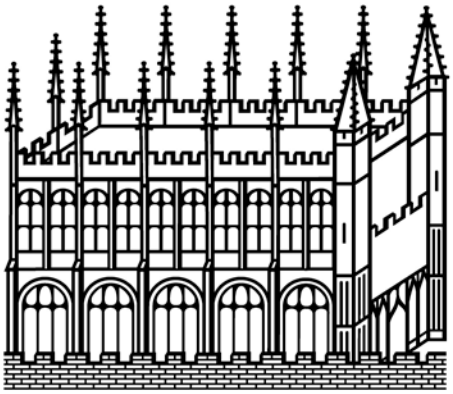

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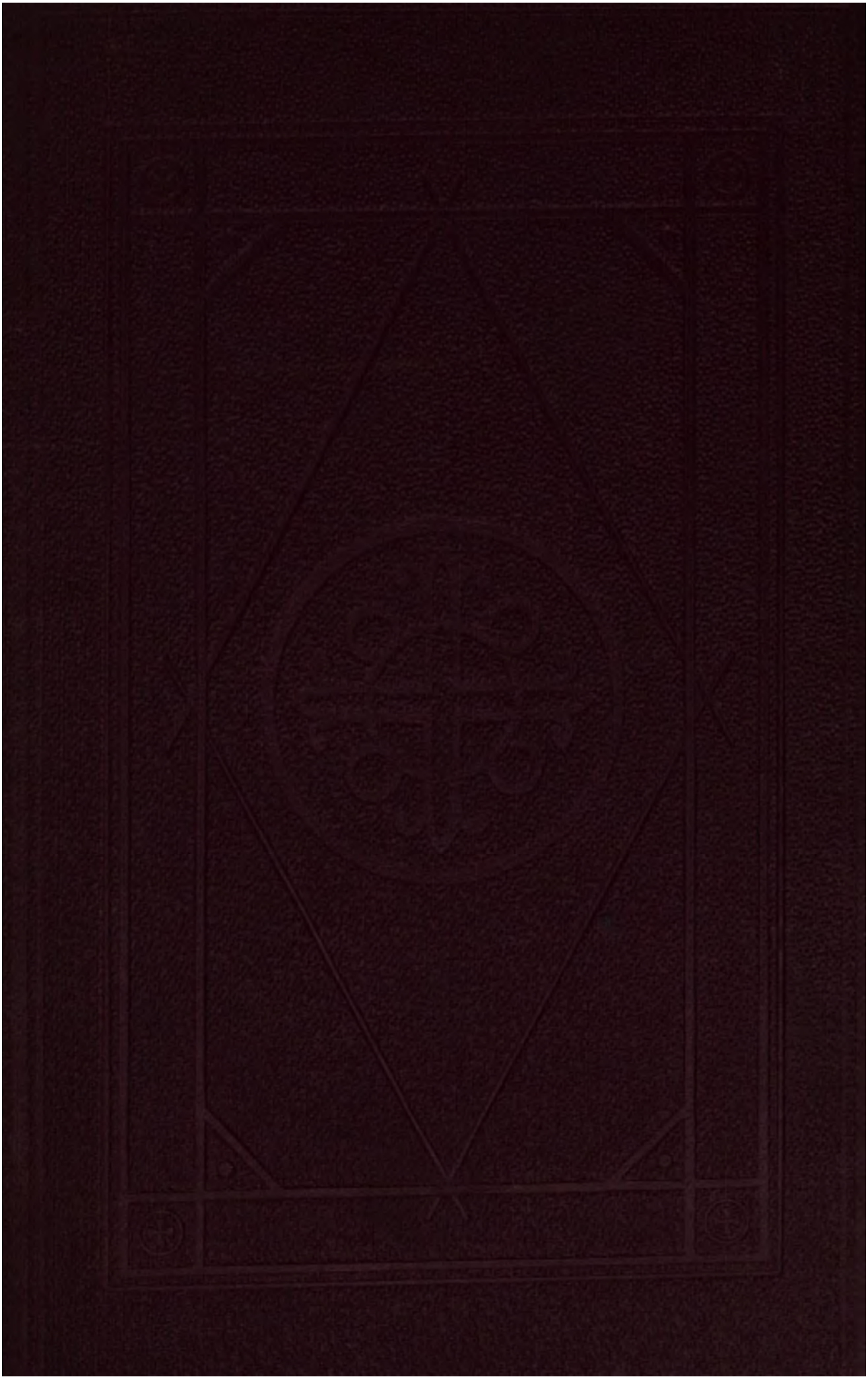

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A WINTER IN THE EAST,

IN

Letters to the Children at Home.

By F. M.

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PREFACE.

THE following Letters contain a true record of the adventures of the writer during a winter's tour in the Holy Land, and as they have interested and amused the young ones for whom they were written, they are now published in the hope that, although possessing no claim to tell anything new or remarkable to experienced travellers, they may be found acceptable and intelligible to other readers not yet old enough to follow the details of more elaborate books of travels.

Moreover, as this tour partook at times of the character of residence (as, for instance, in the three months' stay at Jerusalem,) many customs and habits of daily life fell under the visitor's notice which must escape observation in a hasty tour.

Be this as it may, these pages are offered in all sincerity to young readers as an honest account of what travellers similarly bound will be likely to meet with, should they make the experiment.

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A WINTER IN THE EAST.

LETTER I.

Cairo, Nov. 1863.

My dear Children,

As I know that the arrival of a letter addressed to any of the little "Masters" or "Misses" always occasions great excitement at the breakfast table, I fancy you will be pleased and surprised when the post brings you a letter from Egypt all to yourselves. This is intended for the "children" alone, and though my letter will contain nothing new to papa and mamma, yet I think it may do so to the young ones.

As you are all so fond of reading the Arabian Nights, it has struck me that you may be amused and interested in hearing something about Eastern life as we see it in the present day. When you are reading these stories by a comfortable English

fireside you think of them merely as fairy tales, and perhaps will hardly believe that they describe not only the manners of the Easterns at the time they were written, but in many particulars their every-day life as we see it existing now. Changes are made very slowly in the East, and habits and customs continue the same, generation after generation; many an expression used in the Bible, or custom alluded to, which is not easy to be understood at home, is very plain to any one who has travelled Eastwards, for the dress and the habits of the people are much what they were some thousand years ago.

Sounds, and sights, and dress, are so unlike anything one ever sees in Europe, that I can hardly hope to make you realise by description what such a city as Cairo is like; the more one looks the more unreal it seems, and as we thread our way through the narrow crowded streets, or watch the turbaned figures at night gliding silently along, each with a paper lantern swinging in his hand, we sometimes rub our eyes and wonder whether we are dreaming, or looking at a scene in a play.

We arrived at Cairo by train from Alexandria, which I must own is a very unromantic way of beginning one's travels in the East, but a station where the porters wear white turbans and have

bare legs, happily does not remind one much of Europe. It was dark when we reached Cairo, and as its streets possess no lamps, two men holding lighted torches in their hands ran before our carriage to guide us on our way, screaming out at the top of their voices, "Arabeeh! O, A; O, A," which translated into English means, "Take care! here comes a carriage!" I must not forget to mention our coachman's appearance, which will strike you as rather droll, though we have got quite accustomed to it now. He was a black-faced Nubian dressed in a loose white chemise down to his knees, fastened round his waist with a girdle, his arms and legs were bare, and he had on his feet large red morocco slippers. His head was covered with a red cap with flowing tassel, called a tarboosh, which is a necessary part of an Eastern dress—they wear it in doors as well as out of doors, as they never uncover their heads at any time. Sometimes a turban of white linen or silk is twisted round it.

The streets are mostly very narrow, so that in some places the curious projecting windows which the old houses have, nearly meet on opposite sides of the street, entirely excluding the sun. These windows are very picturesque and pretty, and are made of carved latticed work; they belong to the

rooms occupied by the harem, or ladies of the family, and are so arranged that no person in the street can see the inmates of the room. An Eastern woman, you know, is never to be seen by any man but her husband; when a lady walks or drives out here, she is entirely covered by a large cloak of black silk well drawn over her head, besides which, she wears a veil of thick white material, fastened to her head by means of a strap of coins across the nose, and which, hanging down to the feet, hides all her face except the eyes. A petticoat of pink or lilac silk sometimes peeps out beneath the cloak, or trowsers made of silk or cotton, if of the latter material the pattern is sure to be very gay, probably yellow with scarlet flowers. Sometimes the lady has a maidservant behind her to carry home her purchases, (for be sure no woman ever walks here for pleasure or exercise) and she is wrapped up from head to foot in a white garment called an *eezar*, quite startling, as one comes suddenly upon her ghostlike figure, with its coal-black eyes staring at one out of two little holes cut in the veil.

The streets containing the shops are called bazaars, and many of the larger ones are covered over with mattings thrown across rafters, to shelter the buyers and sellers from the burning sun; the smaller bazaars are too narrow to allow of much

light penetrating them. The need of a covered street for a protection from the sun while shopping, sounds strange to you no doubt, but an Eastern shop is in fact nothing more than a cupboard, the front of which lets down into the open street, and forms a board where the owner sits cross-legged with a long pipe in his mouth, and a cup of coffee by his side. His goods are hung up behind him at the back of the cupboard, or stowed away in drawers. When a purchaser arrives, if he is a native, he will take another pipe and cup of coffee, and, sitting by the merchant, they bargain together over the price, which is always a long affair to arrange, as a much higher sum than they will take, is, as a matter of course, asked at first. We bought some cloaks the other day, and while the dragoman was bargaining about the price, the owner of the stall invited us to sit down, and presented us each with a cup of coffee which it would have been considered very uncourteous to refuse. Each bazaar contains a different set of goods—one has saddles, gorgeous in red leather and embroidery, another slippers, another fruits, or meat, or silk and cotton goods, and through them throng multitudes from all countries dressed in all sorts of costumes: the Bedoueen from the desert with his white blanket thrown picturesquely across his shoulder,

the Nubian, the African negro, the Turk, the Greek, the Armenian, the Copt. There is scarcely a nation that is not represented in some way in the streets of Cairo.

No one of the upper classes ever walks, so the streets are thronged with riders, carriages being a modern invention here, and only used by a few natives; first we meet an Effendi on a beautiful large white Mecca donkey, worth from £50 to £100, with red leather saddle and crimson embroidered saddle-cloth, or perhaps the sheick or chief of some neighbouring village, on a fine grey horse with black and silver trappings; then follows a donkey, having on its back what looks like a balloon of black silk, but is really a lady out on some shopping expedition, a man holding her bridle; then a long string of camels fastened together, some carrying lumps of stone in net bags swung on each side, others long planks of wood, which swerve backwards and forwards, as the animals slowly swing along, and woe to any one in their way, for they move on in their steady demure pace heedless of anything before them. On the back of the last camel in the train, perched up in a wooden cradle-like saddle sits a bare-legged peasant or *fellah*, who rocks his body backwards and forwards with each motion of the camel. Suddenly

are heard loud cries of O, A; O, A! and driving fast through the crowd comes the carriage of some important person, with two running footmen in front, who clear a passage with the sticks they carry in their hands. Oh! what a crush there is! walkers, riders, laden donkeys, are pushed against the wall, until the carriage has gone by. It is marvellous to see with what coolness the natives let the wheels almost go over their feet rather than lose their dignity by hurrying out of the way, and what little notice they take if an accident does happen. One day, the carriage in which we were driving knocked down a poor woman, but the coachman took no notice of our exclamation of horror, and instead of stopping to inquire if she was hurt, he merely gave her a good scolding for getting into his way, and none of the passers by helped to pick up the grain which she had dropped in her fall.

Each carriage is accompanied by a running footman, called a Sais. A very picturesque figure he always is, with his short white dress and long flowing sleeves, scarlet waistcoat, and embroidered sash, and bare legs and feet. They are very swift runners, and keep in advance of the carriage however fast it goes, clearing the road as they run, for there is no such thing as a footpath in Cairo, and

a carriage makes no noise as it approaches, the streets being all laid down with soft sand. The way they have of watering the streets here is very droll. A fellah walks about with a goat's skin over his shoulder filled with water, and the head of the goat having been cut off he uses the neck as a pipe, and from it squeezes the water, which he squirts about the ground, laying the dust effectually.

The traffic in the streets is not the only amusement as one rides or walks along—the habits of the people themselves are very striking, and interest one much. Every street has its one or two coffee shops, which are filled at all hours of the day with men sitting cross-legged on the stone bench (the only furniture they possess) sipping coffee out of little china cups, or smoking their long pipes. Coffee in this country is always ground into a paste, a spoonful of which is put into a little tin vessel, and boiling water is poured over it. It is then poured out quickly into a tiny china cup which stands in a larger cup of metal, and is handed to the guest or customer. At the door of the coffee shop there is a flat stone, serving as a seat for idlers, and here very often the story-teller finds eager and interested listeners to his tales. Story-telling is as popular now in the East as it was in

the days of Scheresade, and the Arabian Nights are the most popular of all stories.

I have often seen crowds of people standing in circles round some turbaned figure, who was keeping them all entranced with one of those interesting tales. Our windows look out upon an open place planted with trees, and here a guard is placed every night. This is their manner of keeping themselves awake—one of the party tells an amusing story, which we hear interrupted at times by shouts of laughter from the listeners, then suddenly the story stops, the guard screams out some word, which is answered by those in another street, and so on, through the town. I do not know whether this succeeds in keeping off thieves, but it certainly succeeds in driving away sleep from the poor innocent traveller.

Next to the coffee shop the barber's shop is the most common. Every man in these countries has his head closely shaven, but he never performs the operation himself, and it is very difficult as one passes the open barber's shop to prevent laughing at the sight of the poor victim under the barber's hands, held either by the nose or by the single lock of hair which is left in the middle of his head. There is another trade which is common here—that of the letter-writer. One constantly

sees an old man seated at the corner of the street, with a reed-pen in his hand, his ink and paper on his knee, while some one stands near dictating the letter which he is unable to write himself. The scribe must be the depositary of many a secret.

In writing to you about the peculiarities of Cairo, I must not omit to mention the donkey-boys, who form one of the features of the place. In all the great thoroughfares donkeys are to be found waiting for hire, and with them are boys, who accompany you wherever you go, to any distance and at any speed you please. They run before you in the street calling out incessantly to the passers by, "*O, A! riglak, gemine, shemalek,*" which means, "*take care of your toes—go to the right, go to the left.*" If the walker, as is often the case, will not trouble himself to move, the donkey-boy without much ceremony pushes him out of the way. Then follows a volley of hard words, which is answered by "chaff" from the boy. Of course we cannot understand what passes, but from the applause of his companions it is evident the boy gets the best of it. They are full of fun and humour, and are very quick in learning English, and are much pleased to teach you Arabic in return. "*Good donkey, mine. Want to know his name? Billy Snooks his name;*

mind to ask for Billy Snooks to-morrow—him very best donkey." So they go on.

Then they amuse you with tales of their companions in almost unintelligible English—how one is called Elephant because he is so fat he cannot run, and such like things. They teach their donkeys to be as sharp as themselves, and we were much amused at hearing of their way of protecting themselves from the soldiers, who constantly ride on the donkeys without paying for them. No boy dares to refuse a ride to a soldier, but as soon as he is safely on the saddle the boy whispers something in the donkey's ear, whereupon he goes on for a few steps and then falls upon his knees, from which no blows or kicks can get him up.

I have spoken to you hitherto only about the charms of Cairo—its curious streets and beautiful dresses, but you know there is a reverse side to every medal, and that there are other things beside beauties here I am afraid I must own, though one easily forgets them amidst all the pleasant objects that meet the eye.

First and foremost among the disagreeables are the children. I fancy I hear your exclamations of surprise that the aunty who is supposed to be foolish about such little animals, can reckon any children among "disagreeables," but so it is; with

all her love for them she confesses to shutting her eyes at the sight of them here! You would not wonder if you were to see them—they are so ugly, so dirty, so horrid-looking, poor little things, that no one but a mother could be expected to love or admire them! I will describe an Egyptian village to you, that you may fancy the places in which these poor little children live, and you will not wonder that they are dirty at all events. The houses, if I may call them by such a name, are built of the brown mud of the country, and are in the shape of an oven, round at the top and only six feet high. In the centre is an opening, which serves as door, window, and chimney, and through this any one entering the hut must crawl, as it is not two feet in height. These houses are apparently only built for shelter from the sun, for all the occupations of the inhabitants are performed in the open air, where one sees the women picking the Indian corn or spinning the old-fashioned distaff. At the door of each hut there is generally a large heap of dirty sand, into which everything appears to be thrown away, and here the children play, looking more dirty than anything you can imagine, without a rag of clothing on their bodies or a scrap of hair on their heads, except a tuft left in the middle which generally stands bolt upright. Their

little faces are covered with flies, which disfigure and blind their eyes, but the children are so accustomed to them that they never move a finger to brush them off. I should imagine, from their appearance, water never comes near them. We heard yesterday of a child of thirteen months old who had never been washed; its mother, who is nurse to an English lady in Cairo, says that as the child's father is very delicate it must not be washed until it is two years old, or it will grow up delicate too! So the poor baby lives on in that state because of its mother's superstition.

The peasant women are as dirty looking as their children. Their dress is nothing but a loose dark blue gown reaching to the knee, and loose trowsers of the same material, with a veil of blue or black crape over their head and shoulders, which they pull quickly over their faces at the sight of a man. This clothing they wear day and night till it drops off. In spite of the scantiness and dirt of their dress they are covered with jewellery—long earrings hang from their ears, and their bare necks are loaded with coins strung together, while on their dirty brown arms are numbers of massive silver bracelets of beautiful old Egyptian design. Since we have been in Cairo we have seen women from villages higher up the Nile, with large silver

bracelets round their ankles like prisoners' shackles, and others with immense silver rings hanging from their noses! Their arms and hands and sometimes faces are painted with all sorts of devices, and the tips of their nails are dyed a beautiful red.

The women work in the fields, seeming to do much more than the men sometimes. At this moment there is a house building near our windows, where girls are employed in carrying great lumps of stone on their backs and heads up a sloping plank, which is used instead of a ladder to reach the top of the house. Hearing loud cries just now I went to the window, and saw one of the workmen beating a poor girl who, with a heavy load weighing her down, was afraid to mount a narrow plank which led to a higher part of the house. The man scolded and beat her, but it never seemed to occur to him to lighten the load or to give her a helping hand. He is, I fancy, an overseer; and he sleeps every night on the roof of the house enveloped in his abba, in charge of the place. For some days we took him for a bundle of clothes, but one morning we saw the bundle slowly move, and out of it appeared a man. He got up, shook himself, poured some water out of a little tin mug by his side over his hands and feet, washed his face, and then his morning toilette

was accomplished. The ablutions are not so much for cleanliness as for devotion, for by the rules of his religion, no Mussulman can pray or eat without first washing his hands and feet, and our friend's next act was to spread his cloak on the ground and prostrate himself upon it, to say his morning prayers.

All the stones employed in building this house are carried to it on the backs of camels. These creatures, owing to their great height, are always obliged to lie down to be loaded or unloaded. At a certain cry of its driver the camel drops on his fore legs, then gradually slips down on its hinder legs, and so rests patiently until its master pulls the halter round its nose, when, reversing its former motion, it rises with a sharp jerk which would throw an unprepared rider off his back. Should he find himself overloaded, instead of rising he makes a loud grunting noise, and refuses to move however much he may be beaten for his obstinacy. I have seen several contests between the driver and his camel, but the latter has always gained the day. Sometimes they are very vicious, and bite horridly. We met a long string of camels the other day, the foremost of which was showing his teeth and making a loud roaring noise. He was evidently in a great rage, and the driver warned us to get out

of the way, a warning which had no need to be repeated you may be sure.

As I have described to you the appearance and house of an Egyptian peasant woman, you may perhaps like to hear something of the home of a lady of this country, which is very different from an English one. An Italian acquaintance of ours, having offered to introduce us to the wife of a great pasha, we went together one morning to pay her a visit. The palace was situated in one of the narrowest of the streets, but when once inside the gates we found ourselves in a large airy court yard. A black eunuch ushered us into a large outer room, where we were received by slaves dressed very gaily, who passed us on to a saloon, where the lady of the house came forward to meet us. She was an oldish woman, her hair cut short like a man's, with bright cotton trowsers and a long train of the same material worn in front as well as behind, which made her waddle like a duck as she walked across the room. As she received us she pressed her hand to her heart and to her head by way of salutation, and then placed us upon a divan, sitting down by our sides with her legs tucked up under her. Near her in the place of honour there was a Turkish lady of Constantinople, who was also paying a morning visit. Though it was quite

early, she was magnificently dressed in a low green satin dress with trowsers and trains alike, and with headdress and necklace of precious stones. She was a pleasant mannered lady-like person, very different from the lady of the house, whose harsh voice and laugh, and manner of staring at us were very disagreeable. There was nothing in the room but mirrors and a long divan which surrounded it on three sides; on the floor several cushions were piled, among which lay some old women shabbily dressed in rather dirty cotton gowns. These were, I believe, less important wives of the pasha. A Mussulman may have as many wives as he pleases.

A number of slaves stood near the door ready to receive orders; some of them were very fair and pretty; all had their eyebrows painted in arches to meet over their nose, which is esteemed a beauty in this country. After we had sat some little time conversing through the interpretation of our Italian friend, coffee was brought in by a slave, in the usual small cups with gold stands set in jewels; then followed long chibouques with beautiful mouthpieces set in diamonds. These being handed tc us, we took our first lesson in smoking, as it would have been thought ill-bred to refuse the pipe. At a sign from her mistress one of the slaves disappeared, and soon returned bringing in four or

five women, who sat down in the middle of the room, and regaled our ears with the most discordant singing to the music of tambourines, violin, and guitar. We were greatly relieved when the door again opened to admit a dozen dancing girls all dressed in white silk embroidered in gold, with long hair hanging down their backs. They danced round and round the room to the sound of tambourines and castanets, which they played themselves, while a little harlequin boy danced backwards before them, imitating their movements. They distorted their bodies into all kinds of attitudes, and none of their dancing appeared graceful to me. Poor girls! it made one sad to look at them, their faces were so weary-looking and melancholy. Women here have seldom any education, and as they rarely go out of doors, their amusements are very limited. Lessons, so hated sometimes by happier little people, would be a luxury I should think to little girls here. When this entertainment was over, we willingly took our departure, as conversation carried on through a third person very soon becomes wearisome.

This letter gets on but slowly, for after sightseeing all day I find it difficult to sit down in the evening to write anything more than my daily journal. One never gets the advantage of a wet

day here for letter-writing, as rain is almost unknown in Cairo, and the winter, which lasts but a few weeks, does not begin before December. We live, therefore, in one constant blaze of sunshine, only oppressed by the flies and mosquitoes which haunt the rooms.

I could not finish my letter from Cairo without telling you something about the native Christians of Egypt, who interest one much as being the remnant of the very ancient Church of Alexandria, founded by S. Mark, and as being the few who have remained faithful to Christianity, in a land where the entire population as well as the government, have for centuries been followers of the false prophet Mahomet.

These Egyptian Christians are called Copts, some suppose from Coptos, once a great city in Upper Egypt, to which the Christians fled when persecuted by one of the Roman emperors. They speak Arabic, the language of the country, but their church services are performed in Coptic—the nearest approach there is, I believe, to the ancient language of the Egyptians. They live altogether in a separate quarter of the town, and as we passed through the heavy wooden door which shuts it off from the adjoining streets, we had an immediate proof that we were treading Christian ground. You

will think, no doubt, that we came upon a cross or some such thing. Nothing of the kind. The sight that greeted our eyes, and marked the Christian neighbourhood, was that of two large pigs, which, filling up the very narrow thoroughfare, were fair game for the repeated kicks and hard names they received from our donkey-boys. A pig is considered unclean by a Mahometan as well as by a Jew, and neither of them ever eats its flesh, or can endure the sight of the animal: it is only, therefore, among a Christian population that one ever comes across it in the East. It certainly is a curious mark of a people's religion. As we rode on through the very narrow and very dirty streets we had a pleasanter token of our being among those who hold a common faith with ourselves. Many of the women, seeing we were Europeans, called out as we passed, "Nasranee?"—"Are you Christians?" And on our nodding in assent, they smiled and made us a salute of respect.

We went on Sunday at a very early hour to see the Coptic service, which was very interesting, as many of the ancient forms and customs of the early Christian Church are retained in it. The women sit apart, and are hidden behind screens of latticed woodwork, so as to be invisible to the men, who, in Eastern fashion, squat on their heels

on the floor of the church, which is covered with mats and carpets. They do not uncover their heads in church as men do with us, but keep up the ancient custom, as old, we know, as the days of Moses, of taking off their shoes when on holy ground. This is a universal token of respect throughout the East among people of all religions. On taking his place, each man prostrates himself and kisses the ground, after which he stands all through the service, kneeling not being the custom of their Church. The service was performed by the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria, assisted by little boys, who read long portions from the Bible, first in Coptic and then in Arabic, as the people cannot understand the former language. In ancient days it was the custom at a particular part of the service for the congregation to give a kiss of peace one to the other, and this custom is still continued among the Copts. The patriarch kissed the hand of the priest, who did the same to the man nearest him, and so the kiss was passed from one to the other through the whole congregation; each person returned the salute by pressing his hand to his breast and his forehead—the common mode of salutation in the East. The patriarch seemed to be looked upon with much veneration, and on leaving the church he was almost thrown down by the crowd

of people who pressed round him to kiss his hand, or even the hem of his garment. A scene such as this, so unlike anything ever witnessed in our colder climes, seems to make one realise more clearly what one reads of the thronging multitude which followed our LORD, as He went about preaching the gospel to the poor, or healing the sick.

There is a great deal of outward religion among the un-Christian population here, for Mahometans are very strict in outward observances, saying their prayers five times a day. At the stated hours a man called a muezzin mounts the tall minaret of each mosque, and going out on its open balcony, he calls out that the hour of prayer is come. When this cry is heard, wherever he is, or whatever may be his occupation, the devout Moslem spreads his cloak on the ground, and, with his face turned towards Mecca, their sacred city, prostrates himself several times and repeats the words of his prayer. Nothing distracts him or makes him turn to the right or to the left, and it certainly is very striking to see the mason on the house-top, the labourer in the field, or the donkey-boy as he walks by one's side, stop in his employment, and without the slightest hesitation or feeling of shame, kneel down and say his prayer.

I am afraid though that there is sometimes a

great deal of mere form in their devotions. No one ever interrupts a man who is praying, or even walks before him. We were surprised therefore one day to see our donkey-boy go up and talk to a lad who, having spread his abba on the ground, was muttering his prayers with great diligence. The reason was, that the young man, not knowing the points of the compass, was kneeling with his back towards Mecca, so that his prayers would be of no avail, and he must begin them all over again!

At this very moment there is a most extraordinary religious ceremony going on under our window. It has continued for three evenings, and this I am happy to say is the last, as the horrid noise keeps one awake all night. The ceremony begins thus: a high pole, hung with coloured lamps, is fixed into the ground, round which stands a circle of dervishes (a dervish is a kind of Moslem devotee) all holding hands. A dervish in a green turban, which marks his descent from Mahomet, stands in the centre of the group and begins a swinging kind of chant, which is taken up by the rest. As they sing, they clap their hands together simultaneously, swaying their bodies backwards and forwards and bending their heads almost to the ground. Then comes the most disgusting part of

the scene—each man makes the most horrible howl, something between the bark of a dog and the cry of a wolf, and, foaming at the mouth, he nods his head incessantly, first on one side, then on the other, till one wonders their heads do not drop off. This goes on without cessation until one by one they fall exhausted on the ground. The word of their monotonous chant is merely a repetition of the word *Allah*, which means GOD. This performance, in which men seem to wish to become like wild beasts rather than anything else, is supposed to be a religious service, and by it they think they are doing honour to GOD and to some saint of their own. How melancholy it is that people should be so ignorant as to imagine that such a devotion can be pleasing to GOD.

There are other dervishes, besides these howling men, whose religious exercises are more elegant though not more edifying. These are the dancing dervishes, who mostly come from Constantinople. They perform every Friday, which is their Sunday, and last week a large party of us went to see them.

We were ushered into a room where was the sheick of the sect on a divan, as usual smoking a chibouque. He politely saluted every stranger who entered, and ordered coffee to be brought. Ali,

our dragoman who had accompanied us, took off his shoes on entering the sacred presence! When all the sight-seers had assembled, we were taken into a kind of circus, at the end of which the sheick was placed, while we strangers were outside the barrier. The dancing dervishes were dressed in white felt hats like chimney-pots, and great cloaks of bright cloth or silk, which they kept on while they marched past the sheick, to whom they made a profound obeisance as they passed. In the meantime a dervish in a gallery read aloud some verses of the Koran, which were followed by a monotonous chant to the music of reeds and drums. Then the dervishes cast off their cloaks and appeared in white cotton dresses with hoops at the bottom, like a modern steel petticoat. They folded their arms, shut their eyes, stiffened their heads, and went off in a whirling waltz. As they turned, they extended their arms quite straight like the sails of a windmill, and when they took the final spin and stopped suddenly they looked just like children playing at "making cheeses!" It lasted an hour, which was quite as long a time as our patience could hold out.

LETTER II.

Alexandria, Dec. 3.

DEAR CHILDREN,

I am very glad that my last letter met with so much approval as to make you all wish for another. You must intend me to write a very long one, if I am to answer half the questions you have put to me. Just now, however, I have plenty of spare time for talking to you, as we are waiting at Alexandria for the sailing of a steamer to take us to Jaffa. It is blowing and raining as disagreeably as it could do in England, and I see no prospect of leaving for the next two or three days, as it is useless to start in a gale of wind, when no vessel can land at Jaffa.

One of you expresses surprise that I did not mention the Nile in my last letter; another, that I said nothing about the Pyramids. It was indeed an unpardonable omission, when both were before my eyes all day, but I thought I must almost have

exhausted your patience with all I did tell you. I will endeavour now to make up for my omission, by giving you an account of the excursion we made to the Pyramids before leaving Cairo. We were there for more than three weeks before we could get near them, in consequence of the great inundations of the Nile, which still kept all the country between us and them under water. At one time, indeed, it seemed doubtful whether we should be able to reach them at all during our stay at Cairo, so slow was the water this year in subsiding; but we succeeded at last, though under difficulties.

The Nile, as you all know, overflows its banks annually; this year its waters rose to a much greater height than usual, doing much damage, washing away villages, destroying fields, and now delaying by its presence on the ground, the sowing of many of the next year's crops. The overflow of the Nile is the great event of Egypt, and is looked forward to by every one with much anxiety; should it rise too high, as it has done this year, it does as much harm as floods in England, while on the other hand, should it not rise high enough, the Egyptian farmer suffers as an English one would do from a long drought.

Though you have heard of the inundations of

this great river, and know how important it is to the country, yet perhaps you scarcely understand how the whole land is irrigated and fertilized by it. As I told you before, rain is unknown in many parts of Egypt, and the land would be sterile for want of moisture, if this were not compensated for by the regular overflow of the Nile. The rising therefore of its waters is eagerly watched, and when they have risen to a certain height, the Viceroy of Egypt goes with much state and pomp, to cut the dam of the great canal which runs through Cairo, and the adjoining country. The waters of the Nile rush into it at once, and from this great canal into smaller ones, and into trenches cut in all directions to receive them. The water is then spread over the fields in different ways; I have seen it done sometimes in a very simple manner. Two men hold a basket suspended by a rope, fastened at each end, and made tight, they first plunge the basket into the water, and bringing it back full, pour all its contents into a channel cut in the bank, along which the water flows to another part of the field. When the water has to be raised, a huge wheel called a *sakiyeh* is employed. This wheel has earthen jars fixed all round it, which are filled as they pass through the water, and empty themselves as they reach the top. One

sees these sakiyehs on all sides, and can never get the peculiar screeching noise they make, out of one's ears. There is another machine too, employed for raising water, which is a very simple affair; this is called a *shadoof*. It is a long pole balanced on a stick, with a basket at one end, and a weight at the other, a half naked man dips the basket into the river, and then throwing it up over his head, empties it into a trench above. In these different ways all the land beyond the natural overflow of the Nile is watered, while the banks and fields which are annually overflowed by the river itself, have no trouble taken with them. When the waters have subsided, they leave behind them a layer of rich brown mould, which is generally ploughed, and then sown with corn ready for harvest in the month of March. In some places though, we have seen the sower above his ankles in water, casting the seed before him, reminding one of the text in the Bible, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days." Wheat seed is never sown in this way I believe.

It was through great pieces of water left by these inundations, and through fields of brown mould, that we had to make our way to the Pyramids. We started quite early one morning on the best donkeys we could procure, and galloped to the

banks of the Nile. Do not laugh at the idea of galloping fast and pleasantly on the back of a donkey, for let me tell you that donkeys in England and Egypt are very different beasts, and an Egyptian donkey I suspect would much disdain his English cousin. He himself is a fine large creature, able to go an immense pace, and with a pleasant easy motion.

On reaching the river's edge, we dismounted, and were all ferried across to the village of Gheezeh after which the large pyramids are named. From here, we rode on through woods of tamarisk and palm trees, till we reached an open country, where all quiet enjoyment was at an end, for when we had proceeded a mile or so, a band of wild Bedoueens suddenly appeared, pressing us on all sides, and with vociferous cries in English and Arabic, proffered their help to carry us over the different pieces of water that lay between us and the pyramids. They were rough creatures, their only dress being the usual white blanket, and a short white or blue shirt, but there was no harm in them beyond their harsh voices and persevering requests for baksheesh. We soon came to a broad stream of water, too wide and deep for the donkeys to cross, nor could they stand upon the deep greasy mud, left by the subsiding water; we therefore

dismounted, and left them. Almost before we were aware of it, we each found ourselves hoisted on the shoulders of two Arabs, a most uncomfortable position, especially as the men were not matched evenly as to height, and the motion therefore was much like that felt in riding a camel. As the current was very rapid in some places, and in others, the mud was sticky and slippery, we expected every moment to be pitched on the back of our heads, or thrown forward on our noses; but by dint of imitating the Arab children who hold on by their mother's head, we kept a steady balance, and were safely landed on terra firma. This horrid ride had to be undergone four times, and each time, on putting us down, the talkative horses shrieked out, "Good Arab man carry you well, good baksheesh!" When these perils were over, there was still a long piece of soft shifting sand left to walk over; but our spirits were kept up by the sight of the great pyramids, seemingly close before us. As we approached, they seemed to diminish in size rather than increase, and it was only when quite under them that we could realize their dimensions. They stand up in the midst of a vast wilderness of sand, upon a broad plateau of rock.

As we stood beneath the great pyramid and saw the gigantic blocks of stone of which it is formed

and up which we had to climb, it required some courage to keep to our resolution of making the ascent. We had not, however, much time for hesitation, for each of the party was laid hold of by three or four of our barelegged companions; one seized the right hand, another the left, a third was ready to push us up behind, a fourth buzzed round, shrieking encouraging words, for which he too expected to receive baksheesh at the end. In this manner we proceeded till we reached the half way, where we halted to take breath, and to refresh ourselves with some cold water, brought by a little Arab boy who ran up like a cat; our tormentors took advantage of the moment's pause to encourage us for the final effort, and shrieked out "Hurrah! half way! how do you feel? good Arab man with you." This was their only stock of English, picked up from the different travellers they go with, and they certainly made the most of it, repeating it in our ears twenty times, each time at a louder pitch of their shrill voices. However, they were a great assistance in helping us up the steep stones, some of which were from three to four feet high, and we should, perhaps, never have reached the top without them; at the end of nineteen minutes we took our last step, and found ourselves safely landed at the top of the highest pyramid. It was

not half so fatiguing a climb as I expected, nor did any of us feel giddy or frightened, as some travellers have complained of doing. But then our heads and legs are well accustomed to climbing at home. The descent was the most tiring part of the business, and the visit to the inside of the pyramid the most disagreeable.

This great pyramid is said to have been built by Cheops, one of the very early kings of Egypt, who lived long before the days of Abraham, so think with what interest one looks upon it; in a room beneath, the Egyptian king's body lies buried. There are several rooms, each burial places, and after the bodies had been placed in them, large blocks of granite were fixed in the entrances to the principal passages, in such a manner as to conceal them from the curious, and to prevent their ever being opened. The efforts of the builders were, however, all useless, for these different rooms have been broken into, and where the real entrance could not be discovered, another has been made through the wall of granite. The entrance to the pyramid is about forty feet from the ground; a dark passage so low as to oblige one to creep in almost on hands and knees, takes one first to a large square room called the queen's chamber; from here we entered another passage which had so

steep and slippery an incline, that we could not have stood without the aid of the Arabs whose bare feet I think help to give such an unpleasant polish to the ground; this led to the king's chamber, a large room built of huge blocks of dark granite fitted so closely together as to appear one solid mass. I cannot describe how awfully dark it looked, with only the light of a few wax tapers; the close atmosphere of the place, together with the shouting and screaming of the fourteen or fifteen wild men who had followed us in, and who were clamouring for baksheesh, made one feel quite faint and uncomfortable. Some French people who were staying at our hotel returned from the pyramids a few days before we went there, with a long story of the manner in which they had been frightened out of all the money they had in their pockets, and we could not help fearing that our friends might play the same trick with us, but we did them injustice. We had no rudeness to complain of on their parts, rather on the contrary overattention, but still we were right glad to find ourselves breathing the fresh air again, and to sit down and rest under the shadow of the pyramids.

When we produced our provisions for luncheon the Arabs, with true Eastern courtesy, went to a little distance and turned their backs upon us

that we might eat undisturbed. Before we had finished, their sheick appeared with coffee, which he presented to us to drink out of some tiny cups, an act of hospitality not to be forgotten even in the desert. We in return offered him and his men some of our wine. They all refused it with one voice, telling us that no Arab ever touched wine or spirits, when suddenly up jumped an old man who had been sitting with them, and taking the bottle in his hands finished off the contents in a minute! The Bedoueens pressed eagerly round us, calling out "He not Arab man! No Arab man." He was a native of Cairo, and though equally bound by his religion to drink no wine or spirits, yet was evidently not so scrupulous in breaking its rules.

I don't think I have mentioned to you our nice dragoman, Ali, who came to us when we landed, and will remain with us as long as we are in the East, acting as interpreter, and providing us with tents when we travel through Syria and Palestine. He is a native of Alexandria, where his wife and family live; and as he knows we find our compulsory stay here very dull, he invited us yesterday to pay a visit to his house and to have an Eastern dinner. We gladly accepted the invitation, as we much wished to see an Eastern in his own house. On our arrival there a little black slave opened the

door and ushered us into the sitting-room—a comfortable room with a carpet and divan; here we were received by "Sitt Ali," a handsome-looking woman, magnificently dressed in a rich silk dress and yellow satin trowsers, her head, neck, and arms covered with gold ornaments. It looked very strange with this gorgeous dress to see her feet bare, for she never used the slippers which were at the door except to go up and down stairs. After we had sat a little time, two little boys, Ali's nephews entered, carrying in a low round table, or stool as we should call it, on which they placed a brass salver divided into compartments containing the various dishes. We were then summoned to take our places on the floor round the table. A napkin was handed to each of us, while one of the boys brought round a brass jug and basin, and poured water upon our hands. Then began the dinner; there were no knives or forks—a luxury unknown among the natives in the East—so each person dipped a sop of bread into one of the dishes and then ate it. If one dish was thought especially good, or if they wanted to show a special mark of honour to one of us, a piece of bread was sopped and then handed to the person chosen. We carefully watched all they did that we might not be guilty of any breach of etiquette; we dipped our

hands into the dishes as they did, and received and presented the bits of sopped bread as they did, but I am afraid we never succeeded in eating as tidily. They pull meat off a bone with their first finger and thumb in the most delicate manner possible, hardly soiling the only two fingers they use, and I suspect they would be shocked at the coarse way in which a European picks a bone. When the dinner was finished, the brass ewer and basin came round again, and water was again poured over our hands, this time not unnecessarily, as they are not accustomed to do the work of forks. Then came coffee, and had we been Egyptian ladies instead of English, pipes would have followed.

The dinner was very interesting, as illustrating so many habits mentioned in the Bible, which, though strange to us, were and still are things of every-day life among all Eastern nations. We can see now why it was thought so singular that our LORD'S disciples should eat with unwashen hands, and we can also understand more clearly our SAVIOUR'S words, "He that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish;" or "He to whom I give the sop."

We were drinking our coffee quietly, when to our astonishment, Ali's wife jumped up suddenly and ran and hid herself in a corner of the room,

while one of the little girls quickly shut the door. We wondered what was the matter, until Ali explained that his wife had heard the water-carrier coming up stairs, and her face being unveiled, she was obliged to hide, lest the man should catch a glimpse of it as he passed the door!

Ali has two little girls, but no boys, which is a great sorrow to him, as it is considered a disgrace, or at all events a great misfortune to have no sons. With us the masculine gender is considered more worthy than the feminine, but in the East the feminine is not considered worthy at all, and a girl counts for nothing. I must say though, that Ali seems very fond of his little girls, who to our eyes looked more like dressed up figures than children, as they waddled about the room with their bare feet and great full trowsers.

LETTER III.

Nazareth, Christmas Day.

NOBODY's travels are quite complete in a boy's eyes, without a shipwreck, or "almost a shipwreck;" and though, I am thankful to say, we have not been cast ashore on a floating piece of wreck, or been picked up at sea by a passing vessel, yet we have had the disagreeable excitement of such a gale of wind as prevented our getting to Jaffa, and so spending Christmas Day at Bethlehem, as we intended, and as you all believe we are doing.

I ended my last letter to you very abruptly, but the wind having abated we took our passage that evening in a Russian ship bound for Jaffa—a most unlucky proceeding on our part, as she proved herself nothing better than an old tub, and we had not left Alexandria many hours before the wind rose again furiously.

Besides ourselves there were a number of pilgrims on board, bound for Jerusalem and for Mecca. These poor people have a place railed off for them on the deck, where they lie wrapped up in their cloaks, looking like bundles of goods rather than men. They bring their own provisions with them, and are generally too closely packed ever to move from the place where they lie. Poor creatures! what miseries they must have endured during that passage, for the ship almost rolled her bulwarks into the sea from the first moment we started, and besides being tossed about from side to side they must have been drenched with the waves that broke over them.

When morning came we inquired of the stewardess what chances there were of our getting into Jaffa; she told us with the greatest composure that the sea was too high even for us to near the coast at present, and that we should not be able to land before reaching Beirut, unless, which was very improbable, the weather changed sufficiently to enable us to go into Caiffa, a little place about twelve hours beyond Jaffa. Matters, however, instead of mending, only grew worse, and we were soon carried beyond any feeling of hope or vexation, and had no thought but that of keeping firm in our berths, and looking out

for all the portmanteaus, chairs, and tables which came tumbling down upon us. What a night it was! the worst I ever encountered at sea—water poured in at the cabin from the deck above, the lamp would not keep alight a moment, and the wretched stewardess, who could speak few words in any language but Russian, would not understand any of our wants. In the middle of it all, Ali burst into our cabin dragging with him poor C., "wishing us all to die together," he said. When they were both more composed, for she was half stunned with a fall she had had on her way to our cabin, and he paralysed with fright, we discovered that the steward had run into Ali's cabin calling out to him that the vessel was going down, and we should all be lost. He instantly jumped out of his berth, sought C., and they both made this precipitate entry into our cabin. Bad as the sea was we did not believe we were in danger of our lives, and we did our best to soothe and comfort them; but from that moment to our leaving the ship Ali never left our door. For three days and nights we were tossed about in this misery, and on Wednesday morning found ourselves lying off the bay of Beirut, with the whole length of Palestine between us and our destination. Our next difficulty was the landing, for the surf

ran so high that it seemed a perilous undertaking to get into one of the clumsy native boats.

The captain advised us to remain a few hours longer on board the vessel, till the sea had gone down, but we did not wish to run the risk of delay lest it should end in our not being able to land at all. While we were doubting what to do, a man-of-war's boat with the English flag flying at its stern came alongside, and the officer in command offered with his captain's leave to take us ashore. This was a great relief, as we felt we could go through any sea in a good boat manned by English sailors, so leaving Ali to follow later with the baggage, we started, and were soon safely landed on the rocks of Beirut.

The next thing to be considered was, how were we to get to Jerusalem? We had the chance of going back free of expense by the next Russian steamer, but were told that it was very probable we might be carried back to Alexandria, so all thought of another sea passage was given up, and it was settled to go by land.

There are no such things as roads in Syria or Palestine, nor are there any inns but in the one or two large towns, so all travelling is done on horseback, and people carry their own tents and provisions with them, resting when and where they

like, provided there is plenty of water near and few robbers. I suppose one may get tired of tent-travelling, but when the life is new as it is to us, and the weather fine, it is most enjoyable. Horses, and mules, and muleteers, are engaged for the whole journey, and this is the kind of cavalcade we make:

First, the baggage mules, fine large beasts with bells round their necks; on their backs are hung the tents and canteen boxes, containing crockery, linen, and food, our portmanteaus, and the *kitchen range*, which, though only a little open iron grate about two feet long and one wide, produces excellent dinners. The muleteers keep of course with their mules, some on foot, others on excellent little donkeys bearing the provender, on which the men sit with their legs round the animals' necks. The cook and man-servant bring up the rear. Ali's place is always with us. We have tolerable horses who can go at a famous pace whenever we have a decent piece of ground to gallop over.

A very short time serves to pitch the tents when the halting place for the night is reached; when we arrive, (for we always take a good rest in the middle of the day, so as to allow the baggage to pass us) we find the tents ready for us, as well as a hot cup of coffee. They are large and comfortable, and are each furnished with a table,

stools, and an iron bedstead, besides a warm rug to put at our feet. The pole in the centre serves as our hanging press, and there are large pockets in the sides of the tent, but these Ali makes us empty when we go to bed at night, or the light-fingered gentry that abound in the villages here might find means to empty them for us from outside before morning. Opposite our tent stands the kitchen tent, in which however no cooking goes on, for our little fire is lit in the open air and the cook's work is done by the light of a Cairo lantern which is slung on a pole by his side. On the opposite side of the iron grate, on three poles piled together, hangs a headless goat containing the water, and a smaller leathern bottle. When we have finished our dinner the servants have theirs, sitting on their heels in the open air round a large dish, out of which they eat with their fingers.

E. I know will be anxious to hear what we have to eat! Well, I can tell him that, particular though he is, he would be quite contented with our fare. Our dinner has two advantages—first, it is always smoking hot, and next, it is always eaten by very hungry people. One dish never fails; a chicken—a hard lean thing it mostly is, but it seems to be a necessary part of the bill of fare. On our arrival at the place of encampment two or

three people appear with live chickens under their arms, a good deal of bargaining goes on between them and Ali, and in a minute or two, if we go too near the kitchen tent, we shall see the process of decapitation going on, for in no space of time the chickens are bought, have their heads cut off, are plucked, dipped into cold water, and are hanging up! The whole process goes on close under one's eyes. A native would eat the fresh-killed chicken immediately, as they do their meat, but Ali knowing English habits arranges differently for us, as the weather is not very hot.

At a little distance, round a blazing fire of wood, lie the muleteers wrapt up in their abbas, either fast asleep or listening to a story or song from one of their number. The horses and mules are picketed round the tents. Animals are never fastened by the head here, but are tethered by a rope round one of their feet to a stick run into the ground, and to prevent our beasts being stolen they are placed close at our heads within the ropes of the tents. This is not altogether a pleasant arrangement for us, as at midnight we are sometimes awakened by a violent shaking of the tents, as if they were coming down upon our heads, accompanied by furious braying of mules and barking of dogs. These latter come in search of what they

can pick up, and, in barking and fighting over the bones, they disturb the horses, who, to get from them or to kick at them, as the case may be, entangle themselves in the tent ropes.

These wild dogs are the pest of the country; no one owns them, no one takes any other notice of the wretched creatures than to kick or throw a stone at them. A dog is always an object of contempt to an Eastern. You may remember the expression in the Bible, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" They live in packs, each owning a particular country, and should a strange dog venture to intrude upon his neighbour's domain, he is sure to be set upon by the whole pack, hunted, chased, and killed if he cannot escape in time into his own territory. You cannot imagine how frightful the noise is during a battle between two packs, in the towns as well as in the open country, for a dog is never purposely destroyed, they are so valuable as scavengers to keep the streets pure.

Nothing is ever buried in the East, and dead camels and other creatures may be seen lying about in all directions. Were it not for the dogs and the vultures, the country would be unbearable. When the barking ceases for a time, one hears the jackals, whose wail sounds like the cry of a child; they come

quite close to the tents after dark, but I have never seen one yet.

Now you can, I think, a little understand our manner of travelling, or at least our nightly home and way of living. We have had lovely warm weather ever since we started, and enjoyed our ride along the "coasts of Tyre and Sidon" immensely. The ground is already carpeted with flowers, and we can make a beautiful nosegay of white cyclamen and the brilliant scarlet anemone, which is believed by some people to be the "lily of the field" spoken of by our SAVIOUR.

You will all quite understand how much interested we were by our first ride in the Holy Land, and how every little peculiarity or custom attracted our attention, often bringing some scene or text in the Bible to our recollection. The very traditions of the places one passes are interesting. For instance, in riding to Sidon we came upon a little sandy bay called Neby Yunus, or the bay of the prophet Jonah, said to be the spot where Jonah was cast up by the whale. The next day we stopped for rest by an ancient well cut in the rock near the town of Zarephath or Sarepta; as we sat there under the scorching eastern sun, it was very easy to fancy a drought in the land, and to picture to ourselves the poor thirsty prophet Elijah craving a drop of

water of the poor peasant woman after his long walk across the hills from the Jordan; nor did it require much imagination to see in any of the peasants we passed, an Elisha ploughing. The dress of the ploughman, and the plough he uses, are little changed, I should think, since those days, for the peasant still ploughs the land in a turban and flowing robe of many colours, or with a mantle over his shoulders, driving a team of oxen yoked together. These he urges on with a goad, a long flat stick with an iron head, which he holds tight against the ploughshare, and sometimes uses to scrape it when too much clogged with earth.

It was probably with a goad like this that Shamgar, the judge of Israel, slew the six hundred Philistines.

The plough itself is nothing more than two bits of rough wood tied together, with a share sometimes of wood, sometimes of iron, and is so small that one constantly sees a man carrying it over his shoulder.

Our second night's encampment after leaving Beirut was near Sûr, the Arabic name for the modern town of Tyre. I dare say you know there were two cities called Tyre of which we read in the Bible, both famous for their wealth and commerce,

and equally notorious for their pride, which GOD humbled in both cases. The first Tyre, afterwards known as old Tyre, or Palæ-Tyrus, was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar; the second, which was built by the inhabitants of the old city, became even more famous than its predecessor, but it too was destroyed in its turn by Alexander the Great. The prophet Ezekiel prophesied that GOD would humble the proud city, and make her who was then the queen of the seas "like the top of a rock, a place for the spreading of nets." And his words seem literally fulfilled, for the only remains of her former glory now to be seen, are broken columns of marble fallen among the rocks or lying in the sea, and the chief occupation of the inhabitants seems to be fishing, the whole beach being covered with their nets.

We spent more time than we calculated on in wandering about the streets, and looking at the little there was to see, so that evening came on before we left to join our tents, which had been sent forward some little distance. We galloped fast along the sandy beach, purchasing some fish as we went, but twilight is short in these countries, and before we were aware night came upon us. On arriving at the place where we expected to find our tents they were nowhere to be seen. It was

pitch dark, and the ground was rough and full of holes, which made the wandering about on horseback unpleasant; we shouted, and strained our eyes to find the white spots in the darkness; but all our efforts were vain, and we had begun to fear that we should have to spend the night on horseback, when the pleasant sound of mule bells caught our ears, and guided by it, we at length discovered the lost tents pitched in a hollow near the sea, where we should certainly never have found them but for the bells. The muleteers had lost their way, which accounted for their non-appearance in the appointed place.

The bay of Tyre is shut in by a promontory called the Tyrian ladder, and over this we had to ride in order to reach the adjoining plain of Acre. It was apparently nothing but a headland of rocks without any track, but in these countries one learns to consider as a road any place upon which a horse can stand, and such a road was this. It was nothing more nor less than a scramble over rocks, at one time terribly steep and sharp-pointed, at another assuming the form of broad flat slabs, the most dangerous of all.

The only thing to do under such circumstances is to slacken the rein and let the animals choose their own path, which they always do with great caution

and judgment. They sometimes take one uncomfortably near the edge of a precipice, but if one trusts to their own instinct for taking care of themselves, they rarely fall or make a false step.

As we ascended what may well be called "the ladder" we met about a hundred and fifty mounted Arabs, dressed in the wildest-looking costumes; each man had a musket slung over his shoulder and a long lance in his hand, and all wore over their heads a kefiyeh or coloured handkerchief, generally striped red and yellow, bound across their foreheads by a camel's-hair cord. These men were the troops of an Arab chief of some note, called Agheel Agha, who has lately been in rebellion against the government. He has great influence over all the neighbouring tribes, and with their help could make a good stand against the Turks, to whom this country belongs. He and the government have just now come to terms, and the soldiers we met were an advance guard preceding him to Beirut, where he and the pasha are to agree upon the terms of peace. The Turks wished to induce Agheel to enter Jerusalem and there arrange matters, but he has little faith in Turkish honour, and will not trust himself within a walled city. He seems much beloved by the Arabs, and according to all accounts

keeps the country under his control in much better order than any of the Turkish governors.

From the Tyrian ladder we reached, by a precipitous descent, the plain of Acre, or Akka, where we found a more fertile country. We came upon large groves of orange trees, the blossoms of which scented the whole air; they were enclosed by impenetrable hedges of prickly pear, a kind of cactus bearing a red fruit which, when you are able to extract it from its prickly covering, tastes something like a water melon. It must be cool and refreshing on a hot day. As some of the party were unwell it was agreed that we should rest a day in the neighbourhood of Acre, and we encamped close to a beautiful garden and house called the Bahjeh, which belongs to a Syrian family, to whom we had letters of introduction; but we were awaked in the night by a violent gale of wind which threatened to blow our tents over our heads, and when morning came we saw there was nothing to be done but to start at once, hoping to reach this hospitable convent at Nazareth, before the rain set in. The plain of Acre that was so bright when the sun shone full upon the many-coloured flowers growing over its surface, now looked dreary enough under a piercing cold wind with heavy clouds curtained round, and we were destined to see it longer

than we wished. The baggage mules started a little ahead of us, and on our coming up with them some time after, we found them in the middle of a deep bog from which there seemed no outlet; whether we looked to the right or the left or on ahead it was all alike—there was nothing but water and bog, bog and water. In the deepest part the poor heavily laden mules were plunging about, and sinking deeper and deeper under the efforts they made to extricate themselves. At last one went down and disappeared under the tents which were on his back, then a second, then a third. It was quite touching to see Ali's face of despair, as well as those of the muleteers, who feared that at least they should lose one of their mules, so completely had he sunk into the bog. I am thankful to say that no such misfortune occurred, for after a great deal of time and exertion, the poor frightened animals having been relieved of their loads, were extricated without much damage, but not so the poor tents, which in spite of their coverings reappeared with a coating of black mud. Ali galloped about in search of an outlet from our uncomfortable position, and at last laid hold of a peasant who undertook to show us a road with a firm bottom. This he did for a little while, but we soon arrived at a morass

worse than the last, when he shook his head and left us to our fate! We wandered about for a couple of hours, and at last met some horsemen who told us that though we and our horses might get across the plain, that part was impassable for baggage mules now. So we turned round again towards Acre, meaning to make our way to the little village of Haiffa, and continue our route by the coast. Fortunately, however, we met a string of camels proceeding to Nazareth, and the driver guided us to a cross-road with a hard bottom, along which we went without further mishap, but the delay prevented our extending our journey beyond the little village of Scheffer Amer.

The ride on to Nazareth through the interior of Galilee was very pretty, and the rich ploughed land and hill sides covered with oak and other European trees, made one almost fancy oneself in some part of England. On the summit of one of the hills is the old ruined castle of Sefurieh, which stood a long siege from the Romans in the days of Titus; and a few miles to the north of it was pointed out to us the site of Kana el Jelil, one of two villages that dispute the right to be regarded as the Cana of Galilee where our LORD performed His first miracle. The other village, called Kefr Kenna, is on the

road to Tiberias; but our own opinion led us to look upon this as the scene of our LORD's miracle. Its Arabic name, which signifies Cana of Galilee, is a proof in its favour.

From Sefurieh we crossed hill after hill, and as we rode on we loved to think of Him Whose holy feet had probably often climbed those very hill sides, where, then as now, grew the flowers from which in after years He drew so many beautiful images when discoursing to the multitudes who came to hear His words. The thought of the thirty years He spent in these scenes gave an indescribable interest to everything we looked upon, and one can never forget the feelings with which, upon rounding a hill, we looked for the first time upon the little town of Nazareth. There it lay—its white houses nestling in the bosom of a beautiful valley enclosed by encircling hills.

None of us were inclined to speak; we rode on rapidly with full hearts, and as we entered the town passed a fine old fountain thronged by picturesque women and children, filling their pitchers with water and bearing them away on their heads. One could not help thinking that perhaps to this very fountain, which is the principal one of Nazareth, the Child JESUS came with His mother every morning and evening, to help her draw water

and carry it home, as one sees the children doing at this very time.

Do not think, dear children, that to talk and think thus of our SAVIOUR is in any way irreverent, rather I hope is it quite the contrary. Of the thirty years He spent at Nazareth, with the exception of the one visit to Jerusalem at twelve years old, the only thing recorded in the Bible is, that "He was subject to His parents." In that one sentence is comprised all we know of His childhood, but by it, we seem to learn that He was taught and trained, that He toiled and bore the discipline of restraint like all other children. We know that in His after life, GOD though He was, He had our human feelings—hungered and thirsted, suffered pain and sorrow like an ordinary man. He must therefore in His childhood have felt like any other child; work and restraint must have been as irksome to His human nature as to ours, but He "was subject to," that is, was obedient to His parents. He is as much our example in His childhood as in His manhood, and that one mention of His child-life was no doubt made to teach all future children that obedience is their highest duty. At those moments then, when submission seems hard, and you are inclined to rebel, it may be a help to you to think of that One who, though

GOD, took upon Himself the form of a child, bore patiently all you have to bear, and can enter still into all your trials and troubles.

One cannot spend a Christmas Day at Nazareth without thinking a great deal of our Blessed SAVIOUR'S early years, for here is shown the site of the house where the Holy Family lived, and there is pointed out the site of Joseph's workshop; and whether one believes the actual tradition or not, they seem to make one realise more completely the scenes of His early life.

Last night we attended the Latin midnight Christmas service, our first public Christian service in the Holy Land. The church was thronged with worshippers, all kneeling and sitting on the ground, for no such thing as a chair or seat is ever seen in a church in this country. The women, who all wore white eezars over their heads, sat by themselves, but there was no division between them and the men as in the Coptic churches. The whole congregation was most devout, and joined more heartily in the responses than many a one in Europe. The men took off their shoes, but kept their heads covered, except in the most solemn part of the service, when they took off their turbans, merely keeping on a little skull-cap. The costumes here are very pretty, and we see them

to great advantage at this season, as many of the villagers from some little distance are in the town to-day, all dressed in their Sunday best. The men wear turbans of every colour, with striped black and white abbas thrown across one shoulder, while the more dandy have the red tarboosh, with green, or blue, or crimson jackets, and white trowsers. The boys are dressed in coats of many colours woven together, and we seem to understand now what the coat was like which Jacob gave to Joseph. The women, who are famed for their beauty, wear open bodices which show their bare necks covered with chains and coins, while their headdress is in the shape of a half-moon, and is covered with silver coins sewn together as close as possible. They wear the veil, as I said just now, but all the Nazarenes being Christians, frequently pull it back, and have no scruple in showing their handsome but rather bold faces.

We start to-morrow for Jerusalem, and as we shall have no opportunity of posting this letter till we get there, I shall be able to let you know of our safe arrival.

Jerusalem, Dec. 30.

Here we are, I am thankful to say, safe in Jerusalem; we arrived yesterday afternoon, quite numbed and stupified with the cold, but still so rejoiced that the object of our journey was accomplished, and that we actually were at last within the walls of this Holy City. The rain comes down in torrents, for we are now in the season of the "early rain," and there is no prospect of moving out of the house to-day, so that I shall be able to add a little to my letter before sending it off by to-morrow's mail.

We left Nazareth as we intended on the morning after Christmas Day, though there was much discussion as to its being prudent, for the rain began to fall in heavy drops and the clouds were hanging all round. Ali looked very gloomy, and evidently considered that if a lady got a thorough wetting she must die of fever, but notwithstanding his solemn face we made a start, well wrapped up in waterproof cloaks, and descended gradually by a rocky path into the famous Plain of Jezreel. This plain is about fifteen or sixteen miles wide in its broadest part, and has scarcely a hill to break its level surface. At one of its extremities stands

Mount Tabor, at the other is Mount Gilboa, not a single mountain like Tabor, but a long range joining the hills of Samaria. Between these two is another mountain called the Little Hermon, and between it and Mount Tabor the plain passes into a wide open country stretching down to the valley of the Jordan. Here was fought the battle between Barak and Sisera which delivered the Israelites out of the hands of Jabin king of the Canaanites. Here, too, took place that other great battle in which the hosts of Israel fled before the Philistines to Mount Gilboa, where Saul and Jonathan were slain. This plain was in fact the great battle field of Israel. On our way we passed the remains of the once famous city of Jezreel, now a little hamlet composed of the dirtiest Arabs' houses; below the town is the site of Naboth's vineyard. To the west lies Mount Carmel, from which Ahab drove in such haste at Elijah's bidding, lest the coming rain should hinder his journey to Jezreel. Perhaps then as now heavy rain converted the roads of this soft plain into an almost impassable mire. The curse that fell on Ahab and his house seems to remain on Jezreel, and its few inhabitants have such a bad reputation that we did not remain there long, but hurried on to the pretty town of Jenin, surrounded by orange

groves with here and there a graceful palm tree. Our tents were soon surrounded by a crowd of people who are nearly as great thieves as their neighbours at Jezreel, and it was necessary therefore to apply to the governor for a guard; these men are not more honest than the rest of the population, and if they are not employed in this capacity have no scruple in laying their hands on anything they can, but unless one pays the tax of the guard one can get no redress from the governor should anything be stolen. We did, however, lose one of our donkeys. We had been much amused all the way from Beirut by the songs of one of the muleteers, which went on incessantly, and were compositions of his own invented as he rode along. To our surprise they all ceased between Jenin and Jerusalem, and on asking the reason we found the poor fellow's donkey had been stolen from him, and he had no spirits to sing any more. The governor at Jenin would not give him any redress, as he had not given in the number of animals we had with us on our arrival.

We had a wretched ride across the hills of Samaria, for the rain came down in torrents, and the roads here almost entirely prevent anything like fast riding. We had an addition to our party on leaving Nazareth—a young Syrian who

had charge of a little orphan girl as far as Jerusalem, was glad to avail himself of our escort in this unsettled country. Poor little thing! she was about four or five years old, and was put behind astride on the horse, being tied by the waist to the man, so that she could not tumble off. She rode like this all day long, for he never untied her, but twisted himself round in some funny way when he wanted to feed her or give her water to drink. When the rain came on he threw his thick abba over himself and her, when I hope sleep made her forget her discomforts. We lost sight of them in the evening, for the weather was so bad that we resolved to forsake our tents and endeavour to get lodgings in the town of Nablouse, which was our sleeping place.

Nablouse is the ancient Sichem or Sychar, where Abraham came on his arrival into the land which GOD had promised to give him, and it was to this valley, too, that Jacob came afterwards and bought a parcel of ground from Hamor, the father of Shechem, and digged a well which he left at his death to his son Joseph. In this same piece of ground, years afterwards, Joseph's bones were buried. The town lies in a well-watered valley between the mountains of Blessing and Cursing—Gerizim and Ebal. Its modern name of Nablouse

comes from "Neapolis," the new city, as it was called by the Romans when it was rebuilt by the Emperor Vespasian after his wars in Palestine. It is an important town, though wretched enough to our ideas. The little narrow streets are many of them vaulted over, with a channel in the centre, through which, the day we were there, the water rushed in a torrent nearly a foot deep.

Ali soon found a place for us to sleep in—the house of the Samaritan chief Shellaby, who having been in England for two years, seemed to have much pleasure in receiving English travellers. There are only a remnant of Samaritans now left, and this is one of the very few if not the only town where they still exist.

They are about a hundred and fifty in number, and are never allowed to marry except among themselves. The young men cannot, therefore, always get wives, and at this moment Shellaby told us there were ten young men waiting till some young ladies grew up! They hate the Jews as much now as they did two thousand years ago, and hold no intercourse with them. The only part of the Old Testament which they receive as true, is the Pentateuch or the five Books of Moses, and they consider that their own mountain—the mount Gerizim, is the true Moriah, where Isaac was

offered up, and every year at the feast of the Passover they ascend this mountain, and on its summit sacrifice seven lambs on an altar of twelve rough stones, and there eat the flesh.

Before we left Nablouse we paid a visit to their synagogue, situated in a dirty court-yard in the midst of narrow lanes, where one little expected to find a splendid orange tree laden with fruit. The synagogue itself is merely a low vaulted room about six hundred years old. The congregation had left just before we entered, and the floor was covered with the white cloaks which they throw over them during the service; at one end of the room was a raised platform, where sat the high priest, a fine white-bearded old man. We were obliged to take off our shoes on entering, and to walk bare-footed to the place where he sat. After the usual civilities had passed between us he brought out from behind a curtain their Roll, containing the five Books of Moses. It was enclosed in a handsome old brass case, and as he unfolded it the high priest begged us to observe that it was written in what he called "Moses' writing," by which he meant the old Hebrew character. This roll they told us was more than three thousand years old, and is said to have been written by Abishua, the great-grandson of Aaron. The really

very old roll is, however, rarely shown to strangers, and we knew we were not among the favoured few. The priesthood descends from father to son, and the old Rabbi showed us with pride the future high priest, a fat child of some months old. He pressed us to take coffee with his wife, but as the place was none of the cleanest, we declined the honour and returned home.

Shellaby's house was very curious, and the room given up to us to sleep in, very pretty, from the quantity of old wood-work about it. It had a long divan at one end, where our tent mattresses were placed, and we lay down to sleep. Before long, however, we simultaneously jumped up and lit our candles. What a sight met our eyes!—the walls, the bed, were quite alive with the unclean insect world. It is too horrid to talk about, and I can only say that there was no more sleep for us that night, nor was there any place but the stone floor on which we ventured to sit. I shall never forget the face of horror of poor Girgis, our Beirut servant, when the next morning he was called upon to empty the basin of water which had been brought into requisition for our wholesale slaughter. Truly Eastern travelling has some little drawbacks.

Our road the next morning led us in the direction of Jacob's well, which is at the opening of the

Valley of Shechem. Along the road we were about to take, our SAVIOUR must have travelled when going between Jerusalem and Galilee, for "He must needs go through Samaria." Through all these hills and valleys He must have passed on His errands of love and mercy; and here, being weary with one of those journeys, He sat down on the well of Jacob, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. There is happily no possible doubt as to the identity of this well. On the very spot where we stood, He once stood and offered the Water of Life to the poor Samaritan woman. The well is now almost entirely filled up with rubbish, and very sad it is that a spot so venerated by every Christian should be thus neglected. Joseph's tomb is some hundred yards further on, and is covered by a little white dome, as it is also venerated by the Moslems, who look upon Joseph as one of their own saints.

The ride, during the next two days, to Jerusalem, was very trying. The cold was so intense, and the wind so high that we scarcely knew how to keep our seats on our saddles, and when we arrived after a weary stony ride of several hours at Beitin, it blew so frightfully that we hardly thought our tents would stand. However, they were lashed down on all sides, and we were not blown away,

though the howling of the wind and the intense cold prevented anything like sleep.

Beitin, dreary as it is, is one of the most interesting places in Palestine, having very many associations connected with it. It was the Bethel, the house of GOD where Jacob saw the vision of the ladder which reached from earth to heaven, and where he built an altar to the LORD, which afterwards gave its name to the place. It is a barren spot, with nothing to be seen but crops of stones, and one is easily reminded how Jacob here made a stone his pillow. It was at Bethel, too, you may remember, that Jeroboam set up a golden calf.

We had now left Samaria for Judæa, and the change in the appearance of the country was very great. There were no more trees or streams, but a sterile country with patches of ploughed land here and there amidst rounded limestone hills, in this winter season looking like a land of stones. It is difficult for any one who has not travelled in the country, to realise how lonely and desolate this part of it is. As far as we could see on every side there was no sign of a human habitation. Such a thing as a house standing apart by itself is never seen in Palestine; the country is too insecure for any one to dwell alone safely, and the peasants cluster together in villages, which are almost always

perched on the top of a hill, so that they can overlook the country below. When they leave home in the morning to take their flocks to pasture, or to cultivate their little patches of ground, they are all armed, and every peasant you meet has his brass-mounted gun slung over his back. It is a miserable state of things, and the nearer one approaches Jerusalem the worse it is, and the more unsafe the country becomes.

Oh! what a wearisome painful ride it was through that stony country—some of our horses had sore backs, and were I suspect like ourselves half frozen, so that we got but slowly over the bad ground. At length, however, we reached the hill called Scopus, that hill upon which Titus was encamped at the siege of Jerusalem; a few steps more, and the first view of Jerusalem burst upon us! We could scarcely believe we were really within sight of Jerusalem, and it seemed as if it must be a dream, but there it lay before us a living reality.

"Thank GOD!" exclaimed Ali, as he gazed upon the long-desired end of our journey. "Thank GOD!" we re-echoed. He was thankful that he had brought us safely through the perils of a winter journey—we, that we were permitted to look upon the "holy hills which stand round about Jerusalem,"

and to dwell within her gates. Cold and shivering though we were, it was impossible not to feel one's heart overflow with gratitude. None that have not looked upon it can, I think, understand what one feels at the first sight of Jerusalem.

running, all the population, ourselves included, hastened out to see it. The sun had come out after a heavy morning's rain, and it looked extremely pretty to see the people turned out in their Sunday best; the men with their horses were lounging under the olive trees by the side of the stream, while the women, hidden behind their veils, chattered away together, and the little children were dabbling in the fresh running water.

The Garden of Gethsemane lies on the opposite side of the brook to Jerusalem, at the foot of the Mount of Olives, and is now enclosed by a stone wall to preserve the few remaining very old trees from the pilgrims, who were fast destroying them by cutting off branches for relics. Perhaps you will want to know whether these trees are supposed to be the identical trees that existed in the time of our SAVIOUR. One can hardly venture to say this, but olive trees do live to a remarkably old age, and will it is said last for two thousand years; and certainly the trees in the Garden of Gethsemane look older than any others I have ever seen. At all events there can be no doubt that our blessed LORD looked upon the place where they now grow, and walked frequently over that garden. By garden you must not understand the word as we use it, for in the East a garden only means an en-

closure with trees, answering more to our word orchard.

Where the Valley of Jehoshaphat ceases, another valley called Hinnom or Gehenna begins, and goes round to the west, so that Jerusalem is surrounded on three sides by a deep valley. It was this very strong position that made her always so important a fortress, and enabled her to withstand her enemies for so long whenever she was attacked.

There is a curious feature in the exterior of Jerusalem of which I must not forget to tell you, as nowhere else in the world does one see it in the same degree. This is the number of tombs that surround it on all sides; turn to the north or the south, the east or the west, tombs of some kind meet the eye everywhere. They are either ancient ones hewn in the rock, or modern graves dug in the ground, belonging to Christian, Jew, and Moslem—for to all of them Jerusalem is a sacred city, and many a man belonging to each of these religions comes here merely to die. This is especially the case with the Jews, and I have been told that these words are often inscribed on the passport of a Jew coming here, "*In order to die at Jerusalem.*" Their burial ground is in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and one always may see three or

four graves ready dug, waiting for their occupants, for in these hot countries funerals take place almost immediately after death.

The most picturesque of all the tombs are four large ones in the Valley of the Kedron; one of these is called the Tomb of Absalom, and is supposed to be the pillar that he reared in his lifetime to perpetuate his memory. This is a mere tradition, it being of a much more modern date, but the Jews believe its authenticity, and every Jew as he passes casts a stone at it to mark his horror of the disobedient son.

The two greatest objects of interest to the traveller within the walls, are the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built over our Blessed LORD's tomb, and the Mosque of Omar, which stands on the site of the ancient Temple. Till within the last few years, no Christian was allowed to put his foot inside this Mosque, but now, with an order from a consul and by paying a large baksheesh, there is no difficulty in going over every part. Our first visit was paid with the French consul, who walked us off to see it very early one morning.

The streets of Jerusalem are quite narrow and miserably paved, many of them indeed are only flights of slippery steps; driving is therefore out of the question anywhere, and riding is so un-

pleasant and dangerous, that the inhabitants of the town mostly walk within the walls, and the Bedoueens from distant parts who come here to buy food and powder, leave their horses outside, fastening their fore legs by a rope to an iron peg driven in the ground.

"Granny" finds it impossible to walk over the uneven slippery stones, and prefers trusting to any legs rather than her own. She has therefore hired a donkey which carries her safely, but all the rest of the party walk, whoever they may be. Whenever a consul does us the honour of taking us anywhere, we are preceded by one or more Kawasses, who are smartly dressed men acting as servants and guards. They march in front carrying long silver-headed sticks, which they thump violently against the ground as they walk along, to inform every one of the approach of their master. The luckless creature who does not clear out of the road fast enough is seized by the collar and thrown contemptuously out of the way, or violently poked with the thick silver stick.

It was in this manner, preceded by four splendid kawasses, that we walked to see the Mosque of Omar; and as their heavy sticks went *bump*, *bump*, upon the ground, each person we passed drew himself up against the wall, hid his feet

under his long dress, and made a low obeisance to the consul. At length we reached a great gateway, and passing through we stood within the sacred boundary of the "Haram," or Holy Place, a grass enclosure planted with cypress trees, in the centre of which stands the Mosque, the chief glory of Jerusalem in the eyes of all Mussulmans.

Here we were on Mount Moriah, where Abraham offered up Isaac, and where, centuries after, Solomon built his glorious Temple.

The Mosque is built on a broad platform ascended by marble steps, where we were made to exchange our boots for bright yellow slippers which had never trodden common ground, and thus shod we entered. The great object of interest is a huge block of the natural rock left visible under the dome, and supposed to be the place where the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite stood. This rock is pierced by a hole which communicates with a cave at a great depth below, and is by some people thought to have been a well belonging to the threshing-floor to provide water for the threshers—a necessity in this hot country. It would not interest you were I to describe all the different buildings in the Haram, or all the different ideas people have about them, I will therefore carry you at once to one of its outer walls, known by the

name of the Jews' Wailing Place. The lower part of this wall is built of enormous stones, chiselled in a manner always found in old Jewish masonry, called bevelling. Some of them are twenty-four feet long, and are built upon the foundation rock. They were probably hewn in the days of Solomon, and the Jews look upon them with the greatest veneration as all that is left of their once glorious Temple. No Jew is ever permitted to put his foot within the enclosure of the Haram, but after paying a heavy tax they are allowed to stand by the outside of this wall, and here they come in crowds every Friday, to bewail the fate of Jerusalem with tears and sobs.

The women, as you may imagine, are the most touching to see. Tears stream down their cheeks as they stoop forward to kiss the sacred stones, and those who from the crowd cannot reach the wall with their lips press their hands against it, and then reverently kiss the tips of their fingers. The men sway their bodies backwards and forwards and from side to side, and groaning and moaning repeat some of the Psalms or the Prophecies in Hebrew. It is altogether a very sad sight, and one almost feels ashamed to gaze at them from mere feelings of curiosity.

Underneath a part of the city there are large quarries, from which the great stones of the Temple were hewn. The entrance to them is by a mere hole under the walls, and when one is inside one is quite surprised at the immense size of the caverns. In several places there are the marks of the masons' chisels, and the niches out of which the huge blocks were hewn. It is supposed there was a subterraneous passage from here to the Temple, and that all the mason's work was done in these quarries; the stones being then placed on rollers and conveyed to the appointed place in the building. You may remember reading in the Bible that the House was formed of stone, made ready before it was brought there, so that no sound of hammer or axe or any tool of iron should be heard in it.

Outside the north wall of the Haram, there is a deep pit now filled with rubbish, which tradition says is the Pool of Bethesda. From here, along a road called the Via Dolorosa, or the Way of Sorrows, you proceed to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. You will guess that this street bears this name from a tradition that it was along it our SAVIOUR bore His Cross, from the judgment seat of Pilate to Mount Calvary.

Uneducated pilgrims, happily for them, have no

doubt whatever about any tradition as to sites, and believe all they are told, which I often think must greatly increase their pleasure in Jerusalem. As they walk along this road, one sees them stopping in crowds to cross themselves and to offer up a prayer at different spots, till they reach the Holy Sepulchre.

The church that is built over our LORD's Tomb, stands in an open piazza, where a number of native Christians sit selling crosses, carved shells, and other curiosities to the pilgrims. The place is thronged all day long with buyers and sellers, and the ground is strewn with things for sale, while bargaining goes on even up to the very church door. As one enters, the first thing that strikes the eye painfully, is the sight of Turkish door-keepers sitting on a dirty-looking divan, smoking and drinking coffee. These men have charge of the church, at least it is their business to lock and unlock the only door it possesses; when the hour arrives for them to go home at night, they go round the church, and whether a service is going on or not, turn out every one who does not wish to pass the night there. It sometimes happens that they want to go away on some business of their own during the afternoon, when they leave without scruple, taking the precaution to lock the church door after them.

The hour for service arrives, and one sees several persons outside anxious to get in, but desire it as they may, there is no chance for them till it pleases the door-keeper to return from his gossip in the café, unless indeed it happens that some one more important than a common pilgrim is among the waiting crowd, when some idler runs to inform him, and at the prospect of baksheesh he hurries to the spot. A certain number of monks belonging to the Latin and several Eastern Churches, live in cells inside the church, and services are going on in different parts of the building nearly all day and night. They very often take place at the same time, and painful as it is to one's ears, there is something very delightful in hearing the voices of men of all nations and creeds lifted up together on the spot where our Blessed LORD went down to the grave for us all, and to feel that prayer never ceases there day nor night. Great numbers of pilgrims pass the whole night in the church, many of them remaining on their knees in private prayer till their own service begins.

We spent one night there last week, and were very much struck by the singing of the Russian pilgrims, who, to pass the time before their public service, congregated in numbers before the Holy Sepulchre, and only led by one of their own

number, sang hymn after hymn in parts by heart. It was quite beautiful, and was the more striking here, as no Eastern has the slightest idea of music, and all sing through the nose, which they consider is the correct thing.

Now I must describe to you the one part of the church that all the world cares to see, and that most of the world looks at with reverence and awe, believing it to be actually the Holy Sepulchre of our SAVIOUR.

It stands under the great cupola of the church, in a little chapel, the entrance to which is so low that one must bow one's head to enter, as indeed one must do in going into any ancient Jewish tomb. The tomb on which the sacred body of our Blessed LORD was laid, was a broad slab of rock, a form still to be found among some of the ancient tombs of Jerusalem. It is now encased in marble, as some covering was necessary to preserve the spot from the depredations of revering pilgrims, who otherwise would destroy the sacred rock by bearing away portions of it for relics. The marble itself is worn uneven by the kisses and tears of the thousands and thousands of pilgrims who year after year flock to the Holy Sepulchre from all parts of the world. Night and day you may see people of all ranks and all nations, prostrating themselves

before it in deep humiliation and earnest prayer. Over the tomb hangs a row of silver lamps, the light of which is never allowed to go out; they are the offerings of some of the richer pilgrims, but what are more touching still, are the bouquets of fresh-gathered flowers which always adorn it—all that the poorer pilgrims have to offer, and which they heap upon the tomb in rich profusion. The sight of their great earnestness and childlike faith, makes one feel ashamed of oneself in comparison, and strikes even those who doubt as to this being the true Sepulchre. "I would give all I possess in the world to feel on this spot as these pilgrims do," said a Scotch minister to us the other day, and I am sure he felt what he said, for to make up for his want of belief, he used all the outward respect he could, and taking off his shoes, entered the Holy Sepulchre bare-footed.

Before I finish my letter I must tell you about our visit to Bethlehem, where we spent the Feast of the Epiphany. The kalendar of the Greek Church is not the same as ours, and it therefore happened that this was their Christmas Day, and the place was filled to overflowing, with pilgrims from all parts, some to keep the Epiphany, others the Christmas. The greater number of Eastern Christians belong either to the Greek Church or to the

Armenian, a smaller number to the Latin, or as we say Roman Church, and some few are Protestants.

Bethlehem is only distant an hour's ride from Jerusalem, along the plain, or as it is called in the Bible, the Valley of Rephaim, where so many of the battles between David and the Philistines were fought: midway is the tomb of Rachel. What a picture I could describe for one of your "Bible Scenes" if I were at home with you now. How easy it is here to realise Jacob's wearisome journey from Bethel, with his large caravan and his poor sick wife pressing on to reach the end of her journey, for "there was but a little way to come to Ephrath." All in vain, she could travel no further, and here, within sight of Bethlehem or Ephrath, she stopped and died, and her poor heart-broken husband buried her on the spot and placed a pillar to her memory. The pillar is gone now, but the place has been remembered throughout all ages, and over it stands a little wely or Moslem tomb. A step or two further, and there lies the little town of Bethlehem, overhanging a broad valley, in the fields of which Ruth went forth to glean, while further on to the east, are those other fields where the shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks on that Christmas eve when the angel brought them the message of "Good tidings of great joy to all people."

We rode through olive gardens and vineyards till a narrow pathway led us into the town, and passing through its crowded streets, we reached an open square where stands the Convent and Church of the Nativity. The square was filled with townspeople and pilgrims, and we were quickly surrounded by a crowd of Bethlehem boys, who to our unaccustomed eyes looked very smart in scarlet dresses, the costume of the place. We had got a letter of introduction to the superior of the convent, that we might be taken in for a night's lodging, so we knocked at the great wooden door for admission, and after showing our letter were admitted by a very surly monk, who said he would see whether there were any spare beds. He appeared rather put out at a large party arriving so late without notice, but after a little delay, he ushered us ladies into a large long cell containing five beds, while the gentlemen were carried off to another part of the building. In a short time another and much more courteous monk made his appearance; he was an Englishman, and was delighted to welcome any fellow-countrymen, and to show them everything. As it was the hour for dinner, we, in company with all the Latin pilgrims, were entertained with a frugal repast of maccaroni soup, cold fish, and some Bethlehem wine made by the monks

themselves, and not of the most tempting description. Our appetites being soon satisfied, we went straight to the church, which was built in the fourth century by the Empress Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great, to commemorate the spot of our LORD'S birth. Though it was long before the hour of service, both the church and the grotto below, which marks the place of the Nativity, were filled to suffocation with pilgrims come to keep their Christmas feast. Some of them were saying their prayers, others, entirely wrapped up in their thick abbas, were lying asleep in different corners of the church, till their companions should wake them in time for the midnight mass. This may strike you as very extraordinary in a church, but it is not thought irreverent here, and you must remember that these people are all strangers who have travelled perhaps thousands of miles to make their pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and during their stay in the Holy City their whole life is given up to religious services, and the church is as it were a home for them. Every morning at break of day hundreds of them go down to a little chapel near Gethsemane, while others, as I told you, spend the night in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. These pilgrims come chiefly from Russia, Greece, the Levant, and

different parts of Asia Minor. They save up a certain sum of money for the pilgrimage, and on their arrival at Jaffa, where most of them land, they deposit the price of their return-fare with their respective consuls; all the rest of their savings are spent in Jerusalem in paying for their living, and in buying relics to take home to their friends. Each convent has a hospice for its own people, where they board and lodge gratis for seven days. After this period the pilgrim may remain on in the hospice, but he must pay something to the convent for his lodging, and has to provide his own food.

But to return to the Church at Bethlehem. It was brilliantly lighted in the usual Eastern fashion by coloured oil lamps set in silver, suspended from the roof by strings of large ostrich eggs. A flight of steps led from one of the chapels down to the grotto, believed to be the very spot where our Blessed LORD was born, and over which the church was built. One wishes that it had been left in its rough state, showing the natural rock, but it is entirely lined with marble, and looks like any other little chapel. Still, what Christian can stand there, where GOD took upon Himself our human nature, without the deepest feelings of awe and reverence? We could only wish that

our first visit had been made in silence and solitude.

Like the church, the grotto was this evening brilliantly lighted by numbers of silver lamps, some of which are never suffered to go out. At the east end is the place where our SAVIOUR is believed to have been born, upon which this inscription is written, HIC DE VIRGINE MARIA JESUS CHRISTUS NATUS EST: "Here JESUS CHRIST was born of the Virgin Mary." Within a short distance, is shown the recess of the manger where the new-born Babe was laid, marked by a silver star.

The crowd here was so great, and the heat so overpowering, that we could only give a rapid glance, and hasten on to other caves below, one of which is the place where the great Latin father of the Church, S. Jerome, lived for years, and wrote his famous translation of the Holy Scriptures.

While we retired to our cell to rest, the gentlemen paid their respects to the Greek Archbishop, who was spending his Christmas in the convent, and to whom we had a letter of introduction. This venerable old man of ninety, has spent the last fifty-five years of his life in Jerusalem, of which he is the Vicar, though he acts like the Patriarch, the real Patriarch living in Constantinople. As he is a native of this country and can

only speak Greek and Arabic, the conversation was carried on through an interpreter; he was very polite, and promised to order his kawass to clear a way for us through the crowd during the procession at night. When midnight arrived, we made our way through a dense mass of pilgrims to the church, where we found the old Archbishop seated on a throne, in gorgeous robes and diamonds; he was surrounded by four other Bishops, and a number of priests and boys, who were all singing psalms;—singing do I say?—it is an insult to music to call their nasal twang by such a name. It was very wearisome to listen to, as there was no change; whether man or boy, all sang through the nose in the same high and shrill key. No accompaniment by any instrument is allowed in the Greek churches. The priests were very handsomely dressed, but it is curious to see them wearing their hair down to the waist like a woman. A Greek priest never cuts his hair or his beard after his ordination, both therefore are often long and flowing. All through the service the pilgrims pressed up to the old Archbishop, kissing his robes and knees, and the silver cross which he held in his hand. Then began the procession to the chapel of the Nativity; bishops, priests, singers, pilgrims, men, women and children, were all jostled together

in one close mass, and as each had a lighted taper in his hand, we could not help dreading lest the white veils of the women should catch fire. The crowd was too dense for any order, and we should never have made our way to the chapel, had not the Archbishop fulfilled his promise, and lent us his kawass, who in the most merciless manner shouldered the crowd, and pushing them out of the way, dragged us through. I wondered what Englishmen would have thought of such treatment, but here the people seem to take it as a matter of course, and whatever qualms of conscience we may have had in turning out some poor worshipper from the place he had struggled for, there was no time for heeding them, nor indeed would any one have understood our feelings. The heat and other disagreeables, were at last too much for us, and before the very long service was half over, we were obliged to retire from the church, and make our way back to our cell.

As the weather changed the following morning, we gave up our intention of making some excursions from Bethlehem, and ordered our horses to be got ready for our return to Jerusalem. The muleteer, on receiving the order, said one of the horses had escaped and was nowhere to be found; whereupon Ali, who suspected some trick, told him he

must find it immediately or get another in its place. In the course of a short time the horses made their appearance in due order, and we started, stopping in the town at the house of a native Christian to make some purchases. The little room in which his treasures were kept, was plain enough; it was covered with a mat of reeds, there the workmen sat carving some mother-of-pearl shells, while at the extreme end were a heap of cushions, forming the place of honour in the day time, and probably the bed at night. Here he placed us, and then produced his treasures; cups made out of the bitumen from the Dead Sea, mother-of-pearl crosses inlaid in wood, beads of all kinds, and large scallop shells on which were carved subjects from the Bible.

All these curiosities he produced out of his bosom, everything seemingly being stowed away in the folds of his loose dress, which was fastened round his waist with a girdle. Here also he placed his bag of money when our purchases were made. This custom seemed to explain so well the text in S. Luke, "Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down and running over, shall men give into your bosom."

On returning to our horses, we were surprised to find Ali, the muleteer, and a Greek priest, all

holding the bridle of one of them, and at high words. We are pretty well used now to the angry tones and frantic gestures of the people, and so we did not make ourselves uneasy as to these leading to blows, but waited patiently until the matter was arranged. Ali then explained to us that our horse instead of having escaped in the morning, had been let on hire to this Greek priest who had followed us to claim it, being naturally indignant at seeing *his* horse, as he believed it to be, mounted by a stranger. The muleteer did not seem in the least ashamed when his trick was discovered.

We have made a great move lately, having left the hotel and taken a house to ourselves. This seems a very simple arrangement to you, but it is far otherwise here, where a "furnished house to let," is a thing unheard of. After some unsuccessful attempts, we at last found a good house freshly painted and done up, belonging to an acquaintance of Ali's, a Christian jeweller, which he undertook to furnish for us. He had some iron bedsteads, and tidy chairs, and these, together with a table or two, and a carpet rolled down in the middle of the sitting-room floor, is all the furniture we possess, or require. Our portmanteaus are our cupboards, and the window seats our book-cases, and side-board.

You may wish to hear what a Jerusalem house is like, and as ours is a fair specimen I will give you some description of it. Its appearance from the street is certainly not prepossessing, as it looks more like a stable than a house, but once inside the low doorway, and up a few steep steps, things improve and you find yourself in a large open courtyard with rooms all round, one of which is the kitchen. These look into the narrow street, and are dull and dark, so we leave them and go up a stone staircase open to the air, leading to a corridor or balcony, where are another set of rooms, which we occupy. These, like all other rooms in Jerusalem, are vaulted, plastered and whitewashed, making them look and feel very cold during the winter, but wood is scarce, and is never used in any part of a house, except for the doors and window frames. Some of the larger houses have these vaulted roofs or domes terraced over, thus forming a pleasant walk, and the roof of a house is certainly the only pleasant walk within the walls of Jerusalem. The terraces are generally protected by a wall perforated with holes, built of round pipes about a foot long, and I think this must be the remains of an old custom, commanded by Moses, "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thy

house, if any man fall from thence." At all events every house, whether belonging to Jew or Mahometan, has this wall.

There are no chimneys, the rooms are warmed by little dishes of charcoal such as are called "scaldinos," in Italy; they are left outside the room till they are red-hot, when they are placed in the middle of the floor. Our sitting room has the luxury of a stove, but it is the only one in the house. As all the houses are built of porous stone, they are very damp, and after hard rain, the walls are streaming with wet, and as a matter of course, the rain pours in at the window, and perhaps at the doors too! Every room has its one door opening into a courtyard, or uncovered passage. Cold and rain do not last long here, and the houses are built for the long summer heat. Each one is built over its own cistern to contain the rain water, the only water drunk here, so that a good rainy season is eagerly looked for both in spring and autumn.

Our household consists of the landlord, a cook and housemaid, or rather I should say *houseman*, for Ali would think it dreadful to employ a woman in the house, and we have not seen such a thing as a woman-servant since we left Marseilles. Bells are unknown anywhere in the East, therefore when anything is wanted, the custom is to go outside the

door and clap one's hands together. When properly performed this sound is heard throughout the house.

Our latchkey is of the same kind as some we saw in the museum of antiquities in Cairo, and from its appearance must be of the same pattern as the first key ever invented. It is merely a piece of rough wood several inches long, with wooden pegs for the wards, and the lock would not be difficult to pick, but we have nothing to lose in our house, nor are housebreakers the kind of thieves one has to dread in Jerusalem.

With the exception of Ali the whole of our household is Christian I am glad to say; Ibrahim, who is footman as well as housemaid, talks a little Italian, a great convenience to us, as our Arabic knowledge only consists of a few learnt up sentences and a good many nouns. In my account of our house I have omitted to tell you of our "upper room" leading out to a charming terrace, where we have a lovely view of the Mount of Olives and the Mountains of Moab. Here we go every evening and gaze at the stars, far more brilliant in this clear atmosphere than anything you can imagine. It is not, however, of the stars I am going to tell you now, but of the brilliant cross of gold that we see to-night. This is the Sultan's fête day, and Jeru-

salem, like London, illuminates to the best of its power in honour of its sovereign. The Christian part of the population will not be behindhand, and they have illuminated the cross which stands on the dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Far and wide its light must shine, over-topping the city.

A few years ago no cross was allowed in Jerusalem, but on the accession of the present sultan a general illumination was ordered, and the Christians ventured for the first time to put up this cross: as it was in honour of their own sultan the Turks made no remonstrance, and it has been allowed to remain ever since.

We have been much amused in wandering through the streets to see the illuminations, which are very different to anything European. All the bazaars are left open, and each stall is decorated with the most beautiful articles it possesses—coloured silks, gold-embroidered cloaks, sheets of tissue or gold paper, produced from the depths of the usually dingy-looking shops, are this evening hung over their fronts and sides and even across the street, while the whole is lit up with oil lamps of variegated colours. The narrow thoroughfares are crowded with people, and Jerusalem, generally so dull and mournful, looks quite animated. In

one place there was a sword dance going on, in the courtyard of another a large party of musicians were playing to a more select audience. Here we were invited to come in, and chairs and sweetmeats were immediately produced for our benefit while we listened to the band, who were placed on a raised stone bench. They had several instruments, reeds, flutes, violins, or what answers to a violin here, and another instrument which lies on the lap and is played with both hands. There was a large audience who all seemed to appreciate the music and singing highly, and it certainly was much better than anything we have heard before in the East.

I am finishing off this long letter to-night, as to-morrow we start for an expedition to the Jordan and Dead Sea, and the mail will leave for England before our return.

LETTER V.

Jerusalem.

Our friend Mr. B. returns to England to-morrow, and as he has offered to take home a packet of letters, I take advantage of his kindness to send you a short account of our journey to the Jordan, otherwise I had no intention of writing to you again so soon, and this must be the last letter you are to expect from here. The road between Jerusalem and Jericho bears no better a reputation now than it did in the days of the good Samaritan, and as it is unsafe to travel along it without a strong guard, we engaged the services of a sheick from a village near Bethany, and of a Bedoueen whose tribe is encamped near the Jordan, who with their men were to be answerable for us and our baggage. All were strongly armed, the villagers with guns and pistols, the Bedoueens with

long lances, which they wheel about on their horses as if they were mere sticks. They amused us as we rode along by sham fights, galloping fast by each other, then one, suddenly wheeling round, fired the pistol in his enemy's face, while the other defended himself with his lance. They manage their horses wonderfully, wheeling them and themselves round on every side, and pulling them up on their haunches when at full speed. This is done by means of a dreadfully sharp bit, which it is cruel to use, though it is quite common in this country. In one of these fights the horse of the Abu Dîs sheick fell over a rough bit of rock, and it was amusing to see his great annoyance and the eager manner in which he disowned the horse, saying he had lost his own beautiful mare and this one was only borrowed!

Our road from Jerusalem led us by Bethany, about which I will tell you later; midway between Jericho and Jerusalem, we came upon an old ruin called the Red Khan, which probably was the half-way resting place. Tradition assigns to this place the honour of being the inn to which our LORD made allusion in the parable of the Good Samaritan, and there is nothing unlikely in the supposition that it stood on this

spot. Here we dismounted, and under the shadow of a great wall of rock, the shelter of which was very acceptable owing to the heat, ate our luncheon, drinking water out of a neighbouring well, from which we liked to think that our Blessed SAVIOUR doubtless drank in His frequent journeys to and fro.

From this point onwards, the road grew more wild and barren every step we took. There was not a tree, or bush, or flower to be seen, nor even a blade of grass to cover the naked sides of the rock; it was exactly the road one would expect to be infested by robbers. We rode down these precipitous barren rocks for several miles, when suddenly the beautiful plain of the Jordan appeared, and to our right were the broad waters of the Dead Sea; and gloriously blue they looked though it was the Dead Sea. The river Jordan lies so low that one cannot see it until actually by its side, but its course can be easily traced from a distance, by the long line of green foliage that grows on the banks.

Our tents were pitched on the plain near a little group of miserable huts called Er Riha, the site of the Jericho built by Herod and visited by our SAVIOUR. It was a very pretty camping ground,

near an orchard of fig-trees and vines, and within a few minutes' walk was the Wady Kelt, believed by some people to be the Brook Cherith where the prophet Elijah hid himself from the wicked king Ahab, and was fed by the ravens. The Valley of the Jordan, or El Ghor as it is called in Arabic, is quite level, and very wooded. Once, you know, it was filled with rich cities, fine palm trees, and was most highly cultivated. There is nothing of this left now; neither a city nor a palm tree are to be seen anywhere, nor is there much cultivation, for the peasants will not sow for the Bedoueens to reap; still, it strikes one as beautifully green after Jerusalem. The climate is nearly tropical, and trees and animals, or at least perhaps I should say birds, belonging to the tropics, are found in this valley. There is a large tree growing abundantly there, called the Spina Christi, of which there is a tradition that the crown of thorns was made from its branches. It has terribly long sharp thorns, nearly two inches in length, and one can scarcely break off the smallest branch without being torn. Besides this tree there are thickets of a shrub bearing a fruit which the Arabs call the mad apple of Sodom. E., as she rode by, burst open one to see if it resembled those large apples of Sodom of which one reads as only con-

taining dust. Instead of dust, however, this was full of a sharp juice which squirted out into her eyes and inflamed them to such a degree that she could scarcely open them for two days.

After our dinner the sheick appeared, to ask us to come out and see an Arab dance. On going to the tent door we found a whole row of black-faced Bedoueens standing outside, while our servants and muleteers were squatting on the ground near to watch the entertainment. This "fantasia," as they call it, is nothing like a dance as we understand the word; one man stands with a drawn sword before the rest of the group making a grunting sound, which all imitate, clapping their hands and swaying their bodies in time to the song they sing.

This was repeated the next evening by the women, but they did not make so picturesque a group as the swarthy wild-looking men.

The next morning we started for the Dead Sea, two or three hours distant from our encampment. We rode over a plain composed of a hard white mud sparkling with salt in some places, but very sticky wherever there was water near. The beach was covered with quantities of drift wood—trunks of trees and reed canes washed down from the Jordan were lying about on all sides; the sea

itself looked clear and blue, but there was a great haze hanging over it, as there always has been whenever we have seen it. We spent some time on the shore and picked up several broken shells, and of course tasted the water and washed our hands in it. It was quite as salt as we expected to find it, and our hands for some time after, felt quite dried up with the salt.

From the Dead Sea we rode to the banks of the Jordan, which is very high just now and very swollen. Its waters were quite thick and muddy, and did not look at all inviting for a bathe, but what pilgrim could return home without having washed in its sacred waters? We certainly did not intend to be of the number, and while Mr. S. was sketching, and Ali preparing our luncheon in a pretty grove of trees above the bank, we took our bathe. The current was dreadfully rapid, and Ali strongly objected to our plan, but we could not give it up, though we took every precaution, and were tied by the wrists to a rope fastened to a tree, so that we should not be dragged into the current. I must say it was not at all a pleasant bathe, as the water was quite brown, and the ground sticky with mud. I think that Ali's precautions were wise, for we have heard since, that an Arab guard who went down with some travellers a few days

after, was swept away by the current as he was bathing close under their eyes.

We went down to the Jordan earlier than travellers usually do, which is the reason we found the river so swollen, as it was flooded with the winter's rains, but by going now we have avoided the extreme heat which other travellers complain of so much. As it was, we found the sun intensely hot, and one or two owned to going to sleep on their horses in the hot ride to and from Jerusalem. There was, however, no uncomfortable heat to be felt in the woods by the Jordan's banks, where we walked about and rested for some time.

Sooner than we wished, we were obliged to make our way back to our tents, and had the good fortune, by the goodly array we presented, to be the means of restoring to a poor peasant a valuable camel which had just been carried off by a Bedoueen; he was driving it off to his tent when he spied our party approaching, and forsaking his plunder he galloped off for his life. Our men pursued him, and the country being a perfect plain we thought he could not make his escape, but we were mistaken, for suddenly he and his horse disappeared as completely as if the earth had swallowed them up, and even the sharp eyes of our Arab friends could not discover him. He had

probably thrown himself and his horse on the ground, and so managed to conceal himself under a bush. The roving plundering life these Arabs lead, makes them good adepts at such modes of escape and of concealment. Before going to bed the sheick warned Ali that a tribe of "black Bedoueens," with whom his own tribe was not friendly, were in the neighbourhood. A strict watch was therefore kept all night, but about midnight we were aroused by loud cries and shouts, whereupon we thought the Bedoueens were upon us. Before we had made up our minds what was best to do under the circumstances, Ali put his head into our tent to reassure us, and explained that the cause of the uproar was only a large body of pilgrims returning to Jerusalem, who, perhaps for the same reason which makes children cry out in the dark, thought it prudent to keep up this incessant shouting and shrieking during their night journey. In the afternoon, we had met a poor pilgrim woman wringing her hands in despair and running about wildly in search of her husband who had strolled from the khan after his return from the Jordan, and had never returned. He had been lost several hours before we met his wife, and scouts were searching for him. When we inquired last he had not been found. We hoped, however, that he was

now among the shouting multitude that were disturbing our night's rest. Jackals and donkeys kept up a chorus all the rest of the night, so we were quite ready to get up betimes and to start early for a lovely spot called "Aîn es Sultan," which is that fountain whose waters Elisha healed, near the site of the old Jericho. The men of the city said to the prophet, "The situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth, but the water is naught and the ground barren. And he said, Bring me a new cruse and put salt therein, and they brought it, and he went forth into the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters: there shall not be from hence any more death or barren land." This fountain still pours forth a large stream of clear and refreshing water, which fertilises all the country below.

Of the once warlike and wealthy city of Jericho, which might have withstood a whole army of besiegers had it not been taken by a miracle, nothing now remains but ruinous heaps. Its very site is even a doubtful point. Joshua's curse remains upon it still—all is departed, Jericho is no more.

Above Aîn es Sultan rises the fine mountain of the Quarantania, which tradition has selected as the "exceeding high mountain" where the Devil took

our LORD, to show Him all the kingdoms of the world. The mountain sides are pierced with holes and caves, formerly inhabited by anchorites, and now the nests of vultures and eagles, or the hiding-place of robbers. Some of the party were anxious to explore a cave which has been recently discovered, and is very curious from the fact of its being painted. This, though common enough in Egyptian tombs or buildings, is very rare in Palestine. Granny remained quietly below, while the rest of us started up the steep sides of the mountain with Ali, the sheick, and a bare-footed Bedoueen, who climbed up the rocks like a cat. The path was very narrow, and the ascent very steep, and Ali and his companions were quite frightened at the thought of the "Sittat" attempting such a thing, but we pursued our way until nearly at the top of the mountain. Close above our heads was the curious chapel, the object of our search, but unfortunately between us and our goal, there was a terrible "mauvais pas,"—a steep rock to ascend of several feet in height, the side of which sloped sheer off to the precipice below, while its broken edge could only be passed along, by placing one foot before the other. It was an ugly looking place, and one false step would have precipitated us hundreds of feet below, but still we rashly re-

solved to attempt it, hoping with care and caution and the aid of the cat-like Bedoueen's hand to get over the difficulty. But at the very thought of such an attempt Ali looked quite aghast, and the sheick, who had been saying prayers aloud all the way up the perilous ascent, turned to Ali and said, "The Sittat must be mad, for never since the sun had been in the heaven had ladies been up there before." He asked what could be their object, what was there to make them run the risk of all this danger and fatigue? Had it been for treasure he would have understood it no doubt, but for the sight of an old cave. No wonder he thought us mad! Ali declared "his heart beat out of his body," and they both looked so pale, and shook so with fright, that the feat was not attempted, as we feared the very nervousness might produce an accident, and it was not worth the risk. However, we considered we were well repaid for all our labour by the magnificent view we obtained of the valley, to say nothing of the caves into which we effected an entrance. When we reached the bottom and recounted to Granny our adventures, she said she considered Ali and the sheick to have been the wisest of the party.

We returned to Jerusalem by Bethany, called in Arabic "El Aziryeh," the town of Lazarus. Its

ancient name, Bethany, meaning "house of dates," has quite disappeared with the date palm from which it was probably named. Now there is not a single palm to be seen anywhere near, though we know they must have been abundant in our LORD'S time, as the multitudes who attended Him when He entered the city in triumph, took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet Him. At present the only trees that cover the Mount of Olives are the fig and the olive, and those at distant intervals. But it must have been very different once, for we read of the people going forth to the Mount to fetch "olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and branches of thick trees," to make booths at the Feast of Tabernacles. Bethany is still surrounded by various trees—the fig and the olive, the almond, the pear, and the pomegranate. The village is now a poor place, but poor as it is, when one looks at it nestling in the pretty valley, one cannot but feel what a peaceful and happy home the humble dwelling of Lazarus and his sisters must have afforded to our Blessed LORD, when wearied with the turmoil and bustle of the great city. A tomb cut in the rock, into which one descends by seven steps, is pointed out as the tomb of Lazarus. Whether it be the actual spot or not, we could not but feel that we were

treading the ground that had been so often and so lovingly trodden by our SAVIOUR, and that we were looking on the same scene on which His eyes had so often rested.

On the brow of the hill just opposite, stands the village of Abu Dîs, by some supposed to be the "village over against them," where the disciples found the colt "whereon never man had sat," and on which our LORD made His entry into Jerusalem, most probably by the very road we were going. As we rounded the shoulder of the Mount of Olives, that splendid view burst upon us, which drew forth from Him that pathetic outburst of compassion over the beautiful city "which when He beheld He wept." Beautiful it looks now even in its desolation, what must it have been when the Temple was in its glory! We followed His steps where He must have descended the hill, crossed the brook Kedron, and ascending on the other side, entered Jerusalem on that day when palm branches were strewn before Him amidst the Hosannas of the multitude. He probably made His entry into Jerusalem by the Golden gate, now closed entirely, but open at that time. The Moslems believe that as His triumphal entry into the city was made through this gate in the days of His Flesh, so by the same way will He come at the day of Judgment. On

our road from Bethany to Jerusalem, we passed one of the wells of the country, with a great heavy stone over its mouth; just such a stone probably, as Jacob rolled away for Rachel, when he helped her to water her flocks. There are two kinds of wells in Palestine; those, whence the water is drawn from a spring below; others, (these are the most common,) which are in reality only cisterns to contain the rain water. When the rainy season is over, these wells are covered at the mouth with a large stone, to prevent the water being used unnecessarily, and to keep it from wasting by the heat of the sun.

These wells are I think very interesting objects in Palestine, for being of the same importance now, and used in the same manner as in former times, they seem as it were, to connect the present days with the past. The flocks still gather round the mouths of the well to be watered, young and old still come thither to draw, and no doubt many a Rachel gets a Jacob to help her in her work.

It is observing these little things that makes one of the great interests of a visit to the Holy Land; habits and customs of which we read in the Bible, and sometimes hardly understand, from the difference of our own manners and customs, are here, every-day events, and seem quite to

illustrate the Bible. For instance, in our walks along the stony paths around Jerusalem, we constantly meet large flocks of sheep and goats driven together, though never intermingled, and belonging to one shepherd, who always walks in advance of his flock. The sheep follow him steadily, but perhaps the stony path is too much for the weak legs of some little lamb, who lags behind; then the shepherd always takes him up in his arms, and carries him in the folds of his dress. How impossible it is to see this daily, without thinking of and seeming to understand so much better, that beautiful metaphor of Isaiah prophetic of the Messiah: "He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom."

We walk through a village, and see "two women grinding at one mill;" men are never employed in this work. The grinding is done by two small grindstones, the upper one of which has a handle, turned by two women sitting opposite each other among the corn.

Again, we can never go outside the walls of Jerusalem without coming across the loathsome leper; and when one sees all the horrors of the disease, one can understand the dread and the disgust which it created, and why, by the Levitical law they were never allowed to associate with others.

These poor creatures have a quarter of their own, just outside the gates, and are not allowed to mix with other people, only marrying and intermarrying among themselves. More distressing looking objects you cannot imagine; some with crippled limbs and distorted features; others, having lost the power of speech, make horrid noises. They are very importunate beggars, and eager to thrust their distortions before your eyes.

LETTER VI.

Jerusalem, March.

You certainly are the most satisfactory little people to write to, dear children, and as you really seem to enjoy all I tell you about Jerusalem, I have determined not to let the packet to mamma go without its enclosure to you.

My difficulty is, to know what particular things you will care to hear of most, it is therefore much pleasanter for me when you give me questions to answer, as you have done now about the Jews. One strives to take special interest in them here, though really it is a hard matter, when one comes in contact with them, for the Jews in the east seem to me even more repulsive than some of their European brethren.

We went one Sabbath Day to visit the old Jewish synagogue, which is merely a square room supported by pillars; a portion raised above the

rest, was railed off and appropriated to the Rabbis, and those who read the scriptures. The service began with a sermon, after which a young Rabbi advanced to the front of the dais with a long scarf thrown over his head, the ends being held by two other men. He first spoke a few words to the congregation below him, and then both he and his assistants, (the scarf now over all their heads,) walked to the end of the room, and took out from an old wainscoted kind of closet, the roll of the Law, called the Thora. The two ends of this roll were attached to massive silver pillars, and a rose-coloured veil having been thrown over it, it was borne with lights, in procession round the synagogue. Every one made an obeisance as it passed, and those within reach, kissed the folds of the veil as it fell near them. When it had made the circuit of the room, it was carried up to the platform, whence portions of the Scriptures were read from it, the reader having head and shoulders covered with the muslin veil. After this, the Psalms were sung in a drawling monotonous tone. There were no women admitted into the synagogue itself, but they took part in the service from the outside, peeping in at the unglazed windows.

The feast of the Passover will not fall while we are in Jerusalem, for which we are very sorry: but

the Jews have no paschal lamb now, for they have no temple in which to sacrifice, nor indeed have they a high priest who could offer the sacrifice. They have a pretty legend that the last high priest of Jerusalem died at the destruction of the temple by Titus. This is the legend.

Jerusalem had fallen, the glorious Temple had been destroyed, all the priests of the LORD had shared the fate of their countrymen except the high priest. As he stood amidst broken columns and ruined heaps, where once had been the Holy of Holies, his heart melted within him, and he felt that it was better to die than live to see the desecration of the holy places. With streaming eyes he knelt down among the ruins of the temple, and prayed thus, "It is finished! Thou hast left Thy people for ever, Thy Temple is desecrated, the altar hewn in pieces, I alone am left, a minister without a people, a priest without a sacrifice. My task is over, and now I kneel in Thy presence, and restore to Thee with trembling the key of Thy Temple." He held up the key. For a few moments there was no answer, all was still. Then all at once the cloud which had been hanging over the temple opened, a flash of light lit up mount Moriah and a hand of fire descended, and seized the key. The next morning the old man was found lying on

his face, amid the ruins of the Temple. The last high priest of the Jews was dead.

Though we shall not be here at the feast of the Passover, we have been present at another Jewish feast, the Purim. You will find the history of this in the Book of Esther, and will see that it was established at that time, as an annual thanksgiving for the deliverance of the Jews from the massacres planned by the wicked Haman.

The service, if I may call it by such a name, seemed to consist of the reading aloud in Hebrew the whole Book of Esther, by a Rabbi enveloped in a white mantle. The congregation, who all followed what he read very attentively, swayed their bodies backwards and forwards incessantly, until the name of Haman occurred, then the most hideous groans were heard on all sides, and when at last they arrived at the account of his execution, the room shook with the stamping of their feet in triumph at his punishment. Even the little babies were taught by their fathers to shake their rattles with joy!

When the Book of Esther was finished, singing followed, quite wonderful in its way, especially as it was all "improvised," being an extra grand performance in honour of the Prussian Consul who had kindly brought us to the feast. The choir

consisted of three or four men, one of whom acted the part of the accompaniment, and sang like the notes of a violin; the runs and shakes he performed were marvellous.

All these Jews were either Polish or German, and some were quite fair-haired. They wear a hideous dress, looking like a long dressing-gown down to their feet, with a greasy and battered chimney-pot black hat, or a fur cap with their hair brought into a long curl on each side of their face. They were horridly dirty, and very ragged. We went afterwards to see one of their schools, which was full of lads of all ages; here they were not taught reading or writing, or the usual work of an ordinary school, but were being trained to argue, they were in fact "disputing and asking questions," which we are told is a regular part of a Jewish boy's education.

Before we returned home, Dr. Rosen took us to pay a visit to a Spanish Jew, who received us in great state with repeated low bows, and salaams, and with many eastern expressions of the honour done to his house, by the presence of so distinguished a personage as the Prussian Consul. Everything was quite oriental, a carpet was stretched on the floor, and pillows were against the wall, on which some of the family lay. On one were the son of

the house and his wife, he a wretched sickly looking boy of fourteen, she a child of ten. These early marriages are quite common in the east.

On another cushion lay the mother of the family, a handsome woman with a tiara on her head, and a quantity of jewels on a very bare neck. The father wore the usual eastern turban, and a long flowing silk robe; he talked Arabic with Dr. Rosen, but these Spanish Jews in the east speak among themselves a patois of Spanish and Hebrew mixed. Of course we were regaled with sweetmeats and coffee, and then pipes were brought in.

A pretty Jew boy often comes out with us to lead the donkey, and as we go to great distances, we always offer some of our luncheon to our little groom, whoever he may be, but our Jewish friend will never touch a mouthful of Christian food, and consequently goes without his dinner, unless we happen to have some bread with us baked by a Jew.

Some of our Mahometan donkey-boys are also very strict, and refuse any offer to tempt them to eat during their great fast which is going on now. It is called the Ramadan, and during the forty days it lasts, no Mussulman will eat a mouthful, or drink a drop, and what is harder still to an Eastern, he will not smoke a pipe, from sunrise to sunset.

At both of these times a great gun fires, to let every one know the hour has arrived, either for eating, or for ceasing to eat. The Pashas and other great folk feast all night, and lie in bed most of the day, but the poor working man cannot at all events do the latter, and as one walks through the bazaars, one sees the poor men squatting in their shops, pale and wan, and ready to faint with exhaustion. It is not a pleasant time to transact business, as you may imagine, for a good many people are cross and sulky.

Half an hour before sunset things brighten a little, and some life appears in the bazaars, coffee is seen preparing, and smoking hot dishes are waiting with crowds round them in the eating shops. Each man has his pipe in one hand, and his watch in the other, counting the minutes till the sunset gun will fire, and he may break his fast.

We hurry to get home by this time, for as our poor companions will eat nothing all day, or drink a drop of water to quench their thirst under this hot burning sun, we are anxious to be within the walls by sunset. In spite of all their endeavours to urge on the donkeys, we have sometimes been too late, and when within five minutes of the Damascus gate, the gun has fired; it is sad then to see their faces of blank despair, for

now all the gates are shut but the Jaffa gate, and they have at least half an hour's addition to their walk, before they can obtain their much needed food. On a Friday between the hours of twelve and two, no one can enter or leave Jerusalem, for every gate is closed. Friday is the Mahometan holy day, and being in their mosques at those hours, they will not leave the city gates unguarded and open, as there is a moslem tradition that at some future time the Christians will regain possession of their holy city on a Friday at noon. It seems curious that their tradition should have fixed upon that day and hour, for the final triumph of Christianity.

Our daily walks and rides are very enjoyable, as one learns to know the country so thoroughly—and there is now scarcely a hill or valley near Jerusalem that we have not visited, nor a curious old tomb we have not scrambled into. Before I describe any of these Jewish tombs, you must divest yourself of all ideas of English churchyards or cemeteries, and remember that the earliest burial places on record were merely caves: for instance, when Sarah died, Abraham bought the Cave of Machpelah to bury her in; Lazarus was laid in a cave, and the Holy Sepulchre itself was a tomb "hewn out in the rock." Thus all the ancient

tombs around Jerusalem are really caves hewn out of the living rock—some small, some large, containing, as the case may be, either places for two or three bodies, or several passages and chambers with "loculi," or niches for the dead.

The most interesting tombs in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, are those called the Tombs of the Kings. At the time of our visit a good staircase, lately discovered and opened, led down to them, from which we passed into a large court hewn out of the rock; then by two steps through so low a doorway as almost to compel one to go on all-fours, we descended into the first chamber. A low seat ran round it, and above were the "loculi," opening endwise in the side of the rock. Some of the "loculi" or niches are merely excavations for the reception of the body, others have a little cupboard in the side or behind, where the jewels of the buried person were placed. All tombs have not these niches—some few have open shelves on which the body was laid, as was the case in our LORD'S Sepulchre. You must remember that when, on the morning of the Resurrection, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb, she saw "two angels in white sitting one at the head and the other at the feet where the Body of JESUS had lain."

The several chambers were closed by massive

doors, made of slabs of stone hung upon pivots, worked in sockets in the lintel and threshold, which were so heavy as to shut by their own weight. One of these doors is still to be seen at the Tombs of the Kings, but broken and displaced.

Just before our arrival in Jerusalem a new chamber had been discovered by M. De Saulcy, a well known French traveller. On striking the floor of one of the chambers he found it to be hollow, whereupon he began to excavate, and on removing a large stone, discovered a perfect staircase leading into a new tomb, as fresh as if it were just finished. Here he found a sarcophagus containing a skeleton with two of its teeth quite perfect, and part of a robe embroidered in gold; soon after it was exposed to the air the skeleton crumbled to pieces, but M. De Saulcy sent the teeth to Paris, as well as the lid of the sarcophagus, on which was an inscription. The Jews were very indignant at this sacrilege, and made a great stir about it. They now frequently congregate at these Tombs and collect all the bones they can find, to bury them in the lowest grave out of the reach of any other curious strangers. Mr. S. went there to sketch a few days ago, and some Jews who were working began to throw stones at him, but he was able to make them understand he was an "Ingleez," and that he thought the French-

man "mouschteib" for having opened their tombs; so at last they left him in peace. They have, however, covered up the staircase which M. De Saulcy discovered, and by which we had descended.

These tombs were closed in a curious way; the entrance was covered by a large circular stone like a millstone, which had to be rolled back before any one could enter. Besides this, there was another large stone which slid along a groove over the millstone, so as to keep it in its place and to hide it from view, thus firmly securing the tomb. It was in this manner that our SAVIOUR'S Tomb was probably closed, and it must have been of a heavy circular stone like this, that the women were speaking when they said, "Who will roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" It was beyond their own power to remove it, for "it was very great."

Perhaps you always fancied before, as I did, that this stone was a large boulder, such as one sees at the mouth of a well.

At the Tombs of the Kings the groove for the stone is perfect, though the stone itself is lying down out of its place broken, but there is a tomb near Bethlehem, which has this same circular stone in its proper position and quite perfect.

There is another interesting tomb which I must

not omit to mention—one held sacred by Jew, Christian, and Mahometan, as the spot where the remains of King David lie. It is now, like all other places held in reverence by the Moslems, built over and covered by a little dome, but all seem to agree that the crypt below, to which no eye may penetrate, is the real spot where the royal body reposes. We are plainly told in the Bible, that he and his successors were buried in the city of David, that is, in Zion, where this building stands. You may guess how eagerly we peeped through every crevice, to see even the floor that covered the remains of "the sweet psalmist of Israel."

The Tombs of the Kings which I have been describing to you are probably those of the Herods.

We have been lately to Hebron, one of the oldest cities in Palestine. It is the city where Abraham first dwelt when he came to the Land of Canaan, and where he bought the Cave of Machpelah, as a burial place for himself and his family. The bodies of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of Sarah and Leah, still lie there as they were placed thousands of years ago.

A mosque now stands over the Cave of Machpelah, and into this no Christian is allowed to put foot. An exception was made in favour of the

Prince of Wales when he visited Hebron, and he entered the mosque, and gazed through a grating into the dark cave where the bodies of the patriarchs lay.

Hebron stands in the Valley of Eshcol, which is, you remember, the place whence the great cluster of grapes was brought, by two of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. The country is still full of rich vineyards, and Hebron wine is reckoned the best. As we rode along, one could not but think of the parable which speaks of the man who "planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a place for the wine-fat, and built a tower in the midst of it." This might have been written of any vineyard round Hebron; as in each of them one still sees the watch-tower standing in the midst.

E. is, I know, very fond of legends, so I have another for her connected with a place near here—the supposed spot where grew one of the trees which formed the Cross of our SAVIOUR. A very curious old Greek church is built over the place, and in a subterranean chapel one is shown the hole where the tree stood.

This is the legend: Adam was sick unto death, and sent his son to Eden to ask the angel who guarded the gate to send him some of the fruit of

the Tree of Life, which might recover him of his sickness. The angel denied the request, but gave the son three seeds. "Place them," he said, "in your father's mouth, and when they shall be grown into trees he shall be freed from his sickness." On the son's return he found his father already dead, but taking the grains, he placed them in his mouth and buried him. From those seeds, sprang three trees, the fir, the pine, and the box, out of which the Cross was made. It is a curious old legend, into the beauty of which you can enter without any explanation of mine.

Easter Monday.

Our happy time in Jerusalem is over, and to-morrow we shall have to take our last farewell of it. It is with great pain that we leave, as we feel that we shall probably never see Jerusalem again; we have passed so long a time here that we have learned to feel quite at home, and to love the sight of every hill and valley.

I shall not attempt to speak about the last Holy Week. You, dear children, who know how solemn that week is at home, will well imagine what it

must have been on the very spot where our Blessed SAVIOUR's Passion actually took place.

We encamp to-night on the Mount of Olives, from which spot we shall carry away our last impressions of the Holy City—impressions that time will never efface.

LETTER VII.

Carmel, April 8.

A FEW days' halt at this charming place enables me, dear children, to begin a letter to you, which I must continue in journal fashion as best I am able, when we return to our tent life. Now we are enjoying the comforts of this famous convent, which is built on the extremity of the ridge of Carmel overhanging the sea.

We enjoy the rest very much after several days' riding in very hot weather, not that it has all been sunshine, for on Sunday the rain came down in such torrents, as almost to wash us out of our tents, and great part of the day was spent in arranging our beds and clothes, so as best to keep them dry. I described the delights of tent travelling to you in the winter, but certainly to wake in the morning and find you are lying in a pool of water, is not one of its peculiar pleasures. Our

tents are very thick and good, but four and twenty hours' incessant rain will make its way through on some side or other.

We arrived here yesterday from Sebastieh, the ancient famous town of Samaria, which stands on a commanding height overlooking the Plain of Jezreel and the sea. It is now merely a miserable village, with some ruined colonnades and fragments of capitals, and huge stones lying about, the only remains of the town of Samaria as it was rebuilt by Herod the Great. The great Plain of Esdraelon is much changed since we saw it in the winter, when it was one sea of bog; now it is green with waving corn, and bright with all the thousand flowers that cover it like a carpet. There are fields of pink flax and scarlet pheasant's-eye, which is twice as large here as anywhere else, and great patches of gold mustard plants, and crysanthemums, and many more flowers than I can name. Here and there one sees a stray camel belonging to some Bedoueens, whose ugly low black tents lie stretched out like bats' wings. From Sebastieh we rode to the foot of Mount Carmel, which we ascended, intending to go straight to the scene of Elijah's sacrifice, and thence along the ridge of the mountain to the convent—a much more beautiful ride than over the plain. We have

been travelling the last few days in company with a party of French gentlemen, one of whom is an enthusiastic sportsman. His principal interest in the Holy Land, seems to consist in the desire of killing leopards and other wild animals, which are however rarely met with in Palestine. He talks "very big," as R. would say, but we have not seen much of his prowess yet. He rides about frantically in Arab fashion, and fires off his gun at every vulture or large bird that he sees, but unluckily without any success, and I fear his Palestine spoils will not be great. His ill-luck does not damp his ardour, and he arranged one day to go with one of his friends and their own dragoman, in search of a bear, we allowing the rest of his party to join us in our ride to the Maharaka, under the care of Ali.

Early yesterday morning we started, leaving the plain and ascending the sides of the mountain through woods of oaks, myrtles, arbutus, and all kinds of flowering shrubs, boulders of rocks cropping up now and then among the trees, and the ground carpeted with flowers of every colour. I can hardly describe to you how beautiful it was, and perfectly unlike anything we had before seen in the east. We rode on and on, too delighted to think of anything but the enchantment of the

scene, till at last we arrived at an open space in which there was a large pool, where were peasants watering their flocks. The guide whom we had taken immediately entered into conversation with these men, and the result was, that with a very crestfallen face he had to confess that he had lost his way, and we must retrace our steps for an hour and a half. Poor Ali, who knew what a long day's journey we had before us, hoped that we would give up the expedition, and resign ourselves to the loss; but this was far from our intention, so, taking a young Druse for a guide, we retraced our steps.

As our ride led us through a lovely country, and it was too early in the day to feel tired, we were quite reconciled to the additional journey. Our guide, Yussuf, was hardly to be blamed, the road is so difficult to find—one wrong turn in the wood is fatal, leading often in a quite contrary direction. Our Druse friend soon put us in the right track, and at length we were rewarded by finding ourselves perched on the edge of the ridge, where there was a grand panoramic view of the immense tract of country visible on either side. Below was the whole plain of Esdraelon, with the town of Jezreel rising up in the midst; under the base of the mountain was the winding river Kishon. From

that high commanding position the failure of the three hundred priests of Baal must have been visible to the multitudes below, who were anxiously awaiting the result of the trial; and the flames from Elijah's altar, must have proclaimed for miles and miles around, that his GOD was the true GOD. When the sacrifice had been performed, the prophet descended the steep sides of the mountain, and by the side of the river Kishon which runs at the bottom he slew all the false prophets of Baal. Then, you remember, he went up the mountain again and prayed GOD to send rain upon the earth, and sent his servant seven times to "go up and look towards the sea." One cannot see the sea from the place of sacrifice, but it is quite visible from a high point at a little distance, which most likely is the spot where Elijah's servant stood. We should never have tired of sitting there, reading all that story on the spot, but we had several miles' ride yet before us, so parting with our young Druse at his village, we proceeded on our way to the convent, Yussuf assuring us that he knew this road well enough.

We rode on for some hours through a pretty underwood of oaks and arbutus, till at last we began to think it was time for the convent to make its appearance. We called up Yussuf, and quickly found

that he was again leading us at random, and had no notion where he was, or which of the numerous winding paths to take next. We were much provoked, as the afternoon was far advanced, but there was no use in grumbling at the stolid creature, who seemed to think a wrong road would serve our purpose as well as a right, so we summoned a council, and all agreed the wisest plan was to descend to the plain as best we could, and take the usual road.

Our horses' heads were turned downwards, but there was no pretence even to a Syrian path, and the way was not only perpendicular but perfectly rocky. One of our French companions, a large heavy man riding a miserable horse, looked in blank despair; he evidently did not know which were the worst to trust to, his own legs or those of his horse. We really feared he would never reach the bottom safely, but he did so in some wonderful manner, and we soon after found ourselves at the foot of a steep flight of broad steps leading up to the convent.

Tired as our poor horses were, they pulled us up nobly, and long after dark we were at last safe within the convent walls, where the rest of the French party were hungrily awaiting our appearance for dinner. The young chasseur had, as we

expected, seen no wild beasts, and was as cross as most sportsmen are, after a tiring day with no sport, and waiting for dinner.

Now I must tell you something about this monastery, which is the most famous in Palestine. It is built over the spot where the prophet Elijah is supposed to have lived, and under the church is shown the cave where the prophet hid himself from Jezebel. The tradition is, that ever since his days, men of some religious order or other have occupied this ground. In the fourth century, the great S. Basil founded the order of the Carmelites who inhabit the monastery at this day. The Turks destroyed their convent in the beginning of this century, and killed the monks; one escaped, and some years after he obtained permission from the Sultan to rebuild the convent; he had of course no money of his own, and finding he should want about three hundred thousand francs for the work, he travelled through the different countries of Asia, Africa, and Europe, begging money for his purpose. He never wearied, never lost courage, and at the end of fourteen years, had collected money enough to build this stately convent at the edge of Mount Carmel, overlooking the deep blue sea. Any one is hospitably received here, of whatever religion or country they may

chance to be, and most travellers are glad to exchange their tents for a while for these stone walls.

Nazareth, April 12.

Here we are experiencing for the first time the disagreeables of eastern heat, and I have hardly even energy to write to you, so oppressive is the weight of the atmosphere. The sirocco is blowing, which makes the sky of as leaden a colour as if it were a November day in England; the air is filled with sand blowing from the desert, and clouds of fine dust or sand are driving over the hills like rain. Even the animals seem oppressed with the weather, and as to ourselves, everything seems a trouble but lying on the ground.

Yesterday morning we made an effort to ascend Mount Tabor, a very toilsome expedition under the circumstances, but we did not like to leave Nazareth without making the attempt. In the middle ages, Mount Tabor was believed to be the mountain on which our LORD was transfigured; it is more probable that the Transfiguration took place on Mount Hermon, but the ruins of a church built to commemorate the event, are still

to be seen on the green sward at the top of Mount Tabor. The ascent is steep and rocky, but it is very pretty, as the sides of the mountain are covered with oaks and shrubs, and all kinds of flowers grow in the clefts of the rocks.

On coming down the steep rocky sides of the mountain, E. nearly had a bad accident. She had a young horse who gets frightened at a rocky piece of road, and accordingly got off to lead it. All of a sudden we heard a fall of stones, and then a moan, and on looking round saw her stretched on the ground, having sprained her ankle in the fall. It was an awkward place for an accident, but we had water with us, and after having bound up her foot, and rested some little time, we put her on a steady old horse and got her safe to the bottom. It never answers to lead a horse down a steep place, as they are liable to push you over, the best plan is to throw the reins over their heads, and let them find their own way to the bottom, which they generally can do very cleverly. You would be surprised if you were to see the mules with the heavy tents on their backs, finding a path for themselves, in places where we should think even no unladen animal could stand. In some very bad or narrow place, the muleteers put their hands on the tents or boxes, to keep them steady, otherwise

the mules go on all day in the most independent way following their leader.

At a short distance from Tabor, in the plain, lies the little village of Nain. It is nothing now but a wretched mass of huts, but the ruins of the old town are lying about in different directions, and the old well still existing, must have stood there when our SAVIOUR visited the city. Down the path we rode, the only one from the village to the plain, the young man must have been carried forth to his burial, on that day when our SAVIOUR met the bier, and restored her only son to his poor widowed mother.

On our road back to Nazareth, we passed an Arab encampment formed of ugly low black tents. Each tent had a division in the middle, to separate the men from the women, who were the ugliest and dirtiest creatures possible. Camels, goats, mares and their foals, were picketed round. The women were baking bread as we rode up, and they brought some out for us to eat; it was made in long flat cakes, something like the plank bread our Welsh cottagers eat, very brown, and as tough as leather, with this they brought out some goat's milk in a large wooden bowl. We were soon satisfied, but our hosts pressed us to eat and drink more, in the most hospitable manner. We returned

their hospitality, by presenting them with a bag of tobacco, for the Bedoueen does not like to take money for the food he offers you; he has though no objection to receive baksheesh in any other form. "Baksheesh" means literally a present, and you must know that in the east, the giver of a present always expects another and a handsomer one in return.

They invited us to enter their tents, which certainly did not look inviting, and proposed to kill a sheep in our honour if we would remain to eat it. This is still the practice, you see, as it was in the olden days.

April 20, *Damascus.*

I must finish my letter from here, as there is an opportunity of posting it, and letting you know of our safe arrival so far. The distressing sirocco continued in great force till we were within sight of the Lake of Tiberias, but as we rode round the walls of the town to our tents pitched by the water's edge a thunder-storm broke over our heads; this cleared away the sirocco, enabling us fully to enjoy the scenery around, which must be dear to every

eye, for whichever way one looks, one can, as it were, trace the footsteps of our LORD. At our feet was the lake on which He had so often sailed, to whose waters He had said, "Peace, be still." Before us, was the rugged coast of the Gadarenes, where He loosed the poor demoniac from the dreadful fetters that bound him, while on the shores of the lake itself, we seemed to be always treading on the sacred footsteps. Here was the little village of Magdala, where the poor penitent Mary Magdalene found pardon and peace, here was the mountain "nigh to the sea of Galilee," where JESUS took pity on the hungry crowds that followed Him, and fed the five thousand. From here too, we could see the spot where He is said to have preached the sermon on the Mount, now called the Mount of Beatitudes. Lower down on the lake, we come to the sites of the cities upon which our SAVIOUR pronounced such an awful doom. In the distance was the hoary head of Hermon, and Safed the "city set on a hill which could not be hid." Every place seemed to have some holy association, either of parable, or miracle, or work of mercy. I cannot describe to you the feelings with which we got into a boat to sail on the lake, one of the two only boats now, where formerly the inhabitants of so many cities plied the trade of fishermen. The day

was fine, the sea was smooth, and there was nothing to disturb our thoughts as they dwelt upon the sacred past. The heavy uncouth ship with its rough tackle, probably the same sort of boat in use 1800 years ago, the Jewish crew, all seemed in harmony with our thoughts. Except the noisy voices of our crew, all was silent on those shores once crowded with eager multitudes, and where thousands were fed, by the SAVIOUR'S miraculous power.

"The feast is o'er, the guests are gone." It was very beautiful but very sad; the lake is fringed with large oleander bushes, now in full flower, and reflecting their beautiful pink blossoms in the water beyond.

The town of Tiberias, and the miserable little village of Magdala, are the only signs of habitation on either side of the lake. We wished to sail down to the sites of two of the ancient cities, and therefore kept along the coast, till we reached Aîn et Tîn, which means the fountain of the fig-tree. We landed here, though in some jeopardy of our lives from the awkwardness of our sailors, who in squabbling among themselves as to the best manner of putting us ashore, forgot to lower the sail in time, and nearly capsized our boat. It is a very pretty spot, and is the site of either Capernaum or

Chorazin. A beautiful spring flows from beneath a large luxuriant fig-tree, where we sat to have our luncheon; we tried to procure a fish, wishing much to eat one on that shore. Later in the afternoon we sailed down to the bottom of the lake, landing at different places, when suddenly the wind rose, and the sea was soon covered with great foaming waves. I could hardly have believed a storm could have risen so quickly, had I not seen it. It was not exactly pleasant, as our crew seemed so inefficient, and our ropes were merely common twine, but still we were almost glad to be out in a storm on the sea of Galilee.

When we turned our heads homewards, the wind was dead against us, and as they do not seem to understand the art of tacking, they "tracked" the boat; that is to say, two of the crew cast off their upper garments, and jumped into the water with a rope tied round their waists, the other end being fastened to the boat. They waded up to their shoulders in the water, walking with great difficulty over the very pebbly bottom, and dragging the vessel after them; in this manner we proceeded, until rounding a corner, we were able to make sail again, and reached our tents before dark.

From Tiberias we rode to Safed, an important town among the Jews, and as I told you, believed to

be the city our SAVIOUR mentioned in the sermon on the Mount, as "set on a hill." When midway between Safed and Tiberias, we were overtaken by a frightful thunder-storm, which quickly drenched us through, and some of the baggage too, so on arriving at Safed, the rain still being very heavy, we tried to find a night's lodging in some house in the town. Ali at last procured a room, which was in fact the whole house, the family obligingly turning out to leave it at our disposal! It was happily built of stone, and we quickly removed the mats from the floor, swept every corner thoroughly, and then brought in our tent-bedsteads. The only furniture the place possessed, was some large stone chests, where the corn was all stowed away, and some water jars. Each of the chests had a pigeon-hole at the bottom, into which the hand was inserted to draw out the grain. There were no chairs or tables, or any of the things usually seen in a European cottage; eastern people never use bedsteads, they only stretch a mattress upon the ground, and in the morning roll it up, and put it on a shelf. It was such a bed that our LORD bid the sick man rise up and carry.

We of course excited great curiosity, and our room was constantly filled with visitors, who if we refused them admittance, made the excuse of want-

ing to fetch some corn. I am sure the chickens must have rejoiced in our arrival. The men did not venture into the room, but indemnified themselves by peeping at us through the window, which was near the ground, and only protected by an iron bar; glass is never seen in any common house in this country.

The curiosity of the people in the east is amusing, though it must be owned it is troublesome. Wherever we stop, we are immediately surrounded by all sorts of people who seem to spring up like mushrooms. Though inquisitive, they are never impertinent in manner or words; they like to touch our clothes to feel of what they are made, at which one cannot be surprised, considering the different kinds of garments they wear themselves, and they sometimes peep into our tents, and no doubt wonder at our knives and forks. One day as I was standing by the side of my horse with my gloved hand on the bridle, a man came up and gently took it, opening and shutting it to see if it were not stiff. I suppose he had never seen a glove before.

In the evening, Ali brought a poor man into our room, with his hand bleeding profusely. He had cut it severely, and hoped we could heal it for him. We did our best by pouring brandy upon the

wounds and binding them up; I suppose our remedy succeeded, as the following morning he appeared looking much better, and bringing with him a dying child for us to cure. It was a case in which we could do no good, but we applied a mustard poultice to its poor oppressed chest, in the hope of affording it some temporary relief, and of satisfying the parents.

Before leaving any large town or village, near which we may be encamped, it is Ali's habit to lay in a store of provisions; accordingly at Safed he set forth in search of bread, and entered the house of a Jew, where he knew good bread was to be procured. The mistress of the house however positively assured him she was a poor woman and had none. When he explained that he was a dragoman, and would pay her for all she gave him, her countenance changed, and she led him through a concealed door into a large cellar, where stores of flour and other treasures were stowed away. She then told him that the poor Jews were obliged to conceal their stores from the other inhabitants of the place, or they would be completely fleeced by them, and by the officials.

Our last Sunday in the Holy Land was spent at Cæsarea Philippi, which is the extreme boundary of Palestine. It is now called Banias, and is one

of the few beautiful places in the Holy Land; it is surrounded by oaks and olive trees, backed with great red and white rocks, out of which bursts a great fountain—one of the sources of the Jordan. This wonderful river has several sources; the largest is near the remains of the ancient Dan, the most northern city of the land of Israel, and where you know Jeroboam set up one of the golden calves.

The great wonder of Banias is its castle, of immense size, making even our Welsh castles look insignificant. It stands a thousand feet above the village, perched on a mountain top. Some of the stones in the oldest part are as large as those in the Temple wall at Jerusalem, and are probably of the time of Herod Agrippa, who gave the place the name of Cæsarea Philippi.

I wish you could have seen the summer bedrooms of the villagers here, as I think Evey would much enjoy building some such for her dolls. On the flat roof of every house there is a sort of cage made of branches and dried leaves, erected on osier poles, a little hole left in the centre serves as the door to creep through from the ladder which leads from the roof of the house to these leafy rooms. These funny places are made for cool sleeping-rooms during the summer months, and are

placed on the roof rather than nearer the ground, to be out of the way of the scorpions which infest the country.

When we left Banias we finished our travels in the Holy Land, and entering the land of Syria, now turned our steps towards Damascus. You must have often heard of the beauties of this famous city, so celebrated for its gardens, its rivers, and handsome houses, as well as for its great antiquity, for so long ago as the days of Abraham it was a city of importance. It lies in the middle of a rich plain surrounded by a circle of mountains, and has gardens for nearly thirty miles round; remember when I say gardens I mean Eastern gardens, that is to say, orchards or groves of trees, such as walnut, apricot, pomegranate, and orange, all now most beautiful, with their fresh green leaves or brilliant blossoms. These gardens are walled round, and through each flows a running brook, all streams from the famous ancient rivers of Damascus, the Abana and Pharpar, which Naaman the Syrian thought so far superior to the Jordan, as indeed they are in size and beauty.

The streets of Damascus are very disappointing, they are merely long lanes between high mud walls, without any windows, unless a slit in the wall here and there may be honoured by this name. But

once inside the door of any house, you are in the midst of Eastern magnificence; the centre of the house is composed of a marble court, with a fountain shaded by orange and lemon trees, in one corner is a recess raised a step above the court, with beautifully painted walls and damask silk divans, where the guests are received and invited to partake of refreshment. All the rooms open into this pretty court; they too have each their recess at one end, furnished with Persian carpets and cushions, and their little fountain of cool running water. The ceilings are beautifully carved and painted, and the windows are all latticed with carved wood or marble, and are very light and graceful. A long passage leads into an inner court, larger and handsomer than the entrance one, where are the apartments belonging to the ladies of the family. I am describing to you the house of a great Bey of Damascus, which we went over, but they are all much the same, only more or less handsome.

When we reached the door of the inner court the gentlemen were left outside, and we entered alone. There was at first no one to be seen, but suddenly a door opened, and out rushed a perfect crowd of women—old and young, pretty and ugly, all wearing over their bare feet the peculiar slippers

of the town. These slippers, or rather "pattens," were made of wood inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and were raised on two upright bits of wood underneath, nearly a foot above the ground, so that the ladies almost looked as if they were walking on stilts. With these they clattered across the marble pavement, and making most friendly salutations ushered us into the reception room, leaving their slippers at the door. As we had no interpreter it was difficult to carry on a conversation, but we made the most of our few words of Arabic, and that useful word "taib," which means "good," "nice," &c. came in very often; they amused themselves with adorning our hats with some natural flowers we had in our hands, but I am happy to say they did not proceed to investigate our crinolines, as they did some days after that of another English lady.

After drinking sherbet we went over their different beautiful rooms. In one there was the most lovely child I ever saw, lying asleep in its cradle; we expressed our admiration of it, and should have liked to have peeped into its cradle, but its mother, a very pretty young woman, evidently did not wish us to look at it closely, and hurried us out of the room. She had inquired before whether we had children of our own, and hearing we had none, I

think she was afraid we should look on hers with an "evil eye," when some dreadful misfortune would happen to it. They are very superstitious about the evil eye, and even Ali, who is more enlightened than most Orientals, from having travelled so much with Europeans, and who quite despises many Mahometan traditions and beliefs, is firmly convinced that nothing wards off a misfortune or death wished for by some one with the "evil eye."

The Damascus bazaars are, I believe, the most striking in the world. They are much higher and loftier than those in Cairo, and have a finer show of Oriental goods. There are all sorts of gorgeous cloaks of every colour, woven in gold or embroidered in silk, silk dresses bright as the rainbow, and cottons as gay as a parrot, silver ornaments and jewels of great value, but these make no show and are stowed away out of sight unless asked for, so that the jewellers' bazaar is the least pretty though the most noisy, as all the hammering and beating of the silver goes on in each stall. Each bazaar here is set apart for one trade, so that down one street you see nothing but scarlet slippers for the men or wooden ones for the women; in another, lines of saddles with their brilliant trappings; in a third, dresses, and so on. Happily our sombre

colours of brown, grey, or black, are never seen in the East, so that even saddles and boots look pretty hanging all along the sides of the bazaar. The great merchants of Damascus do not sell their goods in these bazaars, but in large khans, which are fine buildings in the form of a square, with a fountain in the centre; here they range their goods either on the marble floor or stow them away in rooms upstairs. We made some small purchases of a merchant in one of these khans, and before we left he invited us to sit down, and presented us with some refreshing iced cream which he sent for from a neighbouring café.

Our tents are pitched outside the town, in one of the shady gardens, and as it is some way to walk to them we made our luncheon to-day at a pretty café or eating-shop, covered with vines and flowering shrubs; our meal consisted of "pilafs," bits of meat put on a skewer and roasted. The skewer is given to you covered with these little pieces, which you pull off with your fingers.

The street called "Straight" still exists in Damascus, and one still sees here houses built along the top of the city wall, reminding one of Rahab, who lived upon the "town wall" of Jericho, and who let the spies down by a cord through the window. Some of the windows belonging to these

houses project over the wall, and probably from such an one S. Paul was let down in a basket.

From Damascus we are going to the Cedars of Lebanon, but as there is still a great deal of snow on the mountains we cannot cross them yet, but must go to Beirût, and work our way up by the sea coast. This will make our journey so many days longer, but we are all rather glad of that, as our tour is so nearly approaching its end.

LETTER VIII.

Beirût, May 1.

THIS is a real May-day, so sunny and hot that perhaps I should be more correct in saying it is like an English midsummer day; one wishes it had come earlier, as we have been nearly drowned in the rain since we left Damascus. Now all rain is over till next autumn, and soon everything will be scorched and dried up, and every one will be eating dried vegetables as we do in the winter.

We are waiting here for fresh mules to go into the Lebanon, as the Jerusalem muleteers will go no further; and as the mountain paths are, we hear, worse than any we have yet encountered, we mean to leave as much baggage behind as we can do without. These arrangements delay us here a little, and while E. and M. are repacking I will begin another journal letter to you.

I know by experience that descriptions of scenery

one has not seen are very tiresome, so I will not tell you of the wonderful gorges, beautiful valleys, and rushing rivers we passed on our road from Damascus. You will be quite content to hear it was very lovely, the mountain sides being covered with vineyards and olive groves, while the fields in the valleys were surrounded with hedges of white roses all in flower, and the grand mountain torrents were very picturesque to look at, though very unpleasant to cross. They were much swollen with the heavy rains, and we were sometimes obliged to gather up our feet round the horses' necks to avoid getting wet. We ourselves never met with an accident, but our poor old cook, who looks as if he had never been on a horse's back before, managed to slip off while crossing a rushing torrent. He was too frightened to help himself out, but clinging to the horse's neck and crying loudly, there he remained till a muleteer came to his rescue. Poor man, he had a miserable life of it, and I cannot think how he will face the difficulties of Lebanon travelling. He is an Egyptian, and looks upon rain as one of the greatest calamities of life, and one cannot help laughing on a bad day to see him endeavouring to cook the dinner wrapped up from head to foot in a thick abba. Ali overheard him saying to himself one day, "O, Hammed, you were

a fool to come here; what could make you do such a foolish thing? Ah, Hammed, I know what it was made you do it,—it was money; yes, it was money did it. But oh, Hammed, it was a foolish thing you did!" And I quite agree with him.

On the second day after leaving Damascus, we reached a place called Surghaya, a beautifully situated village where we were to encamp for the night. A pouring day had, however, so soaked the ground and ourselves, that we determined to try and find shelter under a roof, though the houses were not very prepossessing in their appearance. It is rather amusing coming in contact with the natives in this manner, and one therefore hardly regrets the little contretemps of weather that forces us out of our tent exclusiveness. Ali rode round the village to survey the houses and see which looked the least unpleasant, and at last pitched upon one into which we were eagerly invited. It looked much like a bad cow-shed outside, and it stood in such a sea of mud that we had to be carried on the backs of men through the courtyard, our horses not being able to get through its narrow doorway. The house consisted of one large room, the upper end raised a step above the lower end, where there was a half-door, leading into a cattle-shed, and a little kind of closet, where the mattresses were stowed away in

the day time, and where the daughter of the house slept. There was no window of any kind, the only light being admitted through the door, but the room was large and clean, and in a few minutes the floor was swept down and a large wood fire lighted to dry our clothes, and we felt very thankful as we heard the rain fall in torrents that we had a dry floor for our feet and a roof over our heads. We wondered where the family disappeared to, but a flitting in the East can never be a serious matter as regards household furniture—a few mats, mattresses, and pots and pans, is all a Syrian peasant requires in his home, and these, with the owners of the house went out, as we and our much more cumbersome tent furniture entered.

When the evening came we heard a loud thumping at the house door, which we kept locked to prevent the entrance of all the villagers, and on opening it were not a little surprised to see a woman waiting outside with goats, donkeys, cows, and calves; these she quietly drove into the stable at the lower end of our room, where they passed the night. They behaved very properly, not disturbing us by any noise, which is more than can be said of the cat, who would not be turned out, and was so indignant at our forcible possession of the house that she kept up an incessant mewing by the side of our

bed. As we lay thus almost side by side with the cattle, it seemed even more easy than it did at Bethlehem itself, to realise the scene of that night when, the inn being full, the travellers from Nazareth were compelled to take up their abode in a stable.

The people of the house were most kind, and their daughter, a pretty young woman, constituted herself our waiting-maid; she wore a quantity of coins in her hair, and a kind of brooch with a turquoise in the middle fastened into her nostril. This is the ornament, I suppose, mentioned in the Bible as the "nose jewel" worn by the Jewish women. She was a vain little thing, and pulled off the veil which covered her head to exhibit to us her long hair; just as she had shaken it all over her shoulders, Ali came into the room, when she pretended to be much shocked at being without her veil, but we observed she was in no hurry to put it on, and then so arranged it as to leave her hair visible. Our tight habit bodices and small waists excited her astonishment, and she put her hands round her own waist, which, like that of all Eastern women, was like a pillow, and then pointed at ours, as if to inquire what could make the difference. She was so amused at all she saw going on that we could hardly drive her out of the room. We were probably the

first Europeans she had seen so near, or whose clothes she had ever touched.

When we left Surghaya the next morning, we were warned by the villagers that a body of robbers was prowling about the neighbourhood, so it was thought prudent to keep with the baggage all day. As we were riding along a lonely road without a habitation to be seen, we suddenly perceived two men galloping down the side of a mountain, apparently making towards us with no good intention. Ali turned very white, and calling up one of our men, they advanced, guns in hand. It was an anxious moment, for what could we have done to defend ourselves in that lonely place had the rest of the robbers been behind? We must have stood and delivered. On their nearer approach we happily found that though robbers, they were not looking for further plunder, but were escaping with a stolen sheep which one man was carrying before him on his horse. They left us unmolested.

We have had one or two alarms during the course of our travels, but none that have ended in a serious adventure, nor have we been robbed, though travelling without a regular guard. It is Ali's boast that nothing has ever happened to any of "his families," and I think the good luck that always attends those travelling with him is owing to

his great vigilance. He gets up every night at twelve and keeps watch till morning; the cook, and Munsoor, the manservant, are supposed to be our guardians till then, but their watch consists in lying down outside our tents and sleeping so soundly that we have gone from one tent to the other, walking almost over them, without their being aware of our movements. The B—s, who like ourselves, were encamped in a garden outside the gates of Damascus, were robbed of everything while there. The thieves got in under the tents while they were asleep, and managed to carry off the gentlemen's watches and a portmanteau full of Miss B.'s clothes. They took all the best things and threw away the rest on the banks of the river, where they were found next morning.

Now I must tell you of our visit to the wonderful ruined Temples of Baalbec, as they are among the most famous and most beautiful ruins in the world. The word Baalbec means the City of the Sun, which you know in ancient days was worshipped as a God. The Phenicians worshipped it under the name of Baal, the false God of whom we read so much in the Bible, and the gigantic stones forming part of the wall where the Roman Temples now stand, are probably the remains of some very early temple built by them to the honour of this

God Baal. These gigantic stones are one of the wonders of the place; two of them are sixty-four feet long, and one cannot imagine how they ever got where they are, it looks so impossible for them to have been raised to their present height above the ground. However, there they are, and at some little distance there yet remains a huge stone nearly seventy feet long, quarried ready to be removed, waiting perhaps for thousands of years for hands that have never come, to put it in its destined place.

There are three temples at Baalbec, supposed to have been built by the Romans, one dedicated to the Sun, another to Jupiter, and a smaller one to Venus, all now in ruins partly from a great earthquake, which shook down rows of beautiful columns, and destroyed walls that would long have resisted the ravages of time, or of man. If I were to describe the temples to you, I am afraid you would think my letter very dull, and would perhaps skip the descriptions, so I shall refer any of you who would care to hear more about them to mamma, who will read you a better account than anything I can write.

The last part of our journey to Beirût was made along a good road, leading from Beirût to Damascus, the only one that exists in the length or breadth

of Syria; curiously enough it was the only place where we met with an accident. Our horses which pass strings of camels without heeding them, are almost frightened to death at the sight of a cart or carriage, and as we were riding up one of the steep zigzags of the mountain, we met the great lumbering diligence with six horses galloping down; it looked no doubt like a moving house to our poor nags, who dared not face it. To avoid the strange and terrible object Granny's horse bolted up a steep bank, while E.'s horse made straight for a dead wall which supported a terrace of earth, and naturally not being able to take it, he fell back, with E. underneath him. It was fearful to see, and we hardly dared think of what might have happened, but in a few minutes she got up much bruised and shaken, but without serious hurt, the poor horse escaping with a good many cuts, and a lame leg.

There was a great deal of rain and mist on the top of this mountain road, but as we gradually descended, beautiful peeps of the smiling valleys below opened to us, and the white houses of Beirût were marked sharply against the sky with the deep blue Mediterranean beyond. I can hardly describe to you how beautifully green and flourishing this country looks, every little plot of ground

is cultivated, every house has its garden filled with oranges, and pomegranates, now bright with its scarlet blossom, and the people dressed in their summer costume, look so smart and clean, that after the barrenness of Palestine with its wild and half naked inhabitants, this seems like fairy land. The heat is very great, but our hotel is out of the town, and is situated on the edge of the sea. It has a broad verandah shaded by an immense mulberry tree; this is the passage from one room to the other, where all visitors are shown, as into a sort of public drawing-room.

We have just received a visit from an old acquaintance, and his Syrian wife, who cannot speak a word of any language but Arabic. She rode on horseback to pay us a visit, and had natural flowers in her hair, and a little kefiyeh thrown over her head. Our conversation with her flagged as you may imagine, as her husband evidently preferred an English talk with us, to acting interpreter of the polite speeches passing between ourselves and his wife. At the time of this visit, Granny had on an old bonnet which has seen a good deal of service, and is now pretty nearly shapeless; this she examined with great curiosity, asking if it were the latest fashion from Paris. Granny at first was half inclined to apologise for its appear-

ance, but then thinking that would not do, as the lady seemed to admire it, she answered, that it had been the fashion when we left England. With this answer, Mrs. —— seemed highly content, saying she thought it was quite a new shape! You may imagine we had a good laugh afterwards.

She has a beautiful little girl of ten years old, who goes to an English school established here for Syrian children, by a rich and good English lady, but her father talks of sending her home to England to be educated. Poor little thing, she could hardly survive being taken away from the free mountain life to which she has been used from her birth, and how she would astonish English schoolgirls! The day we saw her, she was dressed like a native child, with a little white kefiyeh over her head, her neck covered with ornaments, and her hands painted with different devices. She was very much ashamed of the dye on her fingers, and instead of shaking hands with us, as she was bid, hid them behind her back; none but the women of the lower classes paint their hands now, and she did not therefore like strangers to see them, as her father would have been displeased, and she knew it was below her dignity, either as a Syrian or an English young lady.

May 5th, Eh'den.

I will add another page to my letter to-night, as we break up our encampment again to-morrow, and turn our steps homewards. Eh'den, from which I am dating my letter, is a lovely little village in the heart of the Lebanon, lying nestled among groves of mulberry and walnut trees, under a group of which by a bright running stream, our tents are pitched. We have been spending a day or two here, to make excursions to the famous cedars of Lebanon, and other places near. All the Lebanon is very beautiful, and most highly cultivated: every spot of ground is made use of, however precipitous or rocky, and broad terraces are carried up from the base to the very tops of the mountains, either sown with corn, or planted with vines, mulberries, or fig trees. Almost before the snow is off the ground, on the higher parts of the mountains, one sees the peasant with his rough plough, turning up the light soil, ready for the seed which soon comes up under this burning sun. Not only must the Lebanon husbandman be industrious, but he must be persevering, for the terrace he has built up so carefully one year for his little crop of wheat, is often destroyed the next

winter by the heavy snows, and where the wheat was one year, the next there is nothing but rocks and stones. He is not disheartened, but makes another terrace, and so it comes to pass, that precipitous places which look only fit for goats to climb, are here bright with vegetation.

A mulberry tree is planted wherever it is possible for one to grow, as the leaves are a great source of profit, as food for the silkworms; just now, all the peasants are busily employed in gathering them, and the trees are already beginning to look quite wintery. The houses for the silkworms are generally in the mulberry groves; they are formed of reed canes, and have rows of shelves filled with trays made of hard mud, where the silkworms lie, feeding on the mulberry leaves. Little branches of stick are placed near them, to spin their silk upon. Before they begin to form the cocoon, they will not eat, and remain for two or three days without food; this they do four times in succession.

The Lebanon villages are very picturesque, and are built in the most wonderful places possible, on almost perpendicular sides of mountains, and hanging over precipices into which it seems as if the slightest accident would hurl them; convents and churches too are perched on the top of cliffs, in

places where you would rather expect to find eagles' nests than habitations for men. From all sides, one hears the welcome sound of the church bell, a sound familiar enough at home, but one which never reaches the traveller's ear while in Palestine. The greater part of the population are Christian, and one can travel about anywhere in the Lebanon without fear of insult or injury, if one wanders far from the tents, every one gives you a civil word of greeting, as they pass.

Though they do not openly rob you like the Arabs, they can pilfer, as well as their neighbours, and a few days ago Lady —— had a watch-case she valued, stolen out of her tent, while encamped at the cedars. As we were going in that direction, we promised to make inquiries about it for her, and we mentioned the loss, (it was not thought polite to use the ugly word theft,) to a smart looking man who joined our muleteers, and who said he was a native of a village near the cedars. We parted from him before reaching Eh'den, but he promised on arriving at his native village to do his best to recover the lost property, and agreed if he could find it, to meet us in two days' time at a certain place. At the stipulated time we arrived, and as we expected, found him waiting for us, saying he had got the case, but keeping his hands

behind him instead of giving it up. At last we made out that he would not let us have it, unless he first received the promised reward, and something extra for his own trouble in the matter. As he would not trust us, we were obliged to trust him, and Ali put the money into his hand, when to our dismay he took to his heels, jumped over a wall, and ran away as hard as he could! Ali galloped after him pretty fast, and we then found he was not running away with any dishonest purpose, but was going in search of the box which he had hidden in a hole some distance off, lest we should have seized it from him, and given him a punishment instead of a reward.

All the villagers of Eh'den are Maronite Christians and there are several primitive looking churches here. They are merely square buildings with flat roofs, out of which springs a small bell-tower. Many of them have a stone staircase built outside, leading directly to the roof, so that people can ascend and descend without entering the church itself. Here on the roof, we used to see the women spreading out their corn to dry, just as Rahab did at Jericho, when she hid the spies under the stalks of flax on the roof of her house. Some of the churches have no windows at all, the bright eastern sun giving sufficient light through the door,

others have a square opening with iron bars and a shutter. This latter is a necessary defence in the winter against the snow, which would otherwise drift into the building through the open bars; at that season, Eh'den enveloped in snow, is forsaken by its inhabitants, churches and houses are closed, and the people repair to a village lower down the mountain near Tripoli.

I must explain to you that the Maronites of whom I have spoken as inhabiting this part of the Lebanon, are a people who derive their name from an heretical monk of the name of Maroun, who in the fifth century collected a number of followers, and founded several convents in these countries. They remained separate from the Church till the twelfth century, when they joined the Latin communion, still retaining some of their own rites, and using the Syriac language instead of the Latin in their services. Their priests, who must be married, are a primitive set of men, living like their poor parishioners, and digging their land with their own hands.

Both priests and people came to our tents to give us a welcome, and were more pressing than was agreeable. The women, who are never shy, were especially friendly, and pulled out the little silver crosses hidden in their bosoms, or little pictures

painted on calico, to show us they were Christians. A ride of two or three hours takes you from Eh'den to the famous Cedars of Lebanon. The first part of the way is along a barren road, till the brink of a precipitous hill is reached, when looking down, you see the picturesque village of Bscher'eh hanging on the side of the rock, embedded in trees and gardens, and sparkling streams gushing from the mountain sides. This village is at the head of the magnificent gorge down which roll the beautiful falls of the Kadisha. In this district the women all wear a curious silver head-dress about a foot high covered with a white linen veil. Our road now turned towards the mountain, and in a few minutes a large dark, I might almost say black patch met our view, lying in the midst of an extensive plateau. This was our first sight of the Cedars. We rode on fast, and soon found ourselves in the presence of those patriarchs of the east. Once perhaps they were a mighty forest, now the extent of ground covered by them is not more than two acres. There are about eight very old trees, which one likes to believe were growing in the days of Solomon, as the cedar we know is a very long-lived tree. The smallest of the old trees is about twenty-four feet in girth, the largest nearly forty-five, while some of the branches are as large

as the main stems of many of the cedars that we are accustomed to see in England. We wandered about in quiet and peace, enjoying the sweet fragrant smell which came from a fire of cedar wood the muleteers had lighted, it being cold enough at that elevation to make the fire a luxury; how we groaned though as every fresh piece of wood was heaped on, for it was grievous that the cedars should be thus despoiled, and the old trees were those which were chopped for the fire.

I wish I had Solomon's gift, and as he did, could "speak of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall," for then I could do much more justice to these magnificent old cedars.

Fetrun: our last encampment in Syria.—To-day we have to bid adieu to our tents, and our happy tent life, and do so with more regret than I like to express. You can hardly think how sadly those words "last encampment" sound, and how melancholy we feel that in a few hours we shall be again in Beirût, our happy tour ended, and only a long sea voyage in prospect.

The place from which I am finishing this letter is a little Christian village on the top of one of the mountains of the Lebanon, and though it has been out of our way to reach it yet we are well repaid by

the beautiful view we get, and the sunset which we saw last night was worth any trouble. Peak after peak was lit up by the brilliant hues of the setting sun, while Jebel Sûnnin, the highest mountain of the Lebanon, capped with snow, towered above us.

On leaving Eh'den we had a grand squabble with the muleteers as to the number of days they would take to get to Beirût; we meant to reach it to-night, and this they declared was impossible, but we remained firm and said it must be done, so very early one morning we started. It was a lovely ride—every little patch of ground is cultivated, and the ravine along which we rode, one thousand feet in height, at times so narrows as to look merely like a deep chasm. You may fancy how narrow it is when I tell you that in one place there are two villages perched on opposite sides of the ravine, which are so close to each other that the inhabitants of one village can talk to those of the other, though, there being no such things as suspension bridges in this country, it takes two hours to walk from one to the other. At the bottom of the ravine, which we descended slowly and carefully, as it is rougher and steeper than anything you can imagine, there was a roaring river to be crossed by a rude bridge formed of two trees cemented to-

gether with earth and gravel, with no protection on either side. It was nervous work, but the horses went over quite quietly, tired out I think with bumping down the steep rocks that crop up in all directions, and which it makes my shoulders ache still to think of. After crossing the river, which was the Kadisha, we ascended the opposite side of the ravine, and on reaching a pretty mulberry grove stopped to rest and have our luncheon. On seeing us there the owner of the place came out with his very pretty little children, and presented us with a bottle of wine made from his own vines. As he gave it he begged us to understand he did not wish to be paid for it, and he seemed indeed quite satisfied with some Damascus oranges which we gave his children, and which they seemed highly to appreciate. Syrian children care quite as much for good things as English ones, and we can collect any number round us by the bribe of a few lumps of sugar. We are very much tempted to do so in these Lebanon villages, to Ali's great disgust, as the children are all sweetly pretty and quite clean, but alas, at Eh'den a spoon was missed, and as it was supposed (I dare say unjustly) that some little fingers had taken it, we do not venture again to let them hang round the tents. As we gradually ascended, the mountain clouds came rolling up till at

length we found ourselves enveloped in so thick a fog, that we stopped and pitched our tents at the first convenient resting place. I shall never forget the view that met our eyes the next morning when, on getting up, we found the curtain of clouds had lifted, and the beautiful landscape lay spread before us in the early morning light. We had after this to cross some of the highest peaks of the Lebanon, where we found the snow still quite deep in some places, or just melted, when pretty variegated crocuses and other spring flowers were peeping up among the rocks. Poor Mahommed, the cook, looked quite terrified at the sight of the snow, and rode on enveloped in his hood and cloak with a face of blank despair. We have suffered however, much more from heat than cold lately, and the sun is so powerful in the middle of the day that we sometimes lie down to sleep under a tree. Large flocks of goats browse on the mountains, and we get the shepherd to milk one of them sometimes as we pass, and find the goat's milk very refreshing. Once we met with a refusal, the shepherd saying he had no ewes in his flock, but one of our men who was very thirsty, was not to be put off in this manner, and ran up the mountain till he found a ewe, which he caught and milked into his mouth!

As Ali does not know this part of the Lebanon well, we have had a native guide with us, who is a Metuali, a sect of the Mahometans; they are a wild savage set of men, and are much hated by people of all religions. I must say however, that our guide though a Metuali was very good-natured and kind to his Christian employers. If he saw any of the party looking alarmed at having to cross some deep and rapid torrent, he would instantly pull off his shoes and plunge up to his waist in water, to urge on the horse and encourage the rider. By the rules of his religion he could not taste any food cooked by or belonging to a Christian, and for a little while he merely ate the bread which he bought in the villages we passed, but when Ali assured him that the cook was a Mussulman he was induced to eat some meat. I suspect the sight of our good dinners was too great a temptation for him.

A poor little boy who belongs to the donkey which carries the provender, has excited my compassion greatly. He started from Beirût with a large pair of yellow slippers "a world too wide" for his feet, and in crossing one of the rapid torrents they were swept away, and he has had ever since to follow us over rocks and stones with bare feet, which have got so sore and bleeding that we

see him often sitting down holding them both with his hands. He picks his way slowly and carefully whenever he can, but this is not always possible, and when we reached the snow his sufferings were terrible. It looked as if it must be cool and refreshing to his poor sore feet, but it was treacherous, for beneath it were sharp-pointed rocks, which being unseen were all the worse.

We had another dispute with our muleteers, as we found that they were intending to return to Beirût by some dull shorter road they knew of in order to reach it by the stipulated time; by this arrangement we should have lost seeing a great natural bridge that is one of the wonders of the Lebanon. We explained this to them, but they persisted there was no such place as this bridge, and seeing our incredulity, they called up the sheick of the village where we were encamped to confirm their words.

As Ali did not know the road, we must have yielded and gone their way had we not accidentally come upon a man who had been acting guide to an English party, and offered to do the same by us; after a great deal of noise and squabbling it was arranged that we should ride round by the natural bridge, and the baggage should come to this village of Fetrun, where we were to meet them. This

plan entailed a very long and precipitous ride upon us, but happily we did not know how bad it was going to be; the only way down some of the mountain sides was by water-courses made by the torrents from the melting snow. If I were to describe some of the places to you you would think I was exaggerating, and telling travellers' stories, for to your English ideas it would seem impossible for anything but a goat or a rabbit to go down the places which our horses carried us safely over. When we groaned over the sight of some hopeless looking place, the guide used to turn round to Ali with the comforting assurance that it would be "worse by-and-by."

After many hours of rough riding we reached the bridge, which is formed by a large rock in the shape of a semicircular arch, a hundred and sixty-three feet in span and eighty-three feet high, and through which runs the Dog river, or Nahr el Kelb. It is a wonderful place, as you may imagine, but we could not tarry there long, for the guide, who had told us some time before that we could reach the tents in three hours, now said they were five hours off. Not daring therefore to trust to his calculation of time we hastened on, but had not gone far when C.'s horse lost its shoe. It happened to be a feast day, so we could not get it shod at any village we

passed through, and in a little time it cast another. As it slipped at the same moment C. narrowly escaped being pitched over its head on to the top of a house which was built on the side of the precipitous path we were riding down, greatly to the alarm of a woman who was standing on its roof, and who uttered a loud scream.

At length we reached a beautiful glen called the Wady Sabib, the sides of which are two thousand feet high; and fancy our dismay at hearing that we should find our tents at the top of the mountain on the opposite side of the Wady.

At the end of a very long day we had, with tired horses, to make an almost perpendicular descent of two thousand feet, cross a rough bridge at the bottom, and then ascend the same height by an equally steep path on the opposite side. One always finds strength for the last effort, and we accomplished the feat without any worse consequences than great fatigue, and found our tents ready for us at this little village of Fetrun, with of course a crowd of curious peasants lounging around. After dinner the superior of a Maronite convent near came to pay us a visit. He has passed five years in Rome, and was thankful to find travellers with whom he could have some little conversation, as his neighbours are mere Syrian

peasants, and the Maronite priests are no better educated than their flocks.

He presented us with a large bottle of wine manufactured in the convent, which we visited this morning to please him: there was nothing to see there but a simple little chapel, and a large vaulted room with no other furniture than a rickety old bedstead, and a row of large jars filled with different sorts of wine. He insisted upon our tasting them all,—not the most agreeable treat, considering that each seemed more nasty than the last, and it was six o'clock in the morning. It was his only way of showing us hospitality, poor man, and of course we took it as it was meant. He is now doing the honours of the village and the church to the rest of our party, and as I am too tired to accompany them I have taken advantage of the spare time to finish this letter to you.

I have not been able to tell you half of what I should have wished in any of my letters, but I hope that the little information they may have contained, will give you some idea of the habits and customs of Eastern life, and if anything I have written makes you wish to read more about the places mentioned, the time spent in writing to you will not have been wasted.

J. MASTERS AND SON, PRINTERS, ALDERSGATE STREET, LONDON.

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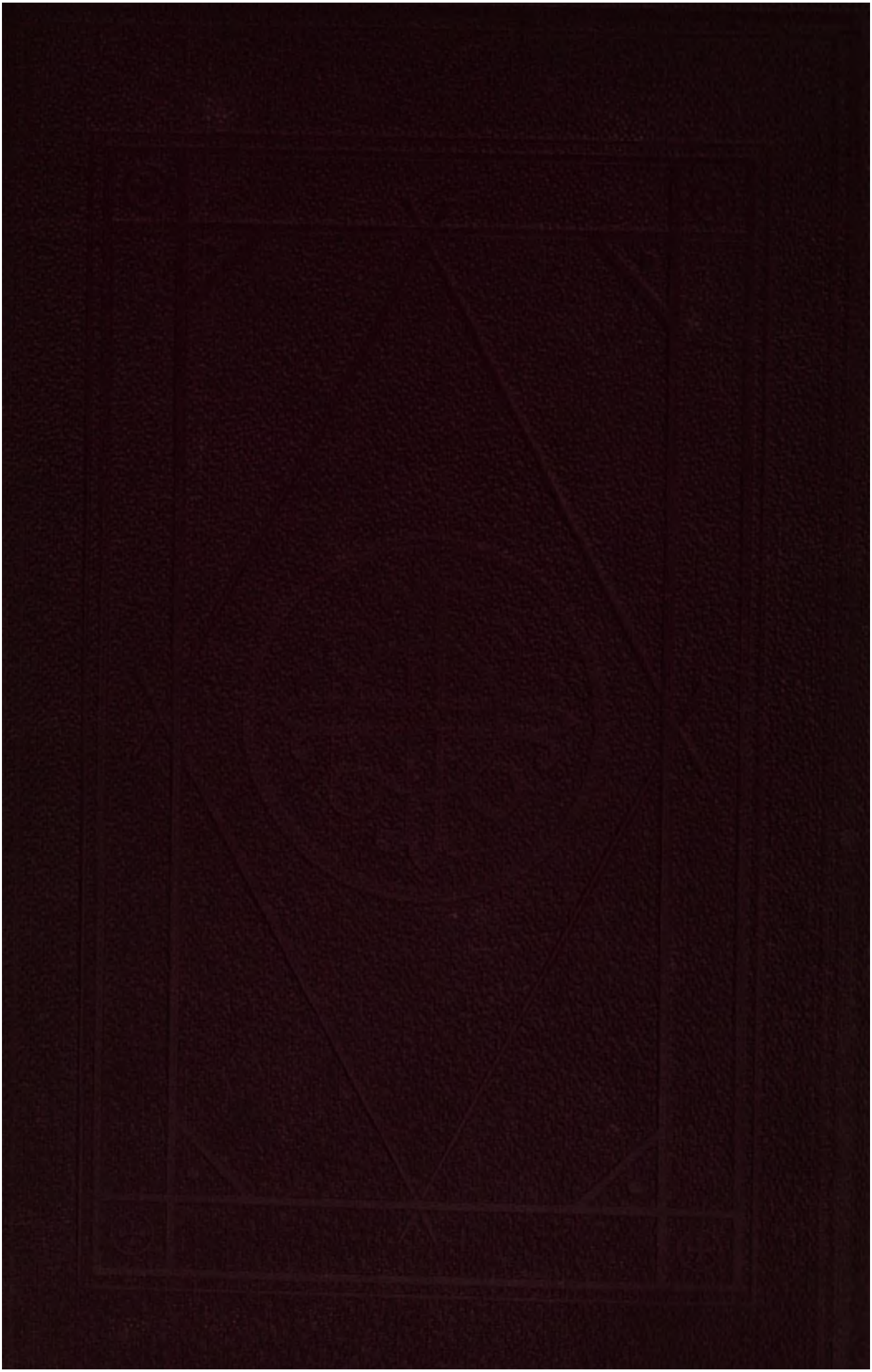
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