

# PLEASANT HOURS

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## The Jericho Road.

BY KATE W. HAMILTON.

Ben Ibrahim, travelling down the road—

The Jericho road so rough and steep.

Where robber hordes their evil watch keep

To seize from the lonely traveller his load—

Bethought him of all the dangers nigh,

And scanned his possessions with careful eye

"Treasures are here of silver and gold,

Spices, fine linen, and fabrics rare.

'Twere a pity to lose such goodly share"

They have cost thought and time and labour untold;

But, hap what may I must keep this stone

That I bear in trust; it is not my own.

"'Tis my lord's and not mine," as the pass he neared,

"New stores can I gain, not honour lost;

I will keep my trust at any cost."

And he hid the gem safe in his long white beard.

O Ibrahim wise! From out thy hoards

Thou hast saved thy best, as well as thy lord's.

Down life's perilous road our pilgrim way lies,

Where dangers surround on every hand,

And robbers beset. Full many a band

Seeks the joy of our hearts, the light of our eyes;

Our gains are snatched by time's clamorous hordes.

One gem must we guard, for that is our Lord's.

A jewel most precious, designed for his crown,

A gem all worlds could never redeem.

'Twill last when earth fades out like a dream,

And the King of the Universe claims his own.

What profit then if, reaching the goal,

Aught else has been saved by losing the soul?

—Well-Spring.

## FROM JERUSALEM TO JERICO.

BY THE EDITOR.

A tolerably good road, repaired and levelled at the expense of a Roumanian



THE WILD SCENERY OF JERICO—FROM THE INN OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

lady, extends for most of the way from Jerusalem to Jericho. In many places we passed swarms of Arab men and boys repairing it in a seemingly most ineffective manner, with the rudest tools, short-handled hoes, and rush baskets for carrying earth.

As we passed the traditional Bethpage we were joined by our Arab escort, a swarthy, dark-eyed, muscular man, wearing a white bournous, confined by black horse-hair cord around his head, a weather-stained cloak and baggy trousers. In his girdle he carried quite an arsenal of weapons—a long-barrelled pistol, a huge curved sword, and on his shoulder a brightly polished gun. He would shake hands all round two or three times a day, and repeat the formula, "Good-morning! English? English goot."

He gave us several exhibitions of his magnificent horsemanship, sweeping like the wind over the plain, his bournous and cloak flying behind him, waving his gun above his head, stopping and whirling almost like a bird in its flight.

We more than once felt the advantage of having our escort, as we passed numerous groups of fierce-looking Arabs, conveying donkey brigades of grain or an occasional camel train, from the wheat-fields of Moab to the Holy City. Their bold, free air, their keen, hawk-like eyes,

and long, white, hungry-looking teeth, quite fulfilled our ideal of the sons of Ishmael: "their hand against every man, and every man's hand against them." On their shoulders they carried guns with immensely long barrels and their stocks inlaid with silver or mother-of-pearl, at their girdle a cruel-looking, curved knife in a sheath, and even the poorest donkey-boy carried a stout club. They were picturesque-looking rascals, with their undaunted air, free stride and sinewy forms.

The road descended rapidly, and we realized as never before the meaning of the phrase, "Going down from Jerusalem to Jericho," the descent being about three thousand five hundred feet. The Apostles' Spring, the only fountain between the two places, where, doubtless, our Lord and his disciples must have drunk of its waters, exhibits the remains of a handsome stone structure with Saracenic arches and stone troughs for

water. It has been identified as the Waters of En-shemesh, mentioned in the fifteenth chapter of Joshua.

The road all the way from Jerusalem is thronged with

### RUSSIAN PILGRIMS

of the Greek Church on their way to the Jordan. They are a very picturesque, but shabby and dishevelled looking crowd in all degrees of raggedness. Most of them trudge along, sweltering beneath sheepskin cloaks, like Bryan O'Flynn's, "with the woolly side in." They wear unkempt, square-cut hair and shaggy beards, and carry bamboo staves from the Jordan, or palm branches, in their hands.

The women are generally mounted on the backs of much enduring donkeys, crouched on their bedding with, it may be, one or two children. They often wear a fur-lined cloak and top boots, and ride with short stirrups, bringing their knees a most to their chins. In the sweltering heat they ineffectually try to ward off the sun's rays by a palm branch or the corner of a shawl stretched out on a bamboo cane.

The village priest trudges along with his parishioners, dressed in black gown and tall, black hat, whose rim is at the top instead of at the bottom. Some of these foot-worn and weary pilgrims carry heavy bags on their shoulders. They all have sad and weary faces, and ceremoniously saluted the howadgi with humble obeisance.

This pilgrimage is the event of a lifetime. The rustic inhabitants of some village, in the remote Caucasus or Greek Islands, save their money for years, and, with the village priest, make the pilgrimage to the sacred places, carrying with them the long, white shroud in which they bathe in the Jordan, and which they carry to their distant homes to be their final winding-sheet.

While the Russian pilgrims are said to number about nine-tenths of the whole, yet there are many others, Cypriotes, Levantines, Abyssinians, Copts, Syrians, Armenians—adherents of the ancient Christian sects of the East. We saw at the Jordan a tall, handsome Abyssinian woman, weary and way-worn, who had got separated from her companions and was anxiously inquiring the way to the convent. It made us think of Mary returning from Jerusalem, and missing the



RUINED AQUEDUCT, NEAR JERICO.



PLAINS OF JORDAN, NEAR JERICO.