Stephen, the upper portion of this Roman arch’s central span. Here by tradition Pilate pronounced the Saviour before the crowd, saying to them and to all the generations that were to follow «Behold the Man.» Whether or not the event happened on this spot none can say, but here are the remains of a Roman triumphal arch that has been remodelled since the days of the Romans. A statue of our Lord crowned with thorns looks down from above the arch as when Pilate led him forth, and another statue of Christ starting out on His sorrowful way with the cross on His sacred shoulders.

The part of the arch over the street is surmounted by a small mosque with two small windows. On the west side of that archivolt two square stones have been placed to save them from being constantly trodden under foot. They are said to be the stones on which Jesus stood and the other on which Pilate stood when he said «Behold your King.» But that it was in the time of Christ a wide road leading to Pilate’s Judgment Hall and that the arch was in the Roman epoch a triumphal arch is well-known.

What admits of no question is the ancient pave-
ment which is to be seen in the basement of the
convent. This must date from the Roman days, and
in all probability was trodden by our Lord.

Here I came to the original pavement and found
also the Roman stone from which Pilate probably
addressed and argued with the excited Jews and
the tribune from which Pilate is supposed to have
washed his hands in the innocency of the blood of
«this Just Man». The pavement of the road under
the central arch was grooved for the horses' feet
and to make it easy for animals to climb the hill,
while under the side arches was left smooth for
pedestrians. It extends for some hundred paces, and
on the pavement are deeply dented marks where
the soldiers played their games. We may feel as we
tread these worn and massive flagstones that here
our feet are indeed set in the footprints of the Man
of Sorrows. We can almost here the thud of the
blows and the harsh shouts of the soldiers, as they
salute Him mockingly «Hail, king of the Jews.»
Doubtless the guard gambled on this court while
they awaited the result of the trial of prisoners in
the Judgment Hall thus whiling away the interval
between their hours of duty.

Here are squares and circles scratched by the
Roman soldiers for the games of chance and
amusement, while tedious business was proceeding
within the Praetorium, the trial of a prisoner, or the
handling of an excited deputation. In the same
darkened vault, on the same pavement are stones
roughened for passage of horses; and pious hands
have placed a Figure staggering under a cross!

There is no doubt whatever that this is the place
where Pilate sat at in the Judgment Hall, and it may
be the very place where the soldiers took our Lord
and mocked him and clothed him in purple, and here our Saviour awaited his trial surrounded by soldiers. That the bleeding feet of Christ trod this pavement on the Way of the Cross is as certain as anything that can be in this uncertain world.

It will always attract the attention of the pilgrims and the travellers, and the opinion that the Judgment Hall was situated in the immediate vicinity gives a decree of verisimilitude to the tradition of the «Ecce Homo» that makes many a devout believer to pass beneath this impressive arch with silent reverence.

There several feet below the present level of the way along which Christ is believed to have carried his cross to Calvary is the real Via Dolorosa, the original approach to the Judgment Hall from which condemned prisoners were wont to issue on their sad pilgrimage to a malefactor’s death. There are several stations on this narrow «Way of Pain» that have been made wet with the tears of many generations who have sought to follow the footsteps of the Master as He bore the heavy cross to be crucified by cruel soldiers.

We then visited the Prison of Christ. Here are great underground dungeons, rock-hewn chambers, indescribably miserable; a nightmare to enter even as free man! The chambers have peepholes for the sentries and same have stocks cut in the stone. Imagination is oppressed as it visualizes the deeds done here, and one «hopes there is a hell!» It may have been here that Barnabas sat with expectation of no other escape than to the death of the cross. Within are pits crammed with human bones.

Along this way of Sorrow is indicated the exact spot where the cross was laid upon Jesus. The First Station is below the steps leading up to the
Palace of Herod, Tetrarch of Galilee, the same who put John the Baptist to death, and to whom Pilate sent our Saviour. There are no remains of Herod’s Palace at present. Here Jesus was condemned to death. A little further is the place where Christ sank under the weight of his burden.

The Via Dolorosa now approaches the Third Station which marks the place where Jesus «bearing his cross went forth» and is said to have fallen under the weight. The condemned, hampered by fetters and the ropes that bound them to their guards, could not walk freely.

A slab in the wall marks the Fourth Station, where the Blessed Virgin Mary beheld her son carrying his cross. The interior of the church is built up and neatly constructed on the ruins of an older church. Underneath it is a crypt. It has the coarse mosaic pavement of an older oratory on which are depicted two footprints. May they not have been placed there to show the spot where the sorrowful mother stood? They are artistically worked in various colours on white ground and are placed together pointing in the direction of the Third Station.

In memory of the African pilgrim to Jerusalem who was so unexpectedly called upon to assist the Redeemer, a small oratory has been erected. It marks the Fifth Station and stands by the supposed spot on the Sorrowful Way where the Roman soldiers charged with carrying out the sentence on Jesus, compelled Simon of Cyrene, to go with him; that he might bear his cross. It has been assumed that the cross-bearer embraced Christianity after the poignant experience of his walk with Jesus to Golgatha.

Very picturesque is the roughly-paved street in
which ecclesiastical tradition commemorates the remaining sacred incidents of the Crucifixion. Tradition has it that as Jesus toiled under the weight of the cross, a Jewish woman saw the sad procession to Calvary from her window, and braving the mob and Roman soldiers, proffered her kerchief to wipe the Master's face. His features covered with sweat and blood were permanently imprinted on the linen, and she was known thereafter as «Veronica», from the words «Vera Eicon,» which means «True Likeness.» The painting seen on the way commemorates her act.

The Seventh Station stands near the Gate of Judgment which according to tradition is the gate through which Christ is said to have left the town bearing the cross on his way to Calvary.

We enter the church with its beautiful frescoes of our Lord's life, with the backgrounds of the real hills and surroundings of the scene depicted, but still more interesting is a large piece of ancient masonry which takes up a large part of this chapel. It is claimed to be a part of the old city wall and the gate through which our Lord left the city bearing the cross on his way to Calvary. Yet the contour hardly suggests an outside city wall rather than the remains of some beautiful palace of those days. One wishes these old walls could speak to tell us if they themselves really sheltered him, if they echoed to his words, if they were witnesses to any of his act of power and love.

No one would wish to dogmatize about the precise identifications preserved by the Stations of the Cross. The Franciscans who invented most of them in the Fourteenth Century intended them rather as helps to devotion, and such they remain for many who at home or in the Holy Land make the «pilgrimage of
the Cross. » In any case the modern pilgrim can hardly be indifferent to the atmosphere of devotion in which sixteen hundred years of prayer and piety have enshrined the traditional holy places in Jerusalem. That we are walking in the exact outline of the footprints of Jesus may be incapable of scientific proof, that we are following in the steps of countless thousands of the saints is in every way an historical certainty.

Looking along the Street of Hallowed Memory.
There is consolation, however, in the thought that somewhere in Jerusalem, buried fathoms deep beneath dust and stone, there lies in supreme peace the ineffable path actually trodden by the feet of Christ, and that «none shall pass through it for ever and ever.» It lies hidden from the eyes of the mumming priests and is safe forever from that tawdry oblation of gilt image and brazen lamp which marks the church's appreciation of a sacred place.
THE PLACE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION: IS IT THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OR THE GARDEN TOMB?

The impulse to visit Jerusalem, to pray before the Holy Sepulchre is a universal one, common to East and West alike, and from the time of St. Helena onwards a stream of pilgrims from all realms of Christendom has flowed steadily towards the Holy City. To spend the Holy Week under the dome of the Holy Sepulchre is the outstanding aim of East and West. No one could realize the significance of Easter in Jerusalem to weary Russian travellers unless he had chanced to live with them and watched their stolid, simple, faithful folk sitting blissfully in their terribly crowded quarters singing hymns in harmony from morning till night.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is the most wonderful church in all Christendom, and during the Holy Week it seems as if the religious life of the whole world is centred in it. And not only within, but also without and round the courts are crowds of vendors of objects of piety, cakes and candies and other forms of light refreshments.

Held sacred down through the centuries as covering the places of Crucifixion, Burial and Resurrection of our Lord, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the north-western corner of Jerusalem is in reality a
group of ecclesiastical buildings opening one into the other. Whether the exact site or not, Christian, Moslem and Jew look upon it as a memorial to Christianity. No Jew could put his foot inside this holy place!

The Dome of the Christian's Most Holy Shrine

As it is today, the Holy Sepulchre goes back only to the Crusaders of the XIth Century, but it is built upon the site of earlier churches, which can be traced back with certainty to the original edifice of the Emperor Constantine, built about A. D. 330 in order to preserve what was believed to be the actual site of Calvary and the Tomb of Christ. Now Constantine selected this spot because in his day it was already traditionally so identified. The identification can be traced back almost to the New Testament era itself, when it seems unlikely that the memory of so sacred an event as the Crucifixion would have been allowed to perish, even in the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70.
For over sixteen centuries, at any rate, the great majority of Christians have looked upon the Holy Sepulcher without misgivings as the true site of Calvary. On its columns a number of small crosses cut by the true Crusaders themselves are still visible. The facade is not beautiful. But yet let us consider for a moment the history of the church. Hither have come kings, queens, hermits, murderers, a vast army reaching back through centuries of bitterest oppression. They have climbed the ascent of Golgatha enshrined beneath its roof and peered into the hole in the rock where the Cross of the Saviour was fixed. They have gazed reverently at the cavity in the ground where the sacred wood was concealed for three hundred years, until St. Helena, the mother of Constantine, discovered it and made of it one of the most hallowed relics of Christendom. There are thousands of pilgrims today who cling to the old tradition, making the Church of the Holy Sepulchre the centre of their devotions.

I will guide you about the dim chapels and corridors, and explain the legends which cling about the church.

Within the church of the Holy Sepulchre and near the southern entrance is the Stone of Unction. It is believed to cover the rock where the body of Christ was laid after the deposition and was anointed by Nicodemus who brought myrrh and aloes to wind with the shroud. The present stone is the survivor of several polished slabs which have in turn been revered here by pilgrims. Huge tripod candlesticks holding painted wax candles stand at either end. Between them ornate lamps, suspended by chains, shed a continual and brilliant light, tended by priests of the different communities to whom the monument belongs.
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OR THE GARDEN TOMB

We then ascend to the foot of the traditional Calvary—a natural rock thirty feet long, fifteen feet high and as many wide, reached by eighteen steps cut in the living rock. On the summit is the Chapel of the Elevation of the Cross, the floor of which is paved with marble, the walls draped with silken velvet, and from the ceiling golden lamps depend, dimly burning. Reverently regarding it as real, the pious pilgrims approach this shrine upon their knees fondly kissing what they believe, to be the summit of Golgatha.

Within the church beneath the high-domed rotunda are the chapels of the Greeks, Armenians, Syrians, Abyssinians and Copts.

The greatest object of sanctity, that is the sepulchre itself, stands in the centre of the rotunda. One could call it a domed shrine of about twenty-five feet in height. Some sixteen columns surround it, but the twisted stone of those ornamented columns where its door is, have beauty all their own.

Over the portal floats the banner of the Cross and beneath its silken folds is a magnificent picture of Christ's resurrection. It is the most spirited representation of that grandest of all events ever thrown upon the canvas. With one foot resting on the tomb Christ is leaving the sepulchre with an air of triumph as majestic as it is natural.

Suspended from the ceiling are forty-three lamps belonging to the different communities. The ante-chamber contains a stone which is said to have covered the mouth of the sepulchre. In the room beyond under a shelf of marble, now used as an altar, is the Tomb of Christ.

Passing under an arched door, I was before the
raised marble edifice. It is not longer than a little over six feet. The small passage offers a place for only a few. It was built as a home for the dead and not to entertain spectators.

Will you enter with me and in quietness kneel before the tomb. Here were buried all our hopes and joys. Bleeding hands, bruised head and broken heart were His, a mute testimony to a cruel world. How can I forget Him when He did so much for me!

Here for over seventeen centuries devout pilgrims from every part of Christendom have knelt to kiss this old marble slab. Impelled by a superstitious faith and a tender affection for their offsprings, mothers come from afar to lay their children on the tomb, and many an invalid is only too happy if they may be laid beside the Master's sepulchre.

A Greek monk, tall, grim and stately stood reciting prayers. He held a peasant boy by the arms blessing him all the while as the youth bent his knees before the mighty tomb. A rosary had fallen from the hand of an old woman as overcome with religious fervour she emerged from the little room, tears climbed and sunk, riding over her wrinkled face.

The simplicity of the place overpowered me. A dim religious light shone through the window. On one of the balconies a choir sang and filled the space with moving music. Women bent low here and there before altars on uncovered stone floors. A priest was blessing the rosaries of some youths. People were lighting their small tapers and were disappearing into various vaults to familiarize themselves with different localities appertaining to the life of our Saviour.

We walk through chapel after chapel. Altars, religious symbols, paintings, tapestry and ornamentation
we see all around us. Every shrine therein, and almost every stone has been bathed with countless tears and has received the passionate kisses of hundreds of way-worn pilgrims. In the dim religious light afforded by numerous coloured lamps, all symbolical of something, we pass priests bearing candles, we scent incense and hear the chanting of rich music.

Rising from the marble floor, in the very middle of the Greek chapel, is a marble column enclosed with an iron railing, marking the centre of the earth and the identical spot from which was taken the red clay for the formation of Adam’s body.
There is the Column of Scourging and the Column of Derision, an Altar to Longinus, the centurion who pierced the Saviour's side, and another to Dinas the penitent thief, and the holes in the wall where Christ was fastened. There is the place where the blind eye of the Roman centurion was restored to sight and the spot where a drop of blood of the Saviour fell on Adam's skull and restored him to life.

A few feet beyond we descend a flight of twenty-nine steps leading to the crypt of the Church of St. Helena containing a marble chair she occupied while superintending the search of the Holy Cross. From the sides of the rock drops of water were dripping down which had percolated the surface above, but which, the monk assures me, are holy tears, the rock still weeping for the dead! Indeed the whole thing is a passion play and it seems almost sacrilege to enter into the details of all the sights of the place.

Outside again the crowd had melted. Small boys still ran hither and thither selling holy glass rosaries and olive wood crosses; the worshippers were coming in and out, procession after procession. Priests in black cloaks, choir boys in white robes, the patriarch in dazzling raiments of scarlet and gold. A choir singing and over it all the great big bells clanged and chimed in spiritual tones; and then a melody of hymns rose from a thousand throats that would have shaken with emotion, even the greatest of all pagans!

* * *

If the genuineness of the traditional site of the Holy Sepulchre be given up, where shall we locate the scene of the crucifixion?
Step aside, therefore, with me out of the glare of the asphalted roads and houses of Jerusalem, and together let us take refreshment in a place where the general thought of mankind might not expect to find it, in a garden beside a tomb!

Here Protestants celebrate Easter Morn

The garden is a very quiet and beautiful spot, and lying, as it does at the foot of a tomb-covered green hill just outside the walls which at least is no less likely to be Golgatha than its chapel-encumbered rival, it is a congenial spot for quiet contemplation.

It seems a cool and lovely haven in which to think about the events of our Lord’s last few hours. People frequent this spot and love to meditate here, because its ancient burial place left in its original condition helps them to realize the scene of our Lord’s burial and glorious resurrection. Many sincere Protestants reverence this spot as the real tomb and visit it and sing hymns there at dawn on Easter morning, a touching little ceremony.
We enter this sacred place through a blind alley. The guardian conducts us silently into a garden in which is situated the tomb, which some scholars believe to be the Tomb of the Great Master. Back of the garden and its tomb rises a precipitous hill, a cliff of some fifty feet high rounded at the top like a skull.

We stroll through the grounds, rejoicing in the well-chosen flowers. The garden is planted in rotation according to the seasons.

The evidence of the tomb is very convincing to me when I read the Scripture reference connected with the burial. This tomb so strikingly meets all the conditions afforded by our knowledge of the circumstances as to supply every detail requisite to the theory that this was the veritable Calvary and here the garden of Joseph and the tomb in which Christ lay.

The tomb is a chamber cut into the solid rock about ten feet square and seven feet high. The walls are straight and evenly cut and the ceiling and floors are the same all rock but smooth and regular a carefully executed work of art. Close to the wall of rock, opposite the entrance, there is a bed cut in the floor about half a foot deep, sloping up the sides and towards the end, just large enough to receive a body. Beyond the place where the foot would rest, there is a slab of rock about a foot square left standing up, as if it were a little table to receive anything which might be placed upon it. The bed is fenced in from the rest of the room by a long slab of what was once white stone, now discoloured by age and contact with the earth which had rolled into the tomb. The tomb was evidently that of a rich man, prepared with all the carefulness
and elegance which such a one might choose to expend upon his last resting place! Such a simple little rock tomb: and yet perhaps the most hallowed, the most wonderful place on earth!

『There is a green hill far away without the city wall』

From this garden, perhaps so holy, we go outside the walls to the traditional Place of Stoning, which is on a knoll in a Moslem cemetery. On the ledge of this knoll rises a sheer cliff forty to fifty feet in depth. It was the habit of the Jews to throw condemned persons off the brink of this cliff.

Now as it chances the cliff at this spot, the face of the rock, looking towards Jerusalem, has undoubtedly a fantastic but a very real resemblance to a rotting human skull. There is a low corroded forehead, there are two deep hollows that make the eyes, there is something which might be the remnant of a nose, and beneath near to the ground level, a suggestion of twisted and decaying lips. I saw the likeness at once!
THROUGH HIS LAND

If two thousand years ago the face of that cliff was approximately as it appears today, may not some fanciful-minded Jew have caught the likeness and designate it on that account, «The Place of the Skull.» If so, in view of its traditions and horrible use, the name would have been likely to cling to the site from age to age. If the inference is not a false one, if indeed the crosses of the Saviour and the thieves stood upon the summit of that little cliff it would be a fact worthy of note that this patch of earth remains now just as it must have been in the long-dead Roman days! It is claimed, indeed, that no one not already wedded to the traditional identification of the Holy Places could visit this Calvary without feeling at once that here is the true site of the Crucifixion.

It is good to come here and remember. The place is quiet, secluded, enshrined amid a bit of nature. It invites meditation, gratitude, communion and love. Let us come here often in thought, if not in person, to sweeten our days with holy memories.
Chapter XXIX

THE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL FROM CALVARY TO EMMAUS.

At a short distance from Jerusalem on the way to Jaffa, we turn aside to the right and climb up a rocky slope where thyme and thistles spring up here and there. We are desirous of traversing the road on which the Lord Jesus presented himself to two disciples after his resurrection. The distance of the remains of Emmaus from Jerusalem exactly accords with the Scripture narrative, which makes it «about threescore furlongs.» Just close to the village Biddou is a ruin with a small spring. This is the spot where tradition says, that the two disciples were walking when Jesus drew nigh and spoke to them.

This is not a very good road to come along. Sometimes it is so steep that we have to drive our car slowly.

After a while, as the valleys and hills begin to take shape, a wood is revealed above us which encloses and conceals amidst its foliage the walls and buildings of a German Hospice, and a little below it, a Franciscan monastery, famous for the appearance of Jesus after death.

The beautiful story of the two disciples walking home from Jerusalem, whose hearts throbbed with gladness while the Risen Lord talked with them by the way but whose «eyes were holden that they should not
know him» is recorded only by St. Luke.

Folk literature and books especially of the romantic period, have handed down to us a certain number of tales in which some spirit from the other world appears and speaks with companions who are still alive, without being recognised; but no one can compare in importance, simplicity, and subdued atmosphere of mystery with the Evangelist’s story in the New Testament. Certainly, the latter has in its favour the fact that it evokes the figure of the unrivalled greatness of Jesus. Here are two of the apostles, Cleophas and Simon, proceeding to Emmaus, a few days after the crucifixion. And as they walk thus along the road, they exchange words and opinions about all that had happened subsequently in the holy city.

Surely these two disciples never forgot the details of their Easter afternoon walk! I think of these two disciples as they journeyed on, talking together of these marvellous things—unheard of things that seemed to belong to the miraculous.

On that wondrous Easter morning those Christians in Jerusalem heard strange rumours. Numbers of them, doubtless, would go to the Garden Tomb and would find that the Roman soldiers were no longer on duty, and would see that the tomb was empty! The fact that the body of Jesus was not stolen but had risen, does not seem to have travelled beyond the inner Christian circle, and when Cleophas and his friend set off on their walk toward the prominent hill of Mount Joy, — the Nebi Samuel of today— they were in ignorance still of the resurrection.

They still are in sadness and uncertainty about Christ. They had once hoped that the triumph of Palm Sunday would have led to the overthrow of the Roman power, that He would have redeemed Israel.
There was a stranger walking along the hillside in the same direction, and soon they found themselves walking with Him. They never for a moment dreamt that it was the Man of Nazareth, who had been so cruelly and publicly put to a shameful death.

He then talked to them, that it was perhaps they who had not been fine enough and unworldly enough to see that what had happened to Jesus was something far more wonderful, far more beautiful, far more suggestive of God, than the kind of tinselled glory with which they would have clothed Him.

The time slipped by and the long walk over the hills and up the vale was as nothing when listening to him. The afternoon was far advanced when they reached Emmaus with its white houses set on the side of the valley, amid orange and lemon groves and olive yards. They came to a flat-roofed white house in the village where these men lived.

Thus they talked on and on, and the sun went down and the stars appeared, corroborating and enforcing this holier view of life and things.

They could not bear to be parted from this wonderful friend who knows so much about Jesus and was so powerful in the Scriptures.

The astonished apostles kept silence, but at the parting of the roads they prayed him to tarry with them at Emmaus. But "He made as though he would have gone further." This phrase has proved a stumbling block to some faint hearts and a joy to unfriendly critics, who read into it an act of insincerity. There is nothing here more than this: that Jesus, a true son of the land, observed the rules of good manners which obtained among his people.
Etiquette demanded that an invitation should not be accepted at the first bidding lest, in consenting, the visitor should unduly tax the resources of the host who was constrained by custom to welcome every "stranger" into his house as "a guest of God." That is not to question the sincerity of the host, for the law of hospitality is ingrained in the East; but it is incumbent on the invited to be equally considerate and polite. Orientals are, sometimes, suspicious of strangers, especially towards the dusk. The two men, in these circumstances, would carefully scrutinize an unknown traveller who joined them on the road. Courtesy forbade them to ask his name and the purpose of his journey. But he must have quickly gained their confidence, and they did not hesitate to acknowledge to him that they had been of the party of the crucified Nazarene. How is it they did not discover his identity in the course of the long discussion they had with him by the way.

It is not really difficult to understand why they failed to recognize him. There was nothing to remind them of Jesus in the outward appearance of their companion. He was not clad in the seamless coat with which they had been familiar. His scarf, after the manner of travellers, was drawn up well above the chin. His disfigured face — the visage so marred more than any man by the scourging and buffetting to which he had been subjected only three days before — bore no resemblance to the gentle countenance of the Master!

They entered the house. Lights were lit in a humble room, and on the stone divans, covered with carpet they sat and partook of an evening meal of bread and wine and fruits.

Following the ancient custom which made the
honoured guest the host, it was Jesus who presided at the table. Taking up a loaf, he recited over it the usual blessing before meals, and then he «brake and gave it to them ». As he stretched forth his hand to give them bread, they saw the print of the nails.

This unusual but symbolical action of their Guest is the prelude to revelation. «And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. »

It was indeed Christ! Oh how glorious, how majestic! They gazed at him in loving awe, but as they gazed that very moment the outline of His form began to fade away. No door was opened. There was no retreat, but where He stood there was only thin air. The blessed bread was in their hands, but He who blessed has gone. It was not a dream, for they still held the bread he brake. They could not stay any longer at Emmaus, the other disciples should not pass the night sorry and sad: they must return this night to Jerusalem and tell them what they have seen and heard. They left their supper on the tables, rose up and returned to Jerusalem. The moon and stars were shining brightly as if they were telling each other the beautiful story of the Resurrection of Christ.

And that evening they hastened to Jerusalem to carry to their sad fellow apostles the news which Luke the Evangelist, with the passionate sincerity of long ago, has transmitted to Christians!

It is made clear to us that the Appearance of Jesus was no shadow cast from elsewhere on the screen of earthly life, but the presence of the same Jesus who had died. A moment of exulting thankfulness, and suddenly they are alone!
We go and visit the Franciscan convent. The pious
of the generations consecrated Cleophas house by
the erection of a church before the time of the
Crusaders. These found it on the way when they
came to rest here in 1099. Descending towards Sidon
and Tyre, having arrived at Arimathaea, the present
Ramleh, they received information that at Emmaus
close by, forage was to be found in plenty, and
cisterns, and so-called miraculous fountains. And the
Crusaders had not been deceived.

Emmaus perched on a mountain and surrounded by various
trees looks its best on Easter Monday.

Later, times of trouble came for Christendom,
when the church at Emmaus, like many others fell
into neglect. Towards the beginning of the year 1859
we find a lady of the Italian aristocracy who passed
by here, and wrote «Seeing the sanctuary at Emmaus
deserted and profaned by unbelievers, I have made
a plan to purchase it.» And thanks to the devotion and sacrifice of this pious lady, the Franciscan church of today was built upon the ruined walls, preserving in it the traditional chamber of the scene of the manifestation of Jesus. Here are shining mosaics of marble, valuable glass windows and on either side of the altar large painted statues of the apostles Cleophas and Simon. I read once more the Scripture lesson in Emmaus and thought of those two disciples. The same Saviour was present here, and I could firmly believe this consoling fact.

Standing in the shadow of the monastery, between heights with historic memories of the Crusades, Ramleh, the modern Arimathea towards the west, and Mizpah Samuel the Mount of Joy—on the east the thought of the past dominates me, and in the silence of the luminous afternoon, when the scent of the fig trees becomes still more pronounced, I meditate on the endless number of travellers who have wandered here in good times and in bad times, until the «journey to Emmaus» has become a proverbial expression.
CHAPTER XXX

ON OLIVET'S BROW

THE MOUNT OF CHRIST'S ASCENSION

The Mount of Olives is sacred in human history because of the place it had in the life of Jesus. It is pre-eminent among the sacred mountains because more than all others, it was honoured as the favourite retreat and quiet resting place of our Saviour. In the crowded city He taught and ministered to the suffering and the needy, but when the shadows of evening began to fall, He went out to Olivet. The Mount reveals Jesus to us as a Lover of Humanity in its everyday humble, common, and universal life—the life of the family, the home at Bethany.

Time's march apparently passes by the crest of Olivet. Leisurely the people ascend and descend the path over the shoulder—paths which Jesus trod between Jerusalem and Bethany.

Let us climb the Mount of Olives. A beautiful hill is this Olivet. It is no less memorable in the annals of Jewish and Christian history than its aspect is impressive to the eye of the beholder. Rising 2,800 feet above the Mediterranean, its base is one thousand feet from Jerusalem. The finest views of Jerusalem are seen from this hilltop. When Jerusalem was in her glory, sitting as a queen upon the hill, there, with the rising sun shining upon the sides of Solomon's Temple and all her greatness, it must have been like the city

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John saw let down from God out of heaven. What visions arise in the soul when one stands on Olivet. How Jesus loved this hill and how often He found comfort and communion in the shades of her green olive trees. While the scenic grandeur of the prospect thrilled the multitude with joy, the view of a doomed city caused Christ to shed more than human tears!

We look at the Holy City with its ancient walls, the ruins of its magnificent Temple with the great Dome of the Rock dominating the site, and we feel we are on sacred ground. It was here Jesus viewed the city and wept over it. Here He loved to seek retirement from the bustling world.

Beyond the city across the Valley of Jehoshaphat is the country that leads to Bethany and the Jordan, while on the horizon stand the Mountains of Moab. It is a poor, but cheerful, lovely country, dim-coloured like a beggar’s cloak, barren and littered with stones.

The view looks like a photograph of the mountains of the moon. I gazed down into an apparently sterile world of brown-domed hills piled together, bare of vegetation and falling rapidly into the distance where a streak of blue marked the waters of the Dead Sea. This was the view that Jesus knew well, and it has not altered since His eyes gazed upon it.

Olivet is a brown ridge, very commonplace, humble and suburban. It is a dry, stony hill with modern buildings on its slopes, with a copious Jewish cemetery at its foot, like a vast stone-mason’s yard, and, on its summit two convents.

There are now but few olive trees growing on the hill; however where they have been left undisturbed form thickets which although scanty yet preserve some memory of the charm which must have once belonged to the spot. Though rough and stony yet
in springtime and summer flowers bloom upon it luxuriantly.

This Olivet, this path to Bethany, this way leading down to Jericho are all sacred sites of unquestionable genuineness. This is the country that was traversed by the feet of Christ. This is the very view that, in every dip and knoll, was familiar to His eyes. This is a veritable part of the Holy Land, a little changed it may be as to its surface, but quite unaltered in its present outline.

It was in this plain unassuming country that the religion of Christ was taught. It was taught in the simplest language in words that a child could understand, and by means of illustrations drawn from various subjects. There was in the teaching no stilted ritual, no gorgeous ceremony, no foreshadowing of the princely prelate or the chanting priest. It was religion associated with such sounds as the splash of a fisherman’s net in the lake; the patter of the sheep; the call of the shepherd; the tramp of the sower across the field. As for the Teacher Himself He was a man of the people, the son of a carpenter who knew no dwelling but the humblest, and who, if He could be seen walking now along the road that stretches away towards Bethany, would be clad in no better garb than that of the peasant of today.

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The tradition which points to this mount as the one from which our Lord ascended into heaven is the oldest and best authenticated on record.

In the courtyard of the large Dervish monastery is the Mosque of Christ’s Ascension. It is quite near Bethphage of the Gospels, and on the way to Bethany. A relic of the Church of the Ascension erected in
the Fourth century by St. Helena and restored by the Crusaders, this tiny domed edifice is the oldest building on the Mount of Olives. The shrine covers the reputed place of farewell between our Saviour and his faithful disciples. Crowds of pilgrims and tourists visit it and have done so for many centuries.

We visit the mosque. The traditional spot of the Ascension is guarded jealously by the Moslems, who, of course consider Christ a prophet. Here in a small octagonal building supported with marble columns, with elaborate capitals, the spaces between the columns having been filled in, we were shown by the guardian, the print of one of the Saviour's feet in the rock. He seriously assured me that both footprints were there until the Moslems took one of them as a memento from the departed Great Prophet! This indentation is surrounded by a small curb. By the footprint is a small hole, and as the guardian seemed thoroughly conversant with all the circumstances surrounding the Ascension, I asked him what it was and how it came here. Not in the least abashed he replied that when Christ went up to heaven He had his walking stick in his hand, with which he struck the rock as He sprang from it, leaving the mark we see today! The place is perfectly bare except for the names of pilgrims who have scribbled them on the walls.

We then ascended the nearby minaret, the base of which is said to have been that of a belfry built during the days of the Crusaders. Here we read the simple, graphic story of the Ascension. I was impressed as I never had been before with the intense, the almost startling vividness of this sacred narrative.

On the highest point of Olivet stands the Russian Tower of the Ascension, rising to a height of over one hundred and fifty feet. Near the foot of the tower is the enclosed «Stone of Ascension». A number of acres of ground surrounding this spot are held by the Russian Church.