

and which, like some of the other temples of this district, faced towards Hermon, leading us to believe that the mount was regarded as holy, and that the worshippers looked towards it while engaged in prayer. We rested at Rukleh for the night and set out early next morning, hoping in a few hours to reach Damascus.

After leaving Rukleh the road leads along a pleasant green valley, and shortly after enters on one of the most desolate and dreary tracks in this country. There is no vegetation and not a village to be seen, but dull grey crags rise on either side, and the sun, directly overhead, beats down upon us, and there is no covert from its scorching rays.

For more than 2 hours we follow the path across the dreary plateau, and then suddenly the scene changes, and the path dives down into a beautiful glen filled with foliage and sparkling with fountains and streams of water. It is the vale of the Abana. Along the centre of this vale "the golden-flowing stream" meanders, fringed on either bank with flowering and fragrant trees and shrubs. Literally we had exchanged the desert for a paradise, and the path winds through luxuriant gardens and under natural bowers formed by the overhanging willows and walnuts.

The hills rising perpendicularly almost entirely enclose the valley, and, instead of following the stream in all its windings till it opens into the plain around Damascus, we climb the intervening ridge. The east of this ridge commands a magnificent view of the plain and city of Damascus. The gardens and orchards which encompass the city have been justly celebrated. They present a variety and beauty of foliage to be seen nowhere else; the sombre hue of the olive, the deep green of the walnut and the purple of the pomegranate mingle with the light shade of the apricot and the silver-green of the poplar; while some palms raise their graceful heads at intervals.

These lovely gardens are watered by the Abana and Barada, the crystal streams of which can be detected winding through the plains. This rich verdure is girt by a belt of sand, and beyond the barren white hills, which bound the horizon on all sides. Thus closely in this land do sterility and death border on fertility and life.

Out of this mass of rich foliage rises the city with its white houses, its tall and graceful minarets and swelling domes; while pretty villages are seen here and

there as spangles on a green ground. On the spot where we were standing Mahomet is said to have stood, whilst yet a camel-driver from Mecca, and, after gazing on the scene below, to have turned away without entering the city. "Man," he said, "can have but one paradise and my paradise is fixed above."

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## POETRY.

### GOING HOME.

"Will you come with me, my pretty one?"  
I asked a little child,  
"Will you come with me and gather flowers?"  
She looked at me and smiled.  
Then in a low, sweet, gentle voice,  
She said, "I cannot come;  
I must not leave this narrow path,  
For I am going home."  
  
"But will you not?" I asked again;  
"The sun is shining bright,  
And you might twine a lily wreath  
To carry home at night;  
And I could show you pleasant things  
If you would only come:"  
But still she answered as before,  
"No; I am going home."  
  
"But look, my child: the fields are green,  
And 'neath the leafy trees  
Children are playing merrily,  
Or resting at their ease.  
Does it not hurt your tender feet  
This stony path to tread?"  
"Sometimes; but I am going home!"  
Once more she sweetly said.  
  
"My Father bade me keep this path,  
Nor ever turn aside.  
The road which leads away from Him  
Is very smooth and wide;  
The fields are fresh and cool and green;  
Pleasant the shady trees;  
But those around my own dear home  
Are lovelier far than these.  
  
"I must not loiter on the road,  
For I have far to go;  
And I should like to reach the door  
Before the sun is low.  
I must not stay; but will you not—  
Oh, will you not come too?  
My home is very beautiful,  
And there is room for you."  
  
I took her little hand in mine;  
Together we went on;  
Brighter and brighter o'er our path  
The blessed sunbeams shone.  
At length we saw the distant towers;  
But, ere we reached the gate,  
The child outstripped my lingering feet,  
Too overjoyed to wait.  
  
And, as she turned her radiant face  
Once more to bid me come,  
I heard a chorus of glad songs,  
A burst of "Welcome home!"