

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## A Ride to Jericho

(The 'Christian Advocate.')

It was an extravagant thing to do. Professor Bently's brother, who was more careful in the counting of his pennies, actually held up his hands in holy horror at thought of the expense.

'I know that you are foolish over those two children,' he said, severely, 'but I didn't expect you to go clean out of your mind!'

Then the professor tossed his hat, caught it again, and laughed, just as he used to do when a boy. His brother had forgotten, long before, how to do that.

'Well, don't shut me up until I've had this one trip with them,' he said, merrily. Then his face grew grave. 'You know that their mother and I had been planning it for several years; and now that she's gone away forever I am only taking them in her place. If she can look down it will please her. It certainly will make them happy, to say nothing about myself. They are reasonable youngsters and fully understand that we must not only be very careful of our pence, but of our pounds as well.'

Josiah still shook his head. 'I'm sorry to say it, William,' he croaked, 'but if anything happens to you, I shall not hold myself responsible for the bringing up of those children.' He gave a little sniff and went away.

William looked after him. 'That was intended for a damper,' he said.

But really it was a most natural thing to do. Dr. William Bently was Professor of Sacred History in the theological school. His lectures were the most delightful of the course; the need for a textbook from his hand had arisen, the authorities had offered him a year's vacation with salary, and—well, you know the rest.

So the three—father, little son, and daughter—set out for a year's sojourn in the Holy Land, and after Josiah's grim, disapproving face had disappeared from view one had difficulty in deciding which was the merriest of the three.

Dr. Bently soon found that he would have missed a good deal if two pairs of sharp eyes had not been on the lookout, and two fresh young minds giving their impressions of persons and things, and at the same time rubbing him up with innumerable questions.

The little party arrived at Jerusalem and were pleasantly settled in a small hotel within the gates. There is quite a settlement of Americans and others outside of the walls, but Dr. Bently felt that he could do his work better if he lived in the very heart of the city.

He was glad to see that the children entered into deepest sympathy with him. They felt the seriousness of the place, and though some believed the most sacred spot to be here and others there, they knew that the feet of the blessed Saviour had really walked those streets, that there he had healed the sick, comforted and forgiven the sinner, and spoken words of tenderness to the unhappy; that he had been crucified and buried and had risen again. Their small Bibles were often consulted, passages were marked, and they listened intently to the conversations of their father and his friends.

Elizabeth stood one evening upon the roof of their hotel and looked over at the Mount of Olives, as the reflection from

the western sunset flooded it with the most beautiful and delicate hues. She heard Mortimore running up the stairs. As he approached her she said in a hushed voice:

'We are living in a golden year, Mortimore. Only down there is the Garden of Gethsemane. O, dearest, if we had lived then would we have been so cruel to the Blessed Christ?'

The boy turned his head away for a moment, then said: 'We're going to Jericho to-morrow. Papa ordered a horse for himself and donkeys for two. He thinks we'd better go over the old pathways. We start early, and he says we must be up at six.'

Elizabeth forgot her sadness. 'O, I'm so glad we are going! Isn't it good of papa? You think he might leave us.'

'I should think it is good of him. Do you know, Elizabeth, that we have just the jolliest father on earth?'

'Of course I know it.'

The next morning was bright and clear, when the little cavalcade set out from the city's gate. There were Dr. Bently and the dragoman, both on fine Persian gray horses; there were the children on donkeys that looked so sober one would never expect anything wrong from them; there was the Arab boy to look after things, the cook, and to crown all, there were two Arab sheiks upon dark bay horses with flowing manes and tails.

These horses were gorgeously bedecked, and the sheiks wore embroideries that astonished the eyes of Elizabeth. They were men of graceful dignity, courteous, with that slow courtesy of the Orientals. Their voices were rich and low, and their whole bearing most pleasing.

These sheiks were to conduct the party safely through their own territory. The natives would be very likely to injure and surely to rob anyone who travelled without their protection.

All day long the company rode over the hills and across the plains. They passed near the brook Kidron, where the ravens brought food to the prophet Elijah, and they stopped at the Inn of the Good Samaritan for luncheon. While the cook prepared this a dear little donkey mother, with the tiniest, cunningest little donkey baby, trotted into the court.

Elizabeth cried out with pleasure and held out her hands. But the little creature did not approve of small American girls. He shook his long ears and ran away as fast as his dainty feet could carry him. Whereupon the Arab boy, who thought that Elizabeth should have every and any thing she wished, ran after the little creature, threw both arms about the donkey's four legs, and carried him triumphantly to the little girl.

'You have him,' he said. 'Me give.'

This caused a merry laugh, while Elizabeth patted the cunning creature and even touched his little gray nose and his long, silken ears.

Late in the afternoon, as they were descending a rocky hillside, they saw before them the little town of Jericho. The river Jordan ran down upon its farther side, and the hills of Moab rose against the sky. At their left stood up sharp and strong the Mount of Temptation, from which Satan offered all the kingdoms of earth, and where the angels came afterward to minister to Christ. Below them, through the plains of Jericho, and near to the city, flowed a stream which the people believed

to come from the fountain whose bitter waters were made sweet by a miracle which was performed through the hand of the prophet Elisha.

The scene was very tender and peaceful. The spirits of all were quite subdued. They were, too, a little wearied from the long journey over rocky ways, where the horses had to feel with their hinder feet for the holes in which their front ones had been.

Horses and donkeys used in touring the Holy Land come to be very wise. They know, when setting out, just what is before them. They will go safely all day long, obeying the slightest touch upon the rein; but at night, when nearing the camping place, they often break into a mad run and do not stop until they have reached it, when they sometimes plant their forefeet and stop so suddenly as to throw a rider violently over their heads upon the ground or against the wall.

The donkeys upon which the children were riding had not made the journey in a long time. So, though the dragoman determined to keep an eye upon them, he did not alarm Dr. Bently by speaking of the matter. But when half-way down the rocky hillside both donkeys bolted. They were considerably in advance of the others, who had lingered to point out the historic spots.

Elizabeth's donkey was first in the race. Down they flew, their light feet bearing them swiftly over the places which horses must cross with more care. The dragoman saw when it was too late. He spurred his horse, but it was impossible to get on as swiftly as the lighter animals.

'What is the matter!' cried Dr. Bently.

The dragoman did not answer, but hastened on, the sheiks, cook, and Arab boy all following, with anxious faces. Not a word crossed any lip, but the 'Sh!' with which the Arabs stop their horses as we do ours with 'Whoa!' arose upon all sides.

The donkeys were upon the plain long before the horses. Their feet flew wildly. One would never have thought that they had been travelling all day. Neither of the children uttered a sound.

'I expected to be killed,' said Elizabeth, afterward, 'but I just laid my head down on the donkey's neck and held on as hard as I could.'

'And I,' said Mortimore, 'wasn't going to squeak when a girl kept still!'

They reached the clear, sweet stream flowing from Elisha's fountain. The donkeys bounded wildly across it. In that clear atmosphere one can hear very plainly for a long distance. The children began to hear the beat of a horse's feet behind them. But the donkeys heard it too. They only ran more wildly.

Above the donkey's head Elizabeth saw a wall rising. She expected to be dashed against it, but, instead, they entered a great opening, and flew along towards a low stone building. Then she made an effort and raised her head. Another minute and the mischievous donkey planted his feet with the determination of throwing the little girl—who had only been kind to him—over his head against the building.

But just at that instant a pair of strong arms caught her. It was the dragoman, pale through his sunburn, who saved her.

At the same moment one of the sheiks did a like service for Mortimore, then