

## VAGABOND VIGNETTES.

BY THE REV. GEO. J. BOND, B.A.

*AT HOME IN DAMASCUS.*

AT home in Damascus! How strange it seems to-day, amid the common-place and familiar circumstances of my every-day work in this prosaic west, to think that I was ever, in veritable fact at home, in the far-off and famous Oriental city. How curiously, sometimes, as I thread the monotonous throngs in the streets of my own little busy town, the thought comes sharply to my mind of far other scenes, of crowds brilliant in all the variegated vestures of the picturesque East; of architecture, quaint and unfamiliar, of mosque or khan; of narrow streets, and darker archways, and crooked bye-lanes, and of all the strange delightful medley of sight and sound which gives to eastern travel its peculiar charm. What wonder-working magicians, after all, are the steamship and the railway, making good the boast of fairy Puck, and girdling this round earth with a cincture which annihilates space, and is going far to steal a march on time. Like a dream, indeed, but yet a dream that was once a delightful reality, is that sojourn of a week in the home of my dear friends, Dr. and Mrs. Mackinnon, in the very heart of the old city; giving me at once the opportunity of seeing its many-sided life as ordinary tourists never could have, and of studying from close and personal observation the influence and value of missionary work, and especially of the work of a medical missionary—for the doctor belongs to the Edinburgh Medical Mission—among, perhaps, the most fanatical of Mohammedan populations.

It was about six o'clock in the evening of a glorious day that my friend M. and I drove up to the terminus of the French Diligence Company at Damascus, after the long, hot and dusty journey from Beyrout, whither, a week before, we had gone with our party. From four in the morning we had been travelling, with just a halt for lunch at noon, first up the long, winding road to the summit pass of Lebanon; then down the slope to the valley of Buk'a'a, and across its fertile level to the foothills of Anti-Lebanon; then up through the romantic passes, till we finally emerged from them to see before us the wide-spread plain of Damascus, and shortly to reach the end of our toilsome journey, just within its walls. It had been a weary day, for the road was very dusty, the sun excessively hot, and the wind high, and my friend ter-