

father, remaining in the background. *Her nurse*; Deborah, as we learn from Gen. 35 : 8. *They blessed Rebekah*. The pronouncing of a blessing was considered to bring good fortune. The blessing was rhythmic in form, and its content was that customary amongst Orientals : "May she be the mother of countless descendants, and may her seed triumph over all their foes!" *Possess the gate*, etc.; that is, possess the cities of their foes. *Her damsels*; her attendants, for Rebekah is represented as a woman of some position. *Rode upon the camels*. The caravan of ten camels with their drivers and caretakers would be needed for the journey of 500 miles from Haran to southern Palestine.

III. The Meeting, 62-67.

Vs. 62, 63. *Isaac came*; had come, that is, before the return of Abraham's servant. *Beer-lahai-roi* (Rev. Ver.); "the well of the living one who seeth me." It may have been 50 miles southwest of Beersheba on the caravan route between Egypt and Syria. It seems likely that Isaac had moved to this district for the sake of better pasture. *South country*; Rev. Ver., "the land of the South," or the Negeb, a region at the extreme south of Palestine. *To meditate*. Perhaps the meaning is "to walk about." *Eventide*; the cool of the day, when the Oriental walks abroad. *Camels were coming*; but he could not distinguish in the distance whose they were.

Vs. 64, 65. *She lighted off the camel*; a mark of respect to a stranger still observed in the East. (Compare 1 Sam. 25 : 23; 2 Kgs. 5 : 21.) *Took her veil, and covered herself* (Rev. Ver.); after the usual etiquette, which required a maiden to veil herself in the presence of her betrothed, and at the time of the wedding. In the East to-day "the bridegroom can scarcely ever obtain even a surreptitious glance at the features of his bride until he finds her in his absolute possession, unless she belongs to the lower classes of society, in which case it is easy enough for him to see her face."

Vs. 66, 67. *Isaac brought her unto . . Sarah's tent*. By this action Isaac signified that he took Rebekah to be his wife. The leading of the bride into the tent was an important part of a wedding ceremony. According to Eastern custom, the wife of a sheik like Abraham might have a tent for herself and her children and her women attendants (see ch. 31 : 33). Though Sarah had been dead for three or four years the tent might still have been called hers. *Loved her*. Under the circumstances of the marriage this fact could hardly have been taken for granted. It is a tribute to the virtues and graces of Rebekah that she at once won a place in the affections of her husband.

Light from the East

THE CAMEL—If you set out from Palestine for Egypt or Babylon or Haran it is like embarking on a great sea of sand. And Providence has given man only one kind of ship to pass these sandy wastes. The camel is the ship of the desert. The camel is an ill-natured beast, but she will bear no end of ill-treatment. She is impatient and groans as you load her in the morning, but she will plod patiently on hour after hour under a blazing sun. An Arab spreads his blanket over the camel's pack, takes his seat on it like a tailor, and when she starts off at two miles an hour he sways his body slowly to match the beast's swinging gait. "She moved forward," said Kinglake in Eothen, "both her near legs at the same time, and then awkwardly swings round her off-shoulder and haunch, so as to repeat the manœuvre on that side; her pace therefore is an odd, disjointed and disjoining sort of movement that is rather disagreeable at first, but you soon grow reconciled to it. The height to which you are raised is of great advantage to you in passing the burning sands of the desert, for the air at such a distance from the ground is much cooler and more lively than that which circulates beneath."

THE GEOGRAPHY LESSON

Beersheba was a small village or settlement near to a cluster of wells on the edge of the southern desert, which marked the boundary

of the Promised Land. In some of the valleys near it, where there is moisture, the soil is very rich, and crops of wheat and barley are