CHAPTER XVI

1854

O you Powers,
That can convey our thoughts to one another
Without the aid of eyes or ears,
Assist me !

PHILIP MASSINGER.

And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a burying-place by the sons of Heth.—GENESIS xxiii. 20.

IN preparation for our start to Hebron I slept at Sim's house near the Jaffa Gate, and Graham met us outside before sunrise. There seemed no hindrance to our starting at once, but Graham dismayed us by explaining that his camera was at the Olivet Tower, and that he must go over and fetch it. He advised us to go on, promising to overtake us with the tent and canteen ; thereupon we started. The journey was altogether enjoyable ; we paused once or twice while Sim descended in pursuit of partridges on the mountain, which, however, in their evasive running were too sharp for him. Seddon, who slept at the Bethlehem Convent, had arranged to meet us at Rachel's Tomb. Sitting on our horses for twenty minutes without sign of my fellow-artist, I rode to the Convent yard and there saw Seddon's animal still unsaddled. We lost patience, leaving word for him, and pressed on to Artass, where eventually he found us. We stopped at the house

of Meshullam, a converted Jew, who had been cultivating the gardens in the valley for some eight or ten years. It was a delight to see the lovely trees with fruit ; peaches, lemons, apricots and figs in many cases ripening on branches which their weight had splintered off from the trunk. The hidden rivulet was led in and out between

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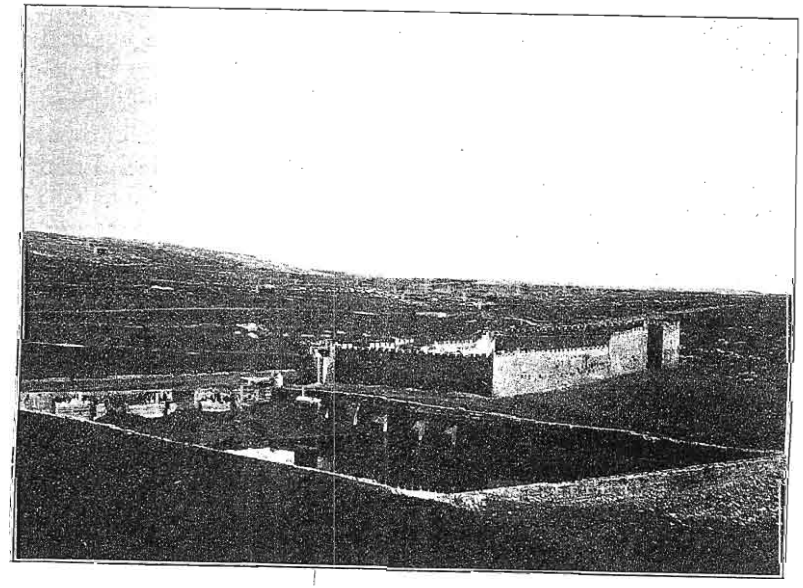
H. WENTWORTH MONK.

the beds of vegetables. The master had several sons and daughters who helped him in the work. Under the shade of a roof in an open chamber looking on to the bird-haunted orchard we had breakfast.

Among the dwellers there, was one Henry Wentworth Monk, who was regarded by Jerusalem church folks as an impious babbler, his efforts, forsooth, furthering nothing less than the actual realisation of Hebrew prophecies for

the establishment of the kingdom of peace on earth. He had travelled from Canada to become familiar with the features of the Land of Promise. At the time he was using fruit-farming experiences to help the Meshullam industry. His knowledge of the history, and his enthusiasm for the progressive thought, stored in the Bible, made him of special interest to me; on his study of the past he built his plan for the abolition of war among all nations revering the God of Abraham. His theory did not ignore existing facts: he did not assume that by confidingly putting down our army and navy our neighbours would be induced to do likewise, he maintained that every believer must regard prophecy as a mandate: "The kingdom of heaven is within you." He would persuade the nations that the dream could be brought about by the establishment of a united Christendom, with a supreme central parliament and government, having a sufficient police army at command to suppress disorder and quell anarchy, or to enforce its own maturely confirmed authority; while all local concerns would be regulated by its own councils, the general interest would be the paramount object of all. Under such ideal rule the energy of heroic minds would be used not destructively, but to serve the higher purposes of humanity. Deceit and falsehood in diplomacy would be no less despicable for national than for personal ends. Funds would then be available for the prosecution of scientific research and all other eternally profitable interests; by increase of knowledge and wisdom the kingdom of this world would truly become the kingdom of the Prince of Peace. Monk during his further life of forty years used all the means he could obtain to publish his views and disseminate his arguments among Popes, Czars, Emperors, Kings, Presidents of Republics, Ministers of State, heads of Churches, authors, both native and foreign, and editors of newspapers. Naturally he was considered mad, but he was perfectly content, so that the question became widely ventilated. Every action of the community begins with a word, and who can say to-day that Monk

did not bring men on the road towards the abolition of war as far at least as we stand at present, with the Hague Tribunal, professedly founded to this end, infirm as such hope may for the time appear with the whole world in suspense for news of recurrent bloodshed and violence, provoked with deceit and arrogance in the name of Christianity.



POOLS OF SOLOMON.

In his youth Meshullam had been servant to Lord Byron. He was now good friends with fellahin and bedouin at Artass. I looked along this rich valley as we ascended to the Pools of Solomon for a spot to serve as background for a figure of the youthful David, who here must have fed his father's flocks. When we had reached the upper pool, we lingered to luxuriate in the rare sight of the expanse of crystal water; but even after an hour's further halt, there was no sign of Graham, with cook and

canteen. We three continued our forward march in company, but a few miles farther on my knapsack straps, which bound with other gear a large drawing-book, broke. I had to dismount to collect together my properties and repair the leather thong. By the time this was done, Sim and Seddon were far out of sight; the only saddle I had been able to get was a Turkish one, I had thought it would be wise to harden myself to the native seat, but I found I had set myself an impossible task, to make up lost ground on the road was out of the question. On a route which I considered very doubtful, I met a solitary Bedawee horseman and asked him to direct me to Hebron; but he looked bewildered, and it proved that this name was not known, and as I could not remember the Arabic name Kaleel, I had to go on, still uncertain of my route. The afternoon came, and I was very hungry, the groups of foot and other travellers I met were also ignorant of the ancient name of the city I sought, but their numbers, and the better indications of a road, assured me that I was on the right track. I came to the region of vineyards, and asked a man who was working in one of these for a piastre's worth of grapes; he returned quickly with so many that I could only store them on the saddle in front of me. I ate them by clusters and gave my horse large bunches, which he enjoyed as much as I did. I pressed on and came to my friends, who were drawn up waiting at the entrance of the town. After a friendly bullying to both, which they parried by saying that they had thought Graham would overtake me, we rode in among the houses and alighted in a yard belonging to a café. Sim had some tea with him, and while he went in to make it, left his gun under my guard. The place became full of men curious to see us and get news. I cautioned them not to go near the gun, but my horse was refractory, and while I was pulling him round Sim came out with the tea, and seeing a man stooping down to put his hand to his weapon, gave him a clout on the head, which provoked a murmur among the crowd. I pointed out that I had warned all to leave

the gun alone, and we drank our tea, and ate bread and cheese so naturally, that the company forgot the grievance with delight at the sight of *franghis* feeding.

Refreshed thus, we got on our horses again and rode back along the road a few miles to look for Graham and our canteen. The sun went down; we dismounted and sat on the warm rocks at the side of the road, whiling away the time by talking under the bright stars. Occasionally a party of travellers went by from Hebron, and to them we gave particulars of the lost company—the *khowagha* and his servant with muleteer and mules—and urged Hebronites to tell the *Inglese* that we were waiting for him near the city. When any late arrivals from Jerusalem appeared, we asked for information, but none had seen Graham's party on the road. It must have been within two hours of midnight when we made up our minds that he had indulged in one of his too usual delays, and that we must get refuge somewhere.

We remounted our tired animals, and turned again to the city. Arrived there, we penetrated streets which grew narrower and blacker; not a light was in any house, and no window showed a gleam; our way lay through covered parts of the bazaar quarter. We emerged into an open place which would have appeared a wilderness of darkness had we not come through the gloomier tunnel. There was not a being to guide us to any shelter, but Sim had an idea.

Standing in the middle of the little square, with tall dead-looking houses encircling us, he shouted out, "Ibrahim ben Ezaac." The sound and all its echoes died away; there was no sign of awakening; again he repeated the cry. The same reverberation and the dead silence fell on us. After the third or fourth call, however, there was the grating sound of the drawing of a bolt and the creaking of a hinge, followed by a man's voice, "Who are you?" "I am the English doctor from Jerusalem, Al Hakim Sim, and I want to find Ibrahim ben Ezaac, who was cured by me of an illness." The same speaker

then said, "I know your voice. Stop a minute." A light struck inside revealed the window at which the man spoke, and soon a door was opened below, and as Sim approached, the inmate seemed impatient to greet and welcome us all with unfeigned satisfaction. "Come up to the deewan," he said, and, preceding us with lights, he led us by the stairs to a room on the first floor, quite dazzling from the whiteness of its walls, its bleached linen-covered settees, and the numerous candles lit for our reception. He had our horses stabled and provendered, and asked us to sit down, armed, booted, and dusty though we were, on his spotless cushions; friends began to arrive as we talked, some of whom recognised Sim, and kissed his hand. The master assured us that provisions should be brought shortly, and further heralding these, the ladies of the establishment appeared; they seemed quite hearty in assuring us that they regarded our visit as a great favour, and asked to know the circumstances of our journey. All the females of the family, from little children to grandmother, were comely and refined looking. Welcome dishes of stew and copious draughts of good refreshing wine arrived, followed by grapes and sweetmeats. With considerable apologies for having no other room ready to afford us rest, the master at once begged that we would excuse him for only having the deewan to offer for the night, and then hurried all away that we might not be kept further from our sleep. But ere the door was shut a great cry arose from the street. The family stopped and listened, as people do who live only like birds on the bough. The master went to the screen window shutter. The cry came again. It was the voice of Graham's *mukary*, demanding at large for three *Inglesat*. We stopped further clamour by responding and going down to the man; it then transpired that our laird had pitched his tent under Abraham's Oak, about a mile away, and summoned us to come and join him.

It needed some hardness of heart to oneself to defer

still longer the night's rest when it was so invitingly in reach, but the tent was nearer a sketching place I had to seek in the morning, and so I went. Sim also girded up his loins, and we walked along a stony road until a light under a grand spreading tree led us to the unperturbed Graham, who laughed at the whole misadventure.

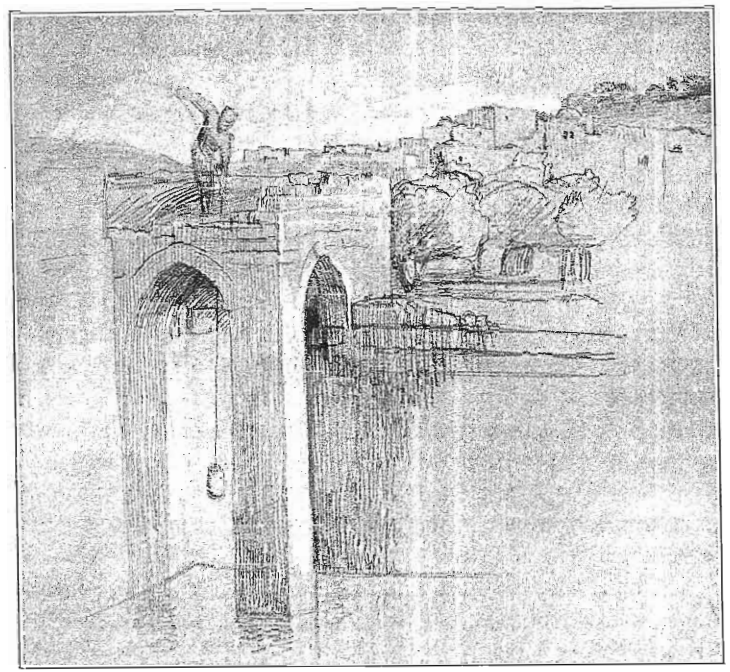
Graham, finding that it was already Sunday morning, took upon himself the office of priest and prayed aloud, but when he had concluded we new-comers lost no time in spreading mats and making our beds on the ground. Taking off our dusty clothes, we were soon wooing sleep; but one of Graham's vices was that he was never tired, his long and somewhat devious spine resisted the jarring of travel, and in and out of the tent he flurried to make sure that he had not left behind any of his photographic apparatus. When we slumbered, he would shake first one and then the other into wakefulness, saying he thought a much-needed chemical must be under our bed. Sim's opinion of chemicals of all sorts and kinds at that moment was scarcely respectful; as for myself, much as I desired and needed rest, I could not sleep for some hours.

Seddon arrived in the early morning, with evidence that the apparent blissfulness of the chamber where he had slept lost its character when the lights were extinguished, and that in consequence he had not been able to sleep. When we called upon ben Ezaac, all the members of the household appeared, and with simple politeness disclaimed every feeling but that of pleasure and thankfulness that we had come to them in the night. Evidently the report of the doctor's presence soon spread about the town, for one by one the halt, the maimed, and the blind were brought. As they thronged the room Sim examined and pronounced upon their ailments, and as the eagerness of the patients and their friends was shown, they little knew how perfectly they were re-enacting scenes of eighteen hundred years before. The resemblance became more striking when men, heated and breathless, arrived, beseeching the doctor to come to their beloved ones who were bedridden or in urgent

danger, and we went with him from the house to find the patients. Thus comfort was brought to each, in some cases relief, and to not a few the assurance of cure on attendance at the Jerusalem hospital. Thus we spent some hours. Afterwards we rode round the city and visited what little the Moslems would show of the mosque over the tomb of Abraham, while we felt tantalised at the restrictions imposed. Under this mosque lies the tomb of Sarah, Abraham, Jacob, and perhaps also Joseph, and in it may be the answer to that scepticism as to the early history of the Hebrews some nineteen centuries ago, expressed by Apion, which is entertained by many learned theologians to this day. It is here rather than on the borders of the Nile that we have the best hope of finding a clue to the genuineness of the story that Joseph was taken down to Egypt as a slave and rose to be sub-ruler of the country, and such proof would carry with it support of the subsequent accounts of the slavery and exodus of the children of Israel under the dynasty of a Pharaoh who knew not Joseph. It is stated in Genesis that when Jacob died he was embalmed according to the manner of the Egyptians, and as with the king's permission Joseph carried his father's bones into his own land in state, with a great escort and buried them in this tomb, it may be assumed that the bier was a sarcophagus of particular dignity, inscribed and decorated within and without in a manner that would tell of the singular circumstances of the patriarch's position and of the high office held by his son. It is possible also that the fact of the whole company of mourners being under promise to return to Egypt would be recorded.

It is unlikely that the tomb was desecrated during the hundred years after the burial, since that district was held by other children of Abraham until the Jews came, during whose fourteen hundred years it was certainly jealously guarded, and ever since by Christian or Ishmaelite it has been kept inviolate. Superstition has been one of its surest sentinels; we have now only to convince both Jews and the descendants of the other children of Abraham that the day

has come when the whole object of the tomb's purpose may be fulfilled, and that the dead may be called upon to speak to the living. The bodies would be reverently handled, and after the inscriptions should have been deciphered and copied the cover of the sarcophagus could be replaced, the tomb re-sealed and closed for ever.



W. H. H.

PUBLIC CISTERN, HEBRON.

Saint Stephen in his address to the Sanhedrim, after speaking of Jacob's burial, adds, "Our fathers were carried over into Sychem." This almost certainly refers to Joseph, who on his deathbed charged the children of Israel to "carry my bones from hence," which, we are assured in Exodus, Moses did. The traditional tomb of Joseph is at Shechem, sixty miles or so north of Hebron. When I

saw it, it was in ruined condition and appeared to have been ransacked. His body may have been placed in it when that region was the first possession the Israelites obtained in Canaan, but it seems possible that when the whole country was conquered his body was transferred to the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron.

We went off to the Quarantine, built twenty years earlier to keep out the plague; our object was to visit the Prussian doctor installed there. We invited him to dinner; at our repast Seddon was in high glee, and entertained us with amusing stories of his life in Paris. The doctor left us in the best of humour, assuring us that he but rarely had the opportunity of meeting Europeans at table. After we went to bed an owl whooped in the branches of the grand tree above our heads, and Sim could not be happy until he had shot at the place where the bird seemed to be, but after firing off both his own barrels and finding that the animal only whooped the more merrily, the doctor borrowed my gun, and then loaded afresh and discharged further shot up in the tree. At last the *specimen* Sim coveted fled away, we trust, unwounded. Sim was a large collector of birds and beasts, which he preserved with great skill.

After breakfast I went to a spot where last evening the scene was lovely, but by sunrise there were no shadows, and it had lost all charm, and I walked to the valley in which were "the upper and nether springs" given to Caleb.

Shortly after noon I returned to the oak and found the tent had gone, as arranged with Sim and Seddon. Graham was to have returned from the town, but he did not appear till far on in the day; then another hour went in packing, and it turned out that we wanted an extra donkey for odd luggage; when this was secured there was further waste of time, and the sun had sunk ere we started. We very soon lost the way, the donkey man was an untrustworthy fellow, and we went blundering on with no guidance but the north star, which we could only

see when we were on ridges of the hills, it being too low for us when we were in the valleys. Our man added to our perplexity by the announcement that the slopes in this region were full of great pits; these had been evidently troglodyte dwellings. We had to escape them by walking and leading our animals; turning about in the labyrinth of danger, we doubted whether we had got our faces to the south as we were ascending a hill; on striking a light we consulted the pocket compass and corrected our course. Once we wandered into an encampment of bedouin sleeping on the ground without fire of any sort, they seemed more perturbed than ourselves, and directed us on our way. Again for hours we groped along, only hopeful of indications when on heights where the country could be overlooked. At such points there was as much to make us conclude that we were on our way to Askelon as to Jerusalem, and we had to descend, trusting to blind fortune more than anything else, but on coming to the brink of a swelling wave of hill long past midnight, we espied below us three pools of Solomon. Gladly we descended the long stairway of rock. I was in advance, rejoicing in the ultimate certainty of our way. From the fountain at the head of the cistern, "the sealed fountain," a mirror of placid water had spread across the road. I paused at the verge, for there was such a perfect picture of the starry heavens that it seemed as though the earth had vanished and that we lived and saw, independent of body or solid resting-place, all the heavens circling around us. I did not wish the others to advance before and disturb my vision, so I resumed my onward way; where the horse planted his hoofs, the stars were shattered into meteors and lightning, but in front the glassy mirror was preserved unshimmered to where the dull land came again, and then behind me the animals seemed to be scrambling amid darts, spears, and javelins.

We dismounted under the khan walls, glad to do so, and having grapes and bread with us, ate these, and slaked our thirst in the spring. The bright stars were

not brilliant enough to illuminate the very obscure track that served for a road, and when we had progressed northward a quarter of an hour we found ourselves again on unknown terrace slopes. We concluded that we had trended too far eastward, so we took the first opportunity to ascend. On the fullest height we raised our eyes, and right in face stood Bethlehem. But a few degrees above the Church of the Nativity hung a lustrous planet, like the star of the magi come again. We determined at once to accept its guidance, and soon we found ourselves knocking at the gate of the Latin Hospice. It was surely true hospitality when a monk came down to us, invited us to enter, offered us supper, and showed us to our sleeping chamber. It was worth being as tired as I was to have the joy of throwing myself down to sleep; but it was near four o'clock before I sank into slumber. About five, to my mortification, Graham waked me up, saying that we must get into Jerusalem before the sun grew hot. As he was starting, it seemed better to join the restless creature, and so we jogged past Rachel's tomb, trotted along by Mar Elyas, and cantered over the plain of Rephaim, having no longer need when near the city to keep close to our baggage mules.

Arrived at the Jaffa Gate, my indefatigable friend mildly pointed out that it would be an excellent opportunity to ride round the city together, that he might confer with me about the best points of view for him to use for his photographic studies. I looked in his face. He was quite serious, and pleaded further, but when I deferred the business he very pleasantly said, "Well, as you like, as you like."

James Graham was absolutely imperturbable in temper, and so often the contretemps that he occasioned brought about experience of lasting interest, that I never for long felt a grudge against him for his unmethodical system of travel.

I had now to complain to the gunsmith that while he had cured my revolver of the immovable catch in the wheel, the hammer had become so weak in the spring that when it descended on the cap it did not explode it. He excused himself by explaining that he had only thought of curing the stiffness in the lock, and not firing it after he had made the hammer and the chamber work together, he had been satisfied, but that he would now make the spring stronger.

My servants' neglect of their duties occasioned me not alone loss of comfort, but of time. The Abyssinian had already gone. According to my agreement I was obliged to keep on both, but one day he presented himself and asked leave to depart suddenly. He had been in Jerusalem two years. Now he found a bishop of his church was returning to Abyssinia, and as he might be safe in his suite he did not want to lose the opportunity. I liked the handsome, good-natured, white-teethed fellow, but I at once agreed to spare him, and paid him his wages and *backshish*. When I wished him God's speed, still he lingered. I asked if there was anything else. He replied that in his own country he was a prince, and his father a man of great importance who could secure any favour. I said I had no doubt of it. "I want, Khowagha, to persuade you to come with me to my country. You want to make pictures of people; there you shall have hundreds to paint," he urged. I remembered a picture representing

> There was an Abyssinian maid,
> And on a dulcimer she played.

The lady was white as the painter could make her. Here was a possibility of doing portraits of a regiment of Abyssinian maids, all of a beautiful velvety unbleached complexion, but I resisted. I again bade "Good-bye" to this princely Gabrien, and bade him give my love to every damsel of his own country that he knew, and assure her that I should like nothing better than to paint a likeness of her. The other man, Farrage, I faithfully handed

back to his original employer without any pang whatever. It was no matter of regret to me that the owners of my hired house were soon coming back, and that I had to seek another home.

After considering all the opportunities that offered, I decided upon a pension kept by Max Ungar, a converted Jew, and his wife. She was a Bolognese Italian, and they were under English protection; the house was kept in excellent order, and both did all they could to help me in my work. Being a tailor with a shop in the market-place, he had Jews working for him, and there seemed a prospect of his persuading some of them to sit to me.

It was only after I had left my picture for a few days that I could judge how far it fulfilled my original expectations. On Sundays I often compared my past week's work with what I had planned to do, and I had to recognise that while each day I had been on the stretch from morn to eve to overcome the lagging fortune that had pursued me in my endeavours from the beginning, I had rarely anything to show that was calculated to give me satisfaction. The little that was done did, even to my aggrieved eyes, commend itself as up to my mark, but I could not underrate the value of the time that it had cost me, while the reduction of my small store of money convinced me of the urgency of taking some step that might prepare me for appearance in future exhibitions. I had hoped to have the Temple picture ready for next year's Academy. I could see now that there was no chance of fulfilling this expectation. Home demands were pressing on me, and this led me to consider more seriously whether I should not own myself defeated and go back ere all my money had gone, and take up the home work which I had left off. There was delight in the idea of being again among art comrades, but I did not allow this to disturb my resolution to consider all my chances. In this frame of mind I bethought me of the subject of "The Scapegoat," which, in reading the books of Levitical

rites, had struck my mind as one suited for Landseer. I had in fact resolved to take the opportunity to talk to him of it; but now I reflected that in Syria I had a possibility of painting it worthily which he could never have, and so I re-studied the story, and found out particulars to enable me to decide what landscape and circumstances would be wanted, and set to work to prepare for the new picture.

I discovered one white goat in a flock, and bought it from the goat-herd, agreeing to pay for its care while I was waiting to be able to use it—a white goat being so rare that it was wise to get one when the opportunity offered. The date of the Day of Atonement had not yet come, and I wished to defer "The Scapegoat" background till about the right season.

Seddon had asked me to pronounce upon his picture of Jerusalem and Siloam from Aceldama. It was painted throughout elaborately and delicately, but it was scarcely in the pictorial sense a landscape. Sitting before the spot I pointed out to him how completely the tones and tints failed in their due relations, and how essential it was that he should supply the deficiency, explaining that in conventional art the demand for variety of tones was satisfied by exaggeration and tricks, and that these had increased the due expectation for effect to such an extent that when a work was done strictly from Nature, unless all the variety that Nature gave was rendered by the painter, the spectator had good cause for declaring the work crude and false; in short, that the more truth there was in one direction, the greater there must be in others. I calculated that to do the scene any justice, he must work upon his canvas fully another three weeks. He appeared determined to devote the necessary time to bring the painting to maturity; but next day he came to me in considerable agitation saying that a letter from home demanded his instant return, and that he should have therefore to depend upon his memory to modulate the tones of his picture. I did not feel called upon to say more until he asked me whether I

did not think he could do this, and then I declared it would be utterly impossible for him to give the requisite effect. He asked what he could do under the circumstances. All I could say was that he must judge whether his correspondent could not be persuaded of the critical sacrifice it would be for him to leave so abruptly; if not, he must never regard the painting as anything more than a map. He decided that he could not feel free to stay even for the few weeks, and so now, while I was preparing for a journey of exploration of the western shores of the Dead Sea, to settle upon the suitable background of "The Scapegoat," he was taking steps to leave the country.

It happened at this time that Mr. Porter, the writer of Murray's *Guide to Syria*, had come from Damascus to Jerusalem, and that Beamont's father had arrived from England. Some other visitors to Jerusalem had also heard of my intended expedition, and these all proposed to accompany me. It was an unusual and hazardous journey to make, and there was more safety and pleasure in travelling in numbers. Graham was to be general caterer and paymaster. Under this unexpected arrangement I had to make one special provision, that my start should be a day before theirs, in order to have a morning at the sketch which I had begun at Hebron.

On the day of departure the *mukary* proved to be a master in chicanery and deceit. He brought the wrong horses, he had the canteen and tent packed on the weakest mule, pretending that we had chosen it. I would not budge, and threatened to discard him. Then he pretended the mule we wanted had gone lame, and so he wasted all the morning. Even Graham got out of temper. I went home to get together my personal gear for the journey, and a violent storm of wind and rain came on which lasted for hours. The muleteer's object all day had been to waste time and yet get payment. I had said solemnly that however much he delayed I would insist upon reaching Hebron in that day's journey. This had made him hurry; but in my absence, when the rain

The Awakened Conscience.

came, he sent the animals away to the stables, and declared that the journey must now be given up. All my cases were left sodden in the market-place. I was unflinching, however, ordered the beasts back, and had them packed. All was got ready in sulky mood, and as we sallied out of the Jaffa Gate the sky was still covered with slaty clouds, the thunder murmuring and the lightning quivering from east to west as we got into the open country only half an hour before sunset, the rays of which were fierce and cheerless.

Reaching the first height beyond Hinnom, I addressed my company to the effect that I would go on to Hebron as fast as possible with Issa, who was Graham's man, sent as servant to the expedition, to get accommodation at the Quarantine building, while they should come on as fast as was convenient ; but the whole of my baggage company were horrified, as they professed, at the danger to myself, as well as to themselves. I laughed at their fear, and began to trot, pumping the rain out of the wet carpet seat as I rode, for the rascally master in the final hurry had again put me off with a Turkish saddle. Looking behind at Issa's suggestion, I discovered the retinue with heads returning to Jerusalem in serious earnest. I rode back, and the muleteer told me to reflect how certain the peril would be from *ghouls* and *effreets*, who bewilder travellers on such nights to lead them over precipices to their destruction, and that the only safety was in company. I was persuaded by a more practical reason to keep with them, but insisted upon the journey forward, and so on we went.

Beyond Mar Elyas the road at that time descended into the deep valley. I could see the path only by the pools of water in the worn limestone. At the bottom the strongest mule slipped and fell ; his burthen was too heavy to allow him to be raised as he was, and so the cord was loosened and every article taken off him. When again reloaded the drivers argued that this settled the question of the length of the journey. Bethlehem, half an hour

hence, would afford us hospitality for the night, and in the morning betimes we could go on to Hebron; but I could not lose my character for firmness, and insisted upon the original plan, not without some reluctance when the Convent of the Nativity in sight to our left brought to mind the thought of its pleasant hospitality. My company hoped, until we had got well past Rachel's tomb, that I should relent. But I was not disposed to allow the *mukary* to find that his stratagem had succeeded in any degree in changing my purpose, and I cheered him and his men on to Solomon's Pools and up the ascent beyond.

The storm was leaving us with sullen murmurings; the lightning occasionally opened up the whole landscape, but left us momentarily blind. From our height we had a wide range of view, being as we were on the upper tableland of Judea; to our left, deep down, was the Dead Sea; to our right was the Philistine plain, ending in the Mediterranean.

The lightning was kindled in the east, and played along the gamut of the cloud-clavier as if with the touch of an almighty hand, advancing note by note along the extending range, until in the west it closed like an angry fist, and descended on the plain as if to single out the object of its search.

Towards the small hours of the night we heard the dogs of the village on the heights noisy in their announcement that strangers were on the road below; their barking filled up the intervals of the thunder's reverberation. As we proceeded I agreed that we should avoid the harder parts of the interlacing tracts of the road to escape the clatter of our horses' hoofs. Our course led us into a dwarf forest and over rocks that rang like metal, to a higher level, and then again into the plain studded with villages on the left, whose fire and smoke we could see against the sky. No art could here still the noise of our movements, and it was not wonderful, considering the disturbed state of the country, that our men feared attack. When we came into a district with soft earth skirting our way, the dubiousness

of the road made me glad that I had not trusted ourselves without experienced guidance. Thinking this, I searched aside to trace the step-worn limestone; none was to be seen. I put it to the muleteer whether we had not wandered from the road; he admitted that we had been lost for the last quarter of an hour, and advised that we should make the best of our lot, and wait where we were till dawn came to reveal the true way to Hebron. Issa faintly seconded this advice, but I knew he was of firm nerve, and I told him that I had a better plan. I turned my horse's head towards the Mount, whose height was defined against the sky by fires and glowing smoke, and called out to all to keep close.

The dogs grew more mad as we got nearer. Here we discovered men sleeping around fires made in the corners of walls. They all started up at the ringing of our horses' hoofs. Women and even children were among the number —all looking both dismayed and fierce.—The dogs were so wild with excitement that two at a time jumped up into my saddle, from which I had to dislodge them with the butt-end of my gun. I had instructed my man to ask for the sheik, while I played the part of the dignified mysterious stranger. The scared fellahin watched, and followed to see the action of the sheik, than whom, whatever his motive, no one could have behaved better. He called a man out from the crowd and ordered him to go with us over the hill to a point from which we could see Hebron, and descend by it into the road; thus I had good reason to approve my confidence in him. We followed the road from this elevation to the outskirts of the town of the "Friend of God," and, passing between the walled vineyards, we reached it at about two o'clock. We turned aside to the right towards the Quarantine building. My man had come up abreast, and we were talking as tired guards will after an anxious march, when I noticed that his foot-track had gradually led him to a level already overtopping my head. The slope was slippery, and I searched for a place where there

might be firm footing for my horse. In the shadowy dimness I discerned a mass of white rock leading to the higher platform. I set my horse to mount and grip it, and heeled him to waken up his full strength. The mass proved to be loose, and the stones began to rattle down. I could feel the poor beast overbalancing, and as the one chance for both of us, I threw myself off as best I could on the upper slope to the right. I pushed my gun away in a safe direction, for it was loaded and still half-cocked. The horse overbalanced and rolled heavily down the incline. I found myself safely landed half-way up, but with my leg badly bruised; my gun had happily not exploded; but when we got to the poor horse he was only just able to get up. We hobbled to the porch of the Quarantine building, and there, after in vain knocking and explaining my claim for admission as a friend of the master, I had some of the luggage put under the portico, and, choosing dry matting, threw myself on it with bags for a pillow, and soon fell asleep.

Two or three hours later I was sitting up, staring and being stared at by a crowd of men, women, and children, feeling much as a gipsy might if caught located in a place not intended for vagabonds. My object was attained, however, in being near Doora, with the plain and Beersheba beyond; and accordingly, after a hasty cup of coffee, I mounted my man's horse and rode off alone, to work on a sketch begun on the previous expedition.

I continued at my drawing until about twelve o'clock, and then returned to Abraham's Oak, where the tent was pitched, expecting to find the party arrived, but no signs of them had been seen. Making a meal off grapes and bread, I lay down to read at leisure some letters from Millais and Halliday which I had received before starting. I made a cigarette with the envelope of Millais' letter, and inhaled this while I re-read the contents. I then walked northward to the ridge in the hope of seeing my friends approaching, but there was no sign of them. I was lost in conjecture as to the cause of their absence. Returning

to the tent, I tried to recover some of my defrauded sleep. No one else was to have money, as Graham had arranged that he should be the paymaster of the expedition, so I was nearly penniless. I had an empty canteen with me, and neither candles nor fuel for fire, but the grapes of Eschol deserved their ancient repute and I supped on them. A storm arose which soon became truly terrible; lightning and thunder played around me and seemed to shake the earth; the birds which had taken refuge in the trees screeched with fright. As the branches were torn off their trunks, I thought of the "horror of great darkness" which fell upon "The Friend of God."

The wind rushed past Abraham's Oak like massive waters, but so far my tent was sheltered by the enormous girth of the tree. When I crept out I perceived that the stars were shining through a deep blood-red sky. I was now in the place where Abraham had received the promise of the future greatness of his race. The storm brought this vividly to mind, and in the comparative lull I lay down again and fell into a sound sleep. I awoke in a few hours, but all was perfectly still and peaceful, and committing myself again to sleep, I so remained till dawn.

With the few pence I still had I sent into the town for bread, and on this and a cold chicken I and my man breakfasted. I had guessed that perhaps the storm had driven my party into Hebron. Had Graham and his party arrived last night and slept in the town, they would have been with me by eight o'clock; their non-arrival bewildered me and drove me to conclude that I must return to Jerusalem to get money.

However, before I had given orders to strike the tent, the muleteer's boy rushed forward saying that the *khowaghein* were arriving, and as I ascended the slope I saw my friend Beamont with his father coming into camp; there were no others in sight. Welcoming the two heartily as they dismounted, I asked them about the remainder. One by one they had given up the idea of

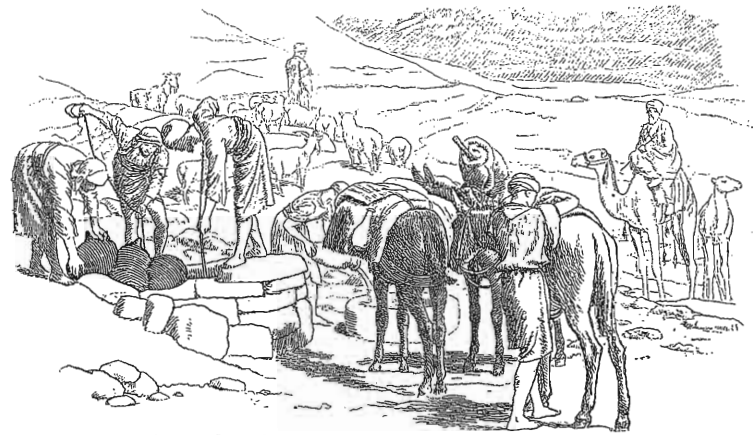
coming on the tour from the unreasonableness of the master muleteer, and Graham had said that on my finding myself alone I too should abandon it. Mr. Beamont, however, had said they could not leave me in the lurch. Graham found the obstacles insuperable for a large party, but allowed us to use his tent and servant if we so pleased. With this message the Beamonts came alone. "But," said I, "I brought no money." "We have money," they said. "Hurrah, then we'll not be disappointed."

They had halted for the night at Artass, starting by early dawn. Being Sunday, we elected to remain encamped for the day, and walked to Hebron to secure provisions for the evening. As we went through the bazaars the people were friendly, while curious about us and our object. In our round Beamont called on a dervish sheik, in whose house he had slept when last there; and his sons or nephews, nearly men, and a very beautiful boy of about eleven, came back with us to the tent, where we gave them presents in the shape of penknives. They were timorous as the sun went down on account of *effreets*, which haunted the neighbourhood at nightfall, but they had faith in company and in the firing of guns before starting as a means of averting the danger.

While making purchases for our canteen in Hebron, we were approached by some Jehalin Arabs, who, having heard of our intended journey, had come to guide us to their encampment. We halted on the way at a well, and reached the bedouin tents near sundown. The sheik was not in camp, and I was able to go with sketch-book and gun up to the summit of the neighbouring hill, the apex of which was crater-formed. Had a good geologist been there he might have explained a fact which puzzled me: in the cup, well defined in shape up to about twelve feet of the rim, all the stones lying on the surface were dark maroon colour; this discoloration reached a line absolutely level, and suggested the agency of liquid fire, for the same sized fragments of rock, but with acuter

angles, were strewn on the surface above, all of blanched limestone hue, and had not been affected by the conditions which had changed the similar stones below.

The sheik was fetched from afar, the arrangement with him which took place in the morning brought before us an interesting display of bedouin life, the bargain ended successfully, and about midday the next morning we started over tracts of wilderness, which, except in some dried-up fields and near the watercourse which we mostly followed,



A. Hughes, from a sketch by W. H. H.

HALT AT THE WELL.

seemed as though man could never have trod its surface before. As we travelled south-east, heavy clouds massed themselves ahead, our track was on a declining plain enfiladed to north and south a mile or two away by barren limestone ridges, a few acacia trees stood at intervals in the torrent bed, without any sign of the rain-fall which had drenched Hebron but a few nights ago. Thus we came to the brink of a descent, which from that point was called the "Wady Zuara Foka," until it opened itself into a wider gorge called the "Wady Zuara Tahteh"; beyond was the plain, with the sea stretching in a narrow gulf still farther south. The forefront of the plateau on

which we had travelled stood out on our left a mile farther, but the gulf we saw before us was the opening down which the winter floods poured in their season ; the scooped-out forms in the two channels on either side of us proved the force of the water volume that found its way in the winter down this chasm to the lake. A tongue of original limestone stretched forward between the two water channels, which was only half as high as the enflanking cliffs, and stood forward but a few hundred paces, ending in a knoll ; and on this eminence a castle tower reared itself, its original object being obviously to defend the pass against inroads of inimical bands, but it had long been left unmanned. On the plain the spread of the sea was restricted by the mountain "Gebel Oosdoom," which hid its southern extremity ; the mountains of Moab reared themselves beyond. We stayed some minutes to admire the wonders of the view, and then descended to the plain. From this moment my observation was studiously directed to all the region within sight, so that every spot should be stored up in memory, to be eventually weighed with others as to its suitability for the background of the projected picture. We had before our eyes the region, the very name of which has become a proverb of God's judgment ; and as we surveyed the range of view, the celestial image of Heaven's mercy in the shape of a magnificent rainbow, with the left base near Kerak and the right at the foot of Oosdoom, spanned the whole plain, while afar retreated the murmuring thunder, leaving peaceful beauty to reign instead.

While the tent was being pitched amid the growth of tamarisk and juniper not far from the margin of the lake, we hurried away to the bend in the coast line, whence, southward, the sea is narrowed. Here we determined to test the buoyancy of the water. It was evident that the beach was being gradually pressed down by the heavy sea, for trees which had been growing on the land to the south had now sunk in the brine, and stood leafless and stark ; those nearest the margin were only submerged at

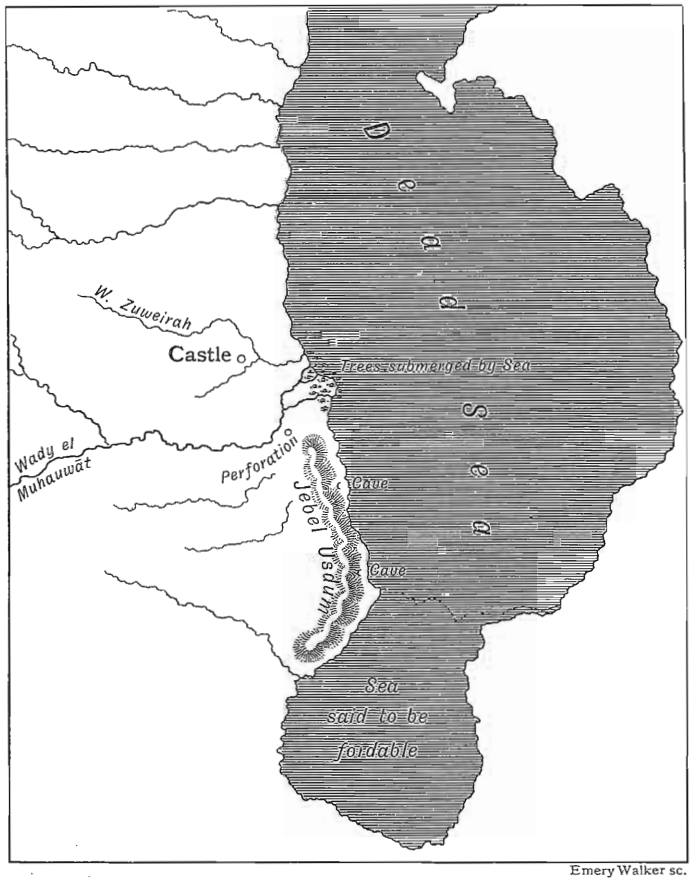
the base, while farther north the water reached the branches ; more distant still all was covered but the upper twigs, and arrested flotsam proved the existence of the dead forest extending beyond.

In selecting our bathing-place we naturally avoided the region where these trees showed themselves, but I argued with my companions that we must give them a wider berth than at first we imagined to be necessary, as it was likely that the trees not seen above the surface might still bother us. We stripped impatiently some fifty yards beyond. There was nothing but a shelving shore, and we rushed forward to get into swimming depth. I could not restrain my dash when I found the heavy water obstructing my progress as though it were lead, which quickly tripped me up, throwing me on my face. Every mosquito bite and stirrup bruise smarted agonisingly, my eyes and ears burned, I was blinded, my feet rose higher than my head, my knees grated against the bottom, the only desire that moved me was to get out far. I propelled myself without seeing my way, I rolled over and over, and found myself being driven, in spite of my efforts, on to the sunken dead arms of the submerged trees. I turned away from these against a strong current ; when it became possible to open my eyes I had no ambition but to reach the shore.

I must declare in justice to the acrid and greasy waters, which made me feel as though I had anointed my body with sardine brine, that every abrasion on my skin became absolutely healed and without smart from the moment I emerged from the sea.

The next morning we had our breakfast before dawn, and gave orders that the mules, with tents and canteen, should immediately they were ready go northward to Sebbieh, the foot of Masada. We, on the other hand, started to the south to visit the cave of Oosdoom. I scrutinised all the shores we passed in going and returning ; the whole scene was a vision of desolation and deceitful phantasy. Before the sun rose every rock appeared like

a weird monster, in the cave itself were white stalactites and rocks, these formed themselves to our eyes, dazed by the sun, into threatening genii, and to the ear the effect



MAP OF DEAD SEA.

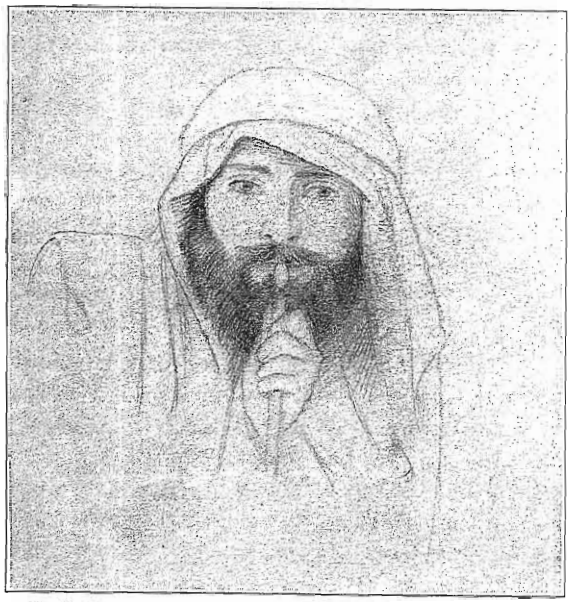
was no less magical. "Remember Lot's wife," we shouted, and round every hill and cranny we heard the words murmured in confusing mockery, until distinct in every syllable "Remember Lot's wife" was returned to us. The distance was more than we had counted upon, and

on our return journey, with the sun shining a-broadside, we felt the need of water to drink, and so hurried in the hope that we should find the camping-ground before our party had left it. Yet I did not fail fully to examine the shore for my background, which it seemed possible would be found in this quarter. At our camping-place all our men were away and out of sight. For many hours we rode that day in the thirsty heat. Once, when we had seen a clear rivulet running down the mountain side into the more limpid looking lake, we hastened to its brink. The companion of my own age, who suffered most from thirst, jumped off his horse and put his lips to the stream. I observed that he drew his head back involuntarily, but in a determined way drank again. I asked if it was quite sweet, he did not answer; I dismounted and tested it myself, to find it was strong brine. His father and I had difficulty to prevent him drinking on. We hurried on to learn from a lonely bedawee, the first man we had seen, that our servants were waiting a few miles ahead in a wady with a fountain bearing good water; and this, to our own and our animals' great joy, proved true.

It was a journey of inconceivable delights; its daring nature only added zest to the adventure. We continued our route to Sebbieh, encamping on the shore of the lake. An hour before dawn on the morrow we set off and traversed the plain through amazing illusions (of which more in the next chapter) to the foot of the cliffs of Masada. Our climb to the summit was both difficult and dangerous; we were one of the two or three parties that had ever visited the place in modern days. Entering the gate, we gazed with wonder upon the ruins of the great stronghold defended by the Jews against the Romans in their last struggle. The wonderful aspect of this mausoleum of Jewish heroism and despair awakened the desire to revisit and examine it with full attention. We had no time to linger, but had to be satisfied with the vision it presented of the desolate hills and that silent

heaven from which its defenders turned their dying eyes in despair.

Descending to the beach again, we remounted our horses and continued our journey to the Engedi plain; ascending this to a basin of water overflowing to the plain below, I remained behind to sketch the scene. The ascent thence was by a zigzag stairway on the cliff, the heights



W. H. H.

THE SHEIK, ENGEDI.

of which led to the wilderness of Judea. We had hoped here to find an Arab encampment with provisions, but we had to take our repose with scant supper, and started next morning after a more meagre breakfast to find the bedouin tribe. In an hour or two we came to the tents. The sheik was absent, but we were welcomed and assured that he should be brought to us. We had already come to terms with the sub-sheik, but the sheik himself,

a tall handsome fellow, when he arrived, ignored our treaty and demanded so preposterous a sum that we determined to avoid his territory and go on inland towards the Tamarah tribe. Before leaving I made a sketch of the comely but covetous fellow as he was smoking his chibouque. All along the coast I had scrutinised the shore, and had determined that no place was so suitable for "The Scapegoat" picture as the Oosdoom district.

Proceeding westward, we came to the Tamarah encampment, and there made terms for our guidance to Jericho and the Jordan. Our party was large and merry, and we enjoyed our journey greatly. When we arrived at the Jordan it was dusk, but we just had time to bathe before black night came on. We continued our track to the site of the cursed city with thunder and lightning pursuing us, until we reached the shelter of our tents, such as it was. We remained in camp next day, and on the morrow returned to Jerusalem drenched to the skin.

I have glanced only at our experience upon the later part of this journey, because Mr. Beamont wrote a faithful and bright account of our expedition. The journey is memorable to me for its interest in many ways, and in none more than the perfect good-nature and happy spirit of my two friends.[1]

[1] *Diary of a Journey to the East in the Autumn of* 1854, by William Beamont, Esq. Longman, Brown, Green and Longman, 1856.