

Here, or hereabouts, certainly, with the same landscape around him, the same snowy crown of Hermon to his left, with the same blue sky and bright sunshine, appeared that light that paled the noonday splendour and that heavenly vision, which proved the turning-point of one of the noblest, purest, most perfect lives God ever enabled mortal man to achieve.

For some time we had seen before us a sea of green, and here we reached its edge. Away in front it stretched, bright and beautiful as a dream of paradise, glowing with a wealth of verdure and vivid life, the product of rich soil, hot sun and plentiful water. Villages, in the midst of gardens and orchards, acres upon acres of corn-fields, groves upon groves of olive and fruit trees.

It was on Good Friday that we rode along here, and our camp for the night was pitched close to a large village in the midst of these scenes of beauty and never-to-be-forgotten interest. We camped quite early in the afternoon, and, as usual, our quarters were the centre of curiosity and interest of a large but respectful and friendly crowd of natives. Some who had sick friends or relatives bringing them, as at other camping places, to present them for the examination and skill of the *hakim*, as they called our young American doctor.

In the night, some of the more wakeful of our party heard a tremendous fusillade in our immediate neighbourhood, and a considerable noise about our camp; and, in the morning, all of us were startled to hear that there had been a fray close by between a party of soldiers and some smugglers, in which three of the latter had been shot dead. One had sought refuge in our camp, and this had led to the noise, our muleteers and attendants, presumably, taking part against the government. It was sad, as we got into saddle and rode off in the bright sunshine that lovely morning, to think that, close by, in the brief hours of the past night, three fellow-creatures, albeit lawless, alien, and ruthless, had been suddenly and violently sent out of life.

We were within an hour or two now of Damascus, and its white minarets were glistening in the distance above the green sea of foliage which environed it. Quickly the villages increased in number, and the road began to wind among plantations fenced by huge blocks of concrete mud and filled with fruit trees, among which canals, filled with running water, glanced, in every direction, in the sun's rays. On and on, in the very depth of the ocean of green, we rode, until at length we came out by the waters of the Baruda, the ancient Abana, and close by its rapid and refreshing current, entered the gate of the oldest city in the world.