

Pristine Purity

The standard we have set ourselves demands that

"SALADA"

TEA B 31

shall always contain only the finest, freshest young leaves. . . . Black, Mixed and Green

terreanean Sea is not "in the midst" of Europe, Asia, and Africa; and as you read history, ancient and modern, in school-books and newspapers, you will see how through all the ages the interest of all nations has centred in the Holy Land—"the glorious land," as Daniel calls it, that God loves (Deut. 11:12). Do you ask why this is? Because God chose this land as the birthplace of the Bible, the cradle of Christianity, the home of the Chosen People, through whom "all the families of the earth should be blessed."

We love it because our Lord Jesus trod its hills and valleys, visited its villages and cities, "healing the sick and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom," and we long for the time when He shall return and reign in Jerusalem gloriously. But meantime it is under the curse which God said should come if the children of Israel were disobedient (Deut. 28). The ground is covered with stones; thorns and thistles are the only vegetation, except during the winter rains, when flowers spring up in profusion everywhere, showing how fertile it really is.

Palestine proper is only a little land, not larger than Wales, yet it includes all varieties of climate on the face of the earth, from snow-capped Hermon to the torrid Dead Sea; so that missionaries taking the Bible to the ice-bound, sunless Eskimo can tell them "the Light of the world is Jesus." Whose precious blood can wash their sins "whiter

than snow." But others who go to parts of Africa where snow is unknown, speak rather of the "shadow of a great Rock in a weary land." There is nothing so deliciously cool and refreshing. It is not a happy land, for it is under Turkish rule, and the Government cruelly oppresses the poor *fellaheen* (peasants) who try to cultivate the soil, robbing them of their crops, and often driving the men away to be soldiers just when they are most needed in the fields, which means famine for their families.

Who are the people of Palestine now? Not the Jews, for they are scattered among all nations, though very many are returning to the land of their fathers, their own Promised Land, which is much larger than Palestine, reaching from the Euphrates on the north-east to the Nile on the south-east. The promise is sure (Ezek. 37:21, 22), though now it is held by the Mohammedan Arabs, their first-cousins. You remember Abraham had two sons, Ishmael the elder, son of Hagar, an Egyptian slave, and Isaac the child of promise, who became the father of Jacob-Israel and Esau-Edom. Esau married his uncle Ishmael's daughter, and their descendants have been the Arabs of the East ever since; the slave-masters you read of in Africa to this day belong to them. The genuine Arabs of Arabia are the Bedouin whose black goat-hair tents are found on the east of the Jordan, for they are nomads, wandering from

place to place in search of pasture for their flocks and herds of camels, and living the same kind of life as Job and the patriarchs did. They are very proud of their descent from Father Abraham; their dress, food, customs, forms of speech are just the same as we read of in the Old Testament; they will make ready a meal for a stranger as quickly and kindly as Abraham and Sarah did for their three angel guests, and they are still wild and fierce warriors like Ishmael (Gen. 16:12).

Then on the other side of Jordan we find many villages, of stone in the mountains and mud in the plains, and here the people are not pure Arab, though they speak Arabic and are nominal Mohammedans. They are descendants of those old Canaanites who were in the land when Joshua took possession of it, and many of their customs prove their heathen origin. Men plough with an ox and an ass "unequally yoked" together. One may see a camel and a donkey tied to the same plough, and often the poor little oxen wearing clumsy straw muzzles to prevent them taking a mouthful when "treading out the corn." The plough has only one handle, and in the other hand the man carries the "goad" to drive the animals with: it reminds us how the Lord said to Saul of Tarsus, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," like a "bullock unaccustomed to the yoke." Men when ploughing sometimes wear the striped *abbeh*, the "mantle" of Scripture, such as Elijah and John the Baptist wore. Our Lord must often have slept in such a garment on the Mount of Olives when "He had not where to lay His head."

Pictures show what the farming implements are like—just as simple as those used by Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21). The thresher is the "sharp instrument having teeth" of Isaiah 41:15, having stones fixed on the under side which break up the straw into *tibn*, the food of the economical camel, when the corn has been winnowed from it with the "fan" (Matthew 3:12).

The women carry fruit to market in straw "chargers" they plait themselves. They work very hard and are treated just like beasts of burden, as if they had no souls. They go bare-foot, carrying heavy loads of wood or water, grind the meal, and make bread every morning, spin, weave, and dye their one coarse linen garment. The veil is often embroidered in coloured silks; it is always drawn across the face on meeting a man, as Rebekah did, and is used to carry things (Ruth 3:15). If they have money, it is sewn like a frill across the front of the close cap, and the long, hanging sleeve is tied up for a pocket. Both Bedouin and Fellaheen are very ignorant and superstitious, the chief remedies for sickness being either branding with hot charcoal or wearing various charms—a verse of the Koran sewn up in leather, or a string of blue beads, which are supposed to avert the Evil Eye. They are fond of their little children, especially the boys; as in-

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fants they are swaddled like the Baby Jesus and carried in a sling on the mother's back from a rope across her forehead, but when older they ride astride her shoulder while she works.

I have not space to tell you about the townspeople; they are much more bigoted, like the Pharisees in our Lord's day, while the "common people" still "hear the Gospel gladly." But what I want you to remember, dear boys and girls, is that though there is a glorious future promised to Israel, there is none for Esau, and, therefore, *now* is the time we must use all efforts to bring "the Truth as it is in Jesus" before the Mohammedans everywhere. They do believe in God, our God, but they do not know Him as Father, and they reject the Lord Jesus as the Son of God, and so they have no Saviour from their sins. Pray that the Holy Spirit may convince them of their need, and pray for the boys and girls in mission schools, that they may all so learn and live Christ that they may win many for Him. Several are already teaching in village schools. Ask that they may be kept true, shining as lights in dark places, that He may be glorified, and when He returns, to dwell "in the midst" of His people for ever (Ezekiel 37:26-28), those "other sheep," whom we have helped to bring, may rejoice with us.—Church Missionary Society.

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