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FROM THE TRAVELER'S NOTE- BOOK

The Twenty-Third Psalm

The Lord is my shepherd;

I shall not want [Pastured:]

He maketh me to lie down in green

He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: [Feed for his name's sake.]

He leadeth me in the paths of righteous-

ness, though I walk through the valley of the

shadow of death,

I will fear no evil:

For thou art with me; [shadow of death,

Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou hast prepared a table before me

In the presence of mine enemies.

Thou hast anointed my head with oil;

My cup runneth over

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

All the days of my life,

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord

forever.



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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PALESTINE
WITH THE
TWENTY-THIRD
PSALM



E.E. VIOLETTE

CINCINNATI

The Standard Publishing Company

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From the blooms that border Biwa
 To the tombs along the Nile;
From the snows along the Yukon
 To the Thames in Britain's isle;
From the ghats along the Ganges
 To the brig o'er bonnie Doon—
We have traveled far together
 In the ships of Night and Noon.
To my wife who journeyed with me
 To the wide ends of the earth,
My travel-chum, my de-luxe pal,
 This tale, whate'er its worth.

E. E. V.

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I

A SOUVENIR SEEKER



IT was Sabbath morning in the Holy City. The worshipers were thronging the narrow streets of the Jewish quarter, bound for the synagogues. A sight-seeing tourist and a truth-seeking traveler pushed their way through the motley crowd, passed under the ancient arch of Zion Gate, and stood for a few minutes with uncovered heads at the tomb of David, without the city wall. The former took his knife and chipped a fragment from a stone in the corner of the historic sepulchre. He labeled his prize and

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placed it in his bag of curios to carry home as a memento of his pilgrimage to the burial-place of the Psalmist. The chief travel-aim of this globe-trotting tourist was the crass task of gathering relics from storied shrines throughout the world.

"I fooled him that time," he said as he put the bag in one of his roomy pockets. "Think of a piece of stone from the very tomb of David!"

"Whom did you fool?" asked his companion—"David?"

"No, the Turkish guard, whose back was turned when we stood over there at the corner," replied the tourist.

The two passed down the hillslope westward, skirted the Field of Blood, came out upon the old highway just south of Lower Gihon, and made off over this world-old path-

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way of patriarchs and prophets, in the direction of Bethlehem. One sought for a footprint of some great man of God in the limestone roadway, while the other gazed upon the blue, blossom-crested hills of Judea, and thought of the imprint of the mighty lives that had moved and wrought along this selfsame way, upon the history and literature of the world.

A journey of little more than an hour brought them to the rude Mohammedan structure that covers the cave in which Rachel has slept for some four thousand years. Another vandal-scar was left on a sepulchre doorpost and one more curio was added to the tourist's relic-bag.

Resting for a long time beneath a gnarled olive hard by, the men entered into earnest conversation about the wonders of the little land

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in which they were pilgrims, the strange stories of the peoples that had come and gone upon it, and the influence of the matchless Book which it had given to the world.

“Minding each other of some sacred spot,
Minding each other of some word forgot;
So gathering up till all the whispered words
Went to the four winds like a flight of birds.”

Then deep silence fell in the shadow of the olive-tree, and the men began to think, each after the fashion of his mind. Neither spoke to the other for many minutes. One wore a puzzled look as he thought of the difficulties of storing his collection of souvenirs so as to cause no comment in passing the customs, homeward bound; but withal, he congratulated himself upon the many new curios he had added during his five weeks in Palestine. The other dreamed of telling the world of the

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new inspiration and the new vision of the world-task that Holy Land travel had brought into his life.

The tourist renewed the conversation by remarking that he would "never be satisfied" unless he could get hold of some "actual and authentic souvenir" that had really been touched by some person of "Biblical fame."

Bethlehem, city of David, birth-place of the Messiah, stood out in clear, white beauty not far to the southward. Fleeting clouds cast moving shadows of brown and gray over that somber pile, the Church of the Nativity. Laughing children and fair-faced women passed to and fro from a small group gathered about a sturdy Greek youth who was drawing water from the old well in the open space before the quiet little city.

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“There is Bethlehem, the city of David,” remarked the tourist. “Do you suppose it would be possible to find there some trinket or relic that belonged to David himself?”

“David’s well is still there, and its identity has never been questioned by scholarship,” answered the traveler. “That Greek yonder is drawing water from the well this very minute.”

“But I could not take the well home in my pocket,” rejoined the other.


“Let us be going,” said the traveler, “and I will take you to a spot that David loved even more than he loved Bethlehem; and there we shall surely discover for you something that David really left.”

Some little horseshoe to nail o’er the door,
Some little trinket to love more and more,
Some little relic touched by some great hand,
To take to my home from this little land.

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II

THE FOUNTAIN OF DAVID

RADITION locates a living fountain some six miles from Jerusalem, less than two miles northeast of Bethlehem, as the place where David watched his flock. It is called the "Fountain of David." A beautiful Hebrew faith has clung to this as the setting for the twenty-third Psalm. Here, says legend that is almost historical, David wrote his best-known song.

Thither the traveler who had visited the spot many times, led his companion. Leaving Rachel's tomb, they started over the rugged field

IN PALESTINE WITH

in an easterly direction. The olive beneath which they had rested, marked their nearest approach to Bethlehem. They soon entered a winding sheep-path which trailed down into a green valley literally carpeted with red poppies, sometimes called roses of Sharon, and lilies of the valley. Wading through this flowered field, resplendent in its April garb of red and green and white, the pilgrims climbed a steep hill, the brow of which marked the western border of the field where the tender Ruth gleaned in the days of Boaz.

“Here,” said the traveler, “is a place fraught with many holy memories of the things of sacred story. We are between the city of David and the city of the Great King. Just over there, near the ruin of that Crusaders’ Church is the spot en-

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shrined in Christian hearts as the traditional site where the shepherds heard the message and song of the angels long time ago. A short distance to the west is the cave of Adullam, still haunted by the spirit of David and his four hundred."

But the tourist had been promised something that David had left, and was therefore in no mood to think seriously of the wonder-scenes through which they were passing. He longed to find one of the pebbles which David cast at Goliath, or a piece of his shepherd's crook, or a gem from his royal crown. He thought what a priceless possession would be his if he could but find the broken spear of David, the man of war.

"Do you suppose," he said to his friend, "that the trading tribes of Palestine have any jewelry or other

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precious articles dating back to the days of David and Solomon?"

"Collectors of antiques have made many a valuable find by trading with Arabs and the wandering Bedawee of the Holy Land," the traveler answered, "but I scarcely think they have ever traced any jewelry back to David's crown collection, if, indeed, he ever had any."

With this they moved on eastward over an undulating field which bore evidences of an outworn fertility, but which was now littered with stones scattered willy-nilly almost as far as the eye could see. It had the appearance of a small wilderness of shrubbery and stones. Now and then a stray goat jumped across the pathway, and in the distance could be seen three or four flocks moving eastward ahead of them. They were following their

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shepherds in obedience to the weird, luring call which could be distinctly heard above the bleating of the sheep. As they neared the slow-moving flocks the tourist tried to imitate the shepherd-call, only to frighten the sheep and cause them to run helter-skelter to the shadow of the rods of the protecting shepherds.

Passing the flocks, they went on until the stony field dipped gently down into one of the most beautiful valleys in Palestine. Wild flowers were growing in rich and profuse variegation, larks were flitting from shrub to shrub, and the verdant vale stretched like a vast velvet rug toward the slope of the hills overlooking the Dead Sea. Palestine is a country of entrancing landscapes, but from the Lake of God's Delight to the shores of the Red

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Sea no more bewitching panorama greets the traveler's eye. The whole scene presents the aspect of a shallow amphitheater.

Knee-deep in wild flowers, the men went down into the very heart of this green valley until they came to a small pool, from the bottom of which bubbled a quiet but living fountain of clear, cool water. A large rock a few yards from the fountain furnished an easy and natural resting-place, and on this, the tourist and the traveler sat together.

"This," said the traveler, "is the 'Fountain of David.' Here he led and fed his flocks and dreamed. Here we shall discover something that was really David's, something that he really left, and you may take it home with you as a most precious keepsake."

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With staring, wondering eyes,
the tourist sat on the stone beside
the still waters and listened while
the traveler told him the story of
the most beautiful heritage that
David left to posterity.

Only a word that hangs starlike,
Only a song that sings birdlike,
Yet that word with its light
And that song in the night
Are still speaking and singing,
And through centuries bringing
Hope, and the strength to do right.

IN PALESTINE WITH

III

PILGRIMS AND SHEPHERDS



AS nearly as possible, the writer will give from memory the substance of the tender story of the world-traveler as he sat in God's great out-of-doors beside the "Fountain of David." The coming of the shepherds, the beauty of the flowered landscape, the holy memories of the time of David, the bright sunshine of the glorious April day, and the surprised bewilderment of the tourist, all combined to make it a never-to-be-forgotten experience.

"Three thousand years ago a young shepherd led his flock in the

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midst of these pleasant places, just as we have seen the shepherds leading their flocks toward the green fields to-day. It is not improbable that he was seated on this very stone when the mystic messenger called 'inspiration,' known only to poets and dreamers, came into his wistful, trustful soul and the world's first immortal poem was breathed upon the flower-scented air. Or, perhaps this stone seat was his table as he wrote in pure Hebrew, past all forgetfulness, the song which alone would have made him famous.

"This flowered valley is greater than the battlefield on which David slew Goliath of the Philistines. The achievements of David, the man of war, are as nothing compared with David, the author of the twenty-third Psalm. David the singer is

— *Twenty-three*

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more powerful than David the king. The song is more potent than the scepter. To write an immortal poem is greater than to conquer in mortal combat. David's pen was mightier than his sword."

The traveler lifted his eyes westward, and stopped speaking as he saw one of the shepherds coming down into the vale with his flock.

"Here," he said, "we shall see enacted before our very eyes just such a pastoral scene as the one that gave birth to David's song."

As the shepherd drew nearer, the men observed that he was a tall, handsome fellow still in his minority, with facial characteristics decidedly Jewish. The traveler addressed him in Hebrew, and received a most courteous salaam in return.

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“How is it that you, being a Jew; lead your flock hither on the Sabbath?” queried the traveler.

“My father is a Christian teacher in the city of David,” he replied, “and the Messiah has restored the kingdom of David in our house. Now I worship God *every* day.”

“Do you live in Bethlehem, then?” inquired the tourist.

“Yes,” said the shepherd, “and I have kept my father’s flock in these fields for five days past, but now I have brought them for a little rest and quiet before starting back to the fold this mid-afternoon.”

Then the young shepherd went to the other side of the fountain and called to his sheep. Immediately they ceased grazing, and, approaching the edge of the pool, they lay down one by one, after drinking of the living waters.

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When the flock had become quiet the shepherd came again to the pilgrims, and told them that this was the favorite shrine of the shepherds of the whole south country.

“They come from all parts to the Fountain of David,” he said.

When he had thus spoken, another shepherd came down from the south fields into the valley. He stopped on the green slope as if in deep meditation.

“That,” said the Hebrew, “is an Arab with his flock. He is waiting for my sheep to rest a little season, after which he will come with his flock to the still waters. He is my friend and we meet here nearly every week. He lives eastward down in the plain, not far from old Hazon-tamar. When I go out toward Bethlehem he leads his flock

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out through yonder ravine toward the valley of the Dead Sea.”

As the shepherd went over to greet the Arab, the traveler pointed to the eastern slope of the vale to show the tourist the mouth of a ravine which seemed to form a natural gateway out into the blue hills beyond.

Soon the Hebrew paid obeisance to the pilgrims, called his flock, waved a farewell to his shepherd friend, and started out over the hills by a time-worn sheep-trail leading to Bethlehem.

“Good-by, David,” the tourist cried out, as the shepherd and his flock disappeared over the brow of the hill.

The Arab’s flock came down to the pool and rested for a little time in the soft grass, and then he, like his friend, led them away across

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the valley, disappearing in the mouth of the ravine.

“I am beginning to discover what David really left,” said the tourist, “and trinkets and relics are no longer worth while. A new and ever-living truth is mine.”

“Yes,” replied his companion, “here is something that one may keep forever. I love this fountain and its wonder-tale of the beautiful. The sweet voice that stilled the tempest in the heart of Saul is silent in the tomb on Mount Zion; the harmony of the Psalmist’s harp-strings is hushed for all time; the king’s scepter and the warrior’s spear are buried with the ruins of a kingdom long since decayed; but the strain of the twenty-third Psalm runs like a stream of silver through the sorrowing centuries, and it is still singing its song of blessed assurance to

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an ever-increasing multitude of believing listeners.”

The harp-strings are rusted and broken,
The kingdom has gone to decay;
The harpist-king sleeps on Mount Zion
Not far from the ancient gateway;

But the tender Psalm of the shepherd
Sings on through the wearisome years—
The shepherd may sleep, but his message
Still lives to dispel mortal fears.

IN PALESTINE WITH

IV

A PERSONAL POEM



AFTER the shepherds had gone and all was quiet in the valley the traveler took his note-book and wrote the Psalm in full. I shall set it down here just as I have it in his notes before me. A thousand times I had repeated the familiar song of the young shepherd singer, but the *intense personality* of it had never occurred to me until I saw it written thus:

“The Lord is *my* shepherd;

I shall not want.

He maketh *me* to lie down in green pastures:

He leadeth *me* beside the still waters.

He restoreth *my* soul:

Thirty —

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He leadeth *me* in the paths of righteousness for
his name's sake.

Yea, though *I* walk through the valley of the
shadow of death,

I will fear no evil:

For thou art with *me*;

Thy rod and thy staff they comfort *me*.

Thou preparest a table before *me*

In the presence of *mine* enemies:

Thou anointest *my* head with oil;

My cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow *me*

All the days of *my* life:

And *I* will dwell in the house of the Lord for
ever."

When he had finished the writing he gave it to the tourist, who read it aloud.

"I thought I knew the twenty-third Psalm," he said, "but I never really read it until now. It makes me homesick for God."

"That is the charm of it," said the traveler. "It makes one long for God, and, once he has been found, the poem becomes the most satisfying song of personal assur-

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ance in all literature. In it we hear the singer singing of himself and God as if nobody else lived in the whole world. Yet the reader who catches the Psalmist's spirit soon discovers his altruistic egotism, paradoxical as that may seem. Everybody's God is nobody's God. He must become personal. This the Psalm makes him in the highest possible sense. David begins with the Lord as his shepherd, and before he ends his short song, the Lord becomes *everything*. So the Lord becomes *everything* to *everybody* that grasps and holds the spirit of the twenty-third Psalm."

The tourist looked out upon the silent solitude about him. The spring day was surcharged with the very atmosphere of imagination.

"David must have been lonely out in these hills," he remarked.

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"Yes, and it is when man is isolated from his fellow-creatures and all alone with God that the outstanding longings of his soul find expression in some inspiring poem or song," said the traveler. "Thus Gray wrote 'The Elegy'; Tennyson, 'Crossing the Bar'; Bryant, 'Thanatopsis'; Omar, 'The Rubaiyat'; David, the twenty-third Psalm."

"I believe I could write a poem here myself," the tourist said dreamily.

"No doubt," replied his companion, "for this is the 'Poets' Corner' in the Abbey of Creation. Here, the most heart-searching poem of the ages was written."

Without attempting exact quotation, the writer will give the traveler's interpretation of the Psalm without reference to local coloring.

It is a song of *faith*—"The Lord

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is my shepherd;" of *assurance*—"I shall not want;" of *contentment*—"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;" of *peace*—"He leadeth me beside the still waters;" of *life*—"He restoreth my soul;" of *divine guidance*—"He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake;" of *confidence*—"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death;" of *courage*—"I will fear no evil;" of *companionship*—"for thou art with me;" of *comfort*—"Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me;" of *providence*—"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;" of *favor*—"Thou anointest my head with oil;" of *happiness*—"My cup runneth over;" of *blessing*—"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;" of *immortality*—"and I will

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dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

The tourist read again the seventeen brief lines, emphasizing, as he read, the words underscored in the traveler's notes.*

“To sing of so many themes in so short a song is almost too wonderful,” he said. “Faith, assurance, contentment, peace, life, divine guidance, confidence, courage, divine companionship, comfort, providence, divine favor, happiness, blessing, immortality—it is *too* wonderful!”

“*Seventeen* lines singing of *sixteen* themes, each a gift of Jehovah, and a blessing to the poet who mentions himself in *seventeen* personal pronouns in the little song. It *is* wonderful!”

“One does not have to come to Palestine to grasp the meaning of

* See *Frontispiece*.

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the twenty-third Psalm," ejaculated the tourist.

"Not necessarily," answered his companion. "The Psalm was born here, and is, therefore, most beautiful in its Holy Land setting, but the theme is universal. That is why the whole world loves it and sings it. I have seen it woven in silken scrolls on the walls in the homes of old Japan; I have heard it murmured by the mourners about the ghats along the Ganges; the coolies of Kowloon have sung it; it has been droned by the Druids, voiced in the night songs of Viking and Norman, and intoned in the litanies of the Latins; I have read it in Arabic and heard it hummed by the donkey boys among the tombs of upper Egypt; temple and synagogue, cathedral and abbey, church and chapel have echoed this anthem of

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hope and calm assurance every day since it first went to the winds; it is carved on ten thousand granite shafts and marble slabs in 'God's Acre' the world around; it is the bright Alcyone in the cloudy sky of human hope—it is beautiful everywhere, but I repeat that it is more beautiful in Palestine than elsewhere in the world."

"How *could* it be more beautiful?" asked the tourist. "To me it now shines in such new and infinite splendor that I see no room to beautify it more."

The departure of the shepherds and the slanting rays of the red sun reminded the pilgrims that they must be going if they would reach the city of David before nightfall.

"We must walk across the valley for a glimpse at yonder ravine and then hurry on to Bethlehem," said

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the traveler. "You know we are to be sunset guests in the house of my old friend, Sheik Abdul Suliman. You will like him because he is one of a very few, aristocratic natives preserving, in the entertainment of guests, all of the ancient dignity and beauty of Orientalism. We shall be favored princes in the house of a patriarch to-night."

In the same little town that the Psalmist loved
well,

We shall rest at the close of the day:
We shall hear an old tale that our host loves
to tell,
'Tis a tale that drives doubting away.

In the same little town where the shepherds, one
night,

Were lured on to the Lord by a song,
We shall hear an old song in a new and true
light,
With a strain that speeds mercy along.

In the same little town where the carpenter's son
Was a guest to the beasts in the hay,
We shall feast in a palace when this day is done,
And find cheer that will brighten our way.

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V

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW



LEAVING the pool of "still waters," the pilgrims strolled in meditative mood through the "green pastures" along the pathway of the Arab shepherd and his flock. Many paths led eastward from the Fountain of David, but the traveler had observed the one taken by the Arab. This trail they followed until they came to an elevated point about a hundred yards from the gateway of the gorge. Then they turned about and gazed eagerly over the lovely vista, the ancient trysting-place of the

— *Thirty-nine*

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shepherd-poet and his all-sufficient Jehovah.

“The native lovers of Hebrew legend and folklore tell us that David often stood here and watched his flocks,” said the traveler. “You observe that from this knoll we have a commanding view of the whole valley.”

“Yes,” answered the tourist; “even this perspective alone makes the ‘Shepherd Psalm’ shine with new luster.”

“It is not unthinkable,” observed the traveler, “that this was David’s inspiration point for the three opening verses of the Psalm. From this point, too, he would take his last look upon the fair fields before leading his flocks into the ‘gloomy ravine,’ translated ‘the valley of the shadow of death’ in our common English versions of the Bible. We

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have witnessed a literal reproduction of the very scenes that caused him to write of his Lord as a shepherd. What could be more natural than that David should, in his devotional dreams, exchange places with his sheep beside the 'still waters' and in the 'green pastures' which he had found for them, and then look to God as *his* shepherd who provided for *him* more, infinitely more, than a human shepherd could provide for his sheep?"

"Look at all those paths leading out from the pool," said the tourist. "They go in every direction. How do you suppose that Jewish shepherd knew which one led to Bethlehem?"

"These trails are as familiar to the shepherds of Judea as the stars in heaven to the astronomer," replied the traveler. "And it is just here

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that the Psalm changes the Lord from *shepherd* to *guide*. David looked upon this many-trailed area, and saw in it all a figure of the divergent paths of life. He guides his sheep in 'paths of right,' and this interprets for him the larger fact that God, *his* guide, leads *him* in 'the right paths for his name's sake.' "

There are so many paths that lead outward
O'er the hills to the great otherwhere,
That I know not which way may lead homeward,
Though my loved ones are waiting me there.

But the Lord, who in tenderness keeps me
In green vales where the still waters flow,
With his strong hand will lead me on safely
In the right paths wherever I go.

"Listen!" said the tourist. "What is that unearthly cry I hear? It comes from the shadows in yonder ravine."

"That is the shepherd's cry of warning," the traveler answered.

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“The Arab is conscious of danger, and is calling his flock to keep close to him in the gathering gloom of the canyon. The reverberations between the rugged walls give his voice that heart-smiting wail. I have often heard the cry in former years as I followed the shepherds into this ravine, and even on down into the dark lower valley that leads to the plain of old Engedi. The passing of the shepherds through this valley gave David the inspiration for the verse that immortalized the whole Psalm:

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death,
I will fear no evil:
For thou art with me:
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.’

“The way is dark and lonely, and the shepherd keeps close to his sheep and guides them over the perilous

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places: should they fall, he will pull them up with his staff: should wild animals threaten, he will protect them with his rod. What the shepherd does for his sheep, God will do for David in the dangerous valley, if perchance he should walk through it.”

“This, then, is ‘the valley of the shadow of death!’” exclaimed the tourist.

“Yes,” replied his companion. “This is the ‘valley of the *shadow* of death’—the valley across which death casts its alarming shadow. The *shadow* only indicates the proximity of death; the *substance* is felt only by him who has no divine Shepherd, no comforting staff, no protecting rod, once he enters this ravine of gloom—and it is a way that all men must sooner or later pass.”

Forty-four —

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The pilgrims stood gazing silently into the shadows of the gloomy ravine, listening to the shepherd's call as it grew fainter and fainter in the distance. One last faint shout of triumph, and the traveler knew that he had reached a place of safety with his flock.

"He is out of the valley and safe on the home path," he said to the tourist.

Safe on the home trail,
Safe on the long trail,
Safe on the trail of truth.

Then, with a voice clear as a bell and resonant with pathos, the traveler sang an old, old song that echoed and re-echoed down the deep ravine. The ancient lyric of faith seemed so appropriate in the hills of fair Judea that late afternoon, that the reader's heart will be refreshed to read it here:

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“We are going down the valley one by one,
With our faces toward the setting of the sun;
Down the valley where the mournful cypress
grows,
Where the stream of death in silence onward
flows.

“We are going down the valley one by one,
When the labors of the weary day are done;
One by one the cares of life forever past,
We shall stand upon the river brink at last.

“We are going down the valley one by one,
Human comrade you or I will there have none;
But a tender hand will guide us lest we fall,
Christ is going down the valley with us all.”

“God grant me a faith that will not shrink when I pass through my valley of the deep shadow,” fervently said the tourist, as the two friends left the Fountain of David and walked with quickened step toward the city of Bethlehem.

The shadows of the hills were thrown far across the open spaces, enshrouding the deep valleys with gloom. The last rays of the sun

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were kissing the tall spires and minarets of the Holy City. Bethlehem was becoming an indistinct mass in the gloom. The tide of darkness went creeping along the sheep-paths, driving the shepherds with their flocks to the sheepfold, and the men and women from their work in the fields. The phantom twilight brooded momentarily over the pilgrims as they passed along the imposing walls of the Church of the Nativity. They entered the ancient building for a moment of prayer at the Altar of the Manger Cradle, purchased a pearl rosary from the importunate priest at the outer door, and then hurried away through the narrow streets to a large house in the outskirts of the city. They paused for a breath at the gateway of the home of Sheik Abdul Suliman.

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“We have had a weary day,” said the traveler. But my old friend Abdul will give us food and rest and cheer before we resume our journey to the city of the Great King. I promised him that you would come with me to his house and he has been expecting us ever since the sun dropped behind yonder hills.”

“Perhaps we should now proceed to Jerusalem without accepting your friend’s hospitality, since it has grown so late,” rejoined the tourist.

“That would be unpardonable,” replied his companion. “And Abdul will add another chapter to our study of the twenty-third Psalm that will make our night walk to Jerusalem a new picture in our Book of Life. The stars will be brighter than ever above the old Bethlehem road to-night. The highway itself will shine anew.”

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM


“Behold, where night clutches the cup of heaven
And quaffs the beauty of the world away!
Lo! his first draught is all of dazzling day;
The next he fills with the red wine of even
And drinks; then of the twilight’s amber, seven
Deep liquid hues, seven times, superb in ray,
He fills—and drinks; the last, a mead pale-gray
Leaves the black beaker gemmed with starry
levin.

“Even so does Time quaff our mortality!
First, of the effervescing blood and blush
Of virgin years, then of maturity
The deeper glow, then of the pallid hush
Where only the eyes still glitter, till even they—
After a pause—melt in immenser day.”

IN PALESTINE WITH

VI

IN THE HOUSE OF HOSPITALITY

HE candlelights were gleaming through the windows as the two pilgrims passed the gateway and approached the house. Their host was expectant and ready, for no sooner were their footfalls heard on the gravel walk than the door was opened and Sheik Abdul Suliman himself came out beneath the open sky to meet them.

“Look up at the stars,” he said. “You may not count them, but they show you the number of times I bid you welcome, and the number of

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years I hope our friendship may endure.”

Taking hold of the corners of his broad mantle with either hand, he stepped between his guests, and, throwing it over their shoulders, he put his arms about them and led them into the house.

The servants removed the boots of the guests, bathed their feet and fastened soft sandals upon them. Then they were shown into a spacious living-room, which was furnished and decorated with carved woods, Oriental rugs and tapestries, and surcharged with the aroma of myrrh and frankincense. Wide, cushioned seats, or lounges, ran the full length of the room on two sides.

Abdul, the host, seated himself gracefully in the middle of one of the lounges, with his feet curled up beneath him. He invited his guests

IN PALESTINE WITH

to sit with him, one on either side, among the soft cushions.

“Did you come directly from the Holy City?” he asked.

“No, I have taken my friend to visit the Fountain of David,” replied the traveler.

“Then you are weary and must have something to refresh you before the evening meal,” said the host.

He called a servant to bring a table and another to bring Turkish coffee. The table was brought, and three small cups were placed by the time the coffee was ready to serve. One of the servants took hold of the brazen urn as if to pour the coffee, when Abdul, the host, motioned him away and took hold of the long, black handle himself. He filled the guests' cups to the brim and then poured into his own. Again

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM

he began pouring into the guest-cups until the coffee was running over into the saucers and upon the table.

“My cup is running over,” cried the tourist.

“That is as I would have thy cup of happiness whilst thou art a guest in my house,” said Abdul.

“We are honored more than we deserve in being your guests and in having you fill our cups with your own hand,” rejoined the traveler, bowing his gratitude.

“I would that thou couldst ever be with me and that all I have could ever be thine,” graciously said the host, as he reached for a golden-chased cruse which one of the servants had brought. As he removed the cover the rich perfume of oil of spikenard floated out to mingle with the aroma of myrrh and

IN PALESTINE WITH

frankincense already permeating the room.

“You recognize this?” said Abdul, addressing the traveler, as he gracefully waved the cruse to and fro in front of him.

“Yes,” answered the traveler. “It is an honor you have bestowed upon me in the years gone by. I am extremely happy if my old friend Abdul finds me still worthy to receive the anointing oil of favor in his hospitable abiding-place. I am unworthy of such *goodness* at his hands.”

“My long-time friend is not *unworthy*,” said Abdul. “But if such an impossible thing could be, still I should love him and show *mercy* to him in his *unworthiness*. I know thy heart, and I merely show thee *goodness* because thou art *worthy* indeed.”

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM

“Goodness and mercy attend all who come into the house of my lord, Abdul,” replied the traveler.

The tourist was so absorbed in the conversation between his friend and the host that he sat as one entranced. The twenty-third Psalm was growing in his heart as day increases with the rising sun.

Abdul lifted the cruse and anointed the head of the traveler, saying: “My blessing upon thee, my ancient friend.”

Then lifting the cruse above the head of the tourist, he poured out the remainder of the scented spike-nard, but, before he could add his word of blessing, the tourist was murmuring as if by instinct:

“Thou anointest my head with oil;
My cup runneth over.”

“Let us drink our coffee now,” said the host. “To whom shall we

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drink? It must be to some absent one."

"To David," suggested the tourist.

"Hast thou a name to propose?" asked Abdul, addressing the traveler.

"David, by all means," he replied.

"Then I drink to David, whose song led me to Bethlehem and to Sheik Abdul Suliman's house to-night," said the tourist.

"And I drink to David, whose song has been glorified in my friend's house to-night," said the traveler.

"And I drink to David, whose song has brought me companionship in my pilgrim friends to-night," said Abdul. "And may that song increase our hope of immortal companionship, that we may 'dwell in the house of the Lord for ever'!"

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A servant announced dinner, and the host led the way into the hall of the feast. And it was indeed a feast for the pilgrims at the close of their weary day. Savory meats, delicacies of all kinds, fruits and Carmel wine were spread upon the table.

“Thou preparest a table before me,” said the tourist, earnestly.

“And in the presence of enemies,” added the traveler.

“But that I do not understand,” replied his companion.

“You shall see what Abdul says when we leave for the Holy City to-night,” remarked the traveler.

Abdul was a royal host who regaled his guests in true Oriental fashion. He was a good storyteller—and a good listener, and the hour of feasting was all too short.

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Four times the servant had turned the hour-glass since the beginning of the Bethlehem day, and the sand had run a full half on another turn. It was half-past ten, and the guests arose to depart.

“Two of my servants will follow my guests to Rachel’s Tomb on the road to Jerusalem,” said Abdul. “The natives of Palestine look upon foreigners as ‘infidels.’ Several have been about the house to-night, and they will likely follow as my guests leave. Any who are not of my own race are considered enemies, but they will know my love for my guests if my servants follow them on their journey. Then they will not molest my friends on their night walk to the Holy City.”

“Farewell, Abdul. May the God of David keep you until we meet again,” said the traveler.

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM

“Good-by, Abdul. I wish I could live forever in such a house as yours,” said the tourist.

“May *goodness* and *mercy* follow my friends in every walk of life,” were Abdul’s last words to his departing guests.

“He did prepare a feast in the presence of enemies,” said the tourist, as they passed through the gateway and moved slowly along the unlighted streets of the city in the direction of the open space on the north, whence they should find the old roadway to Jerusalem.

“*Goodness* and *mercy* still follow us,” said the traveler, as he looked back when Rachel’s Tomb had been reached. The servants of Abdul were only a few yards behind them.

At the same olive tree beneath whose shadow they had rested in the morning, the pilgrims stopped

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and waited for the servants of Abdul to overtake them. The traveler dismissed them with "a gift," and bade them Godspeed as they turned again to the house of their master.

"Well, this is the end of a perfect day,
Near the end of a journey, too;
But it leaves a thought that is big and strong,
With a wish that is kind and true.

"For mem'ry has painted this perfect day
With colors that never fade,
And we find, at the end of a perfect day,
The soul of a friend we've made."

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM

VII

THE TRAIL OF IMMORTALITY

“’Tis midnight’s holy hour, and silence now is brooding
Like a gentle spirit o’er the still and pulseless world.”



ONLY one who has seen the stars on a clear night in Palestine could appreciate the beauty of the hour that had come upon tourist and traveler as they stood again at the solitary tomb of Rachel. Not a cloud could be seen in the sky, and new constellations and galaxies seemed to adorn the heavens, shining with a brilliancy that can only be seen when the soul is *en rapport*

— *Sixty-one*

IN PALESTINE WITH

with some new ideal of truth. An eerie stillness pervaded the atmosphere, and the old trail of the centuries loomed like a long line of lurid light amid the shadows on the hills ahead; the trees, silhouetted against the blue, starlit sky, were as specters moving on the landscape. Bethlehem was a dream-city of silence in the darkness behind them; and Jerusalem, with her rugged walls, was fringed with a border of star-sheen before them. The night journey was a fitting climax to the day at the Fountain of David, and the evening in the house of Sheik Abdul Suliman.

"It has been a beautiful day," said the traveler.

"Yes, a beautiful day and a wonderful night," replied his companion. "Every star in yonder sky is

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a Psalm of faith and hope to me now.”

“And the twenty-third Psalm?” asked the traveler.

“I have found a worthy memento that David left,” answered the tourist. “I am going to take it home with me and fit it into my little house of life as a window facing the sunrise. Through it, I shall see God as David saw him, and I shall look often upon the glowing trail that leads from my window to the house of the Lord, where *my cup shall run over*, where *goodness* and *mercy* shall attend me and where I shall *dwell forever*.”

“I am happy in our common fellowship with the oldest of the world’s poems and poets,” said the traveler. “The calm assurance and intense devotion of this matchless

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poem are contagious when one reads it among the flowered fields and underneath the stars. Millions have loved it and found comfort and strength in it, but its full measure of comfort and strength is found among the sheep-trails that lead to the Christmas city and the Fountain of David."

"And to the house of Abdul," added the tourist.

"That is another charm of this little flower of the literature of antiquity," said his friend. "It is at home in the land of its birth, and here in Palestine we find the golden key that unlocks its doors to the whole wide world in all generations. And it must not be interpreted by a heart that merely loves literary lore, but by a longing soul that believes and loves God. It was written by a man who had tried God in the

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conflicts and vicissitudes of life and found him true in *everything*; it finds interpretation in him who is willing to believe that *everything* is possible with God. It makes God and life and hope and faith *intense personal* facts to man."

"I love the *fourth* verse best of all," said the tourist.

"That is the popular verse," answered the traveler. "But I love the *last* because it lies beyond 'the valley of the shadow of death.' The faith that God is *everything*, so devoutly expressed in the whole poem, finds consummation in the confidence of immortality which shines in the last verse. 'I will dwell in the house of the Lord *for ever*' is the reasonable end of all human faith in God. No heart is satisfied with any other ultimate conception of the life of trust."

IN PALESTINE WITH

“If death be final, what is life with all
Its lavish promises, its thwarted aims,
Its lost ideals, its dishonored claims,
Its uncompleted growth? A prison wall
Whose heartless stones but echo back our call;
An epitaph recording but our names;
A puppet-stage, where joys and griefs and
shames
Furnish a demon-jester’s carnival;
A plan without a purpose or a form;
A roofless temple, an unfinished tale.
And men like madrepores through calm and
storm
Toil and die to build a branch of fossil frail,
And add from all their dreams, thoughts, acts,
belief,
A few more inches to a coral reef.”

When the pilgrims reached the edge of the Sheep Market above Lower Gihon, they paused to look upon the shepherds who were just wrapping their cloaks about them to lie down among their flocks. The bells of convent and monastery were ringing the hour of midnight in preparation for the Lord’s Day, with its round of early masses and

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prayers. The frowning battlements of the tower of David stood like night sentinels at the Jaffa Gate. They approached the portal, awakened the Turkish watchman, a friend of the traveler, who greeted them sleepily, shot back the bolt of the needle's eye and allowed them to pass through. They went to the hotel that stood just within the ancient walls, made their way to their room by the light of a flickering candle, and were soon fast asleep.

The room was filled with the red light of sunrise when the traveler turned in his narrow bed. The tourist was looking out at the east window upon the gilded housetops of the Holy City and watching the flood of daylight flow along the narrow streets. He saw the aimless multitudes thronging the thorough-

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM

fares as sheep having no shepherd.
He was saying softly to himself in
the light of the new day:

“The Lord is *my* shepherd;
I shall not want.


.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow *me*

All the days of *my* life:

And *I* will dwell in the house of the Lord for
ever.”

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