

From Jerusalem to Jericho.

From "Notes of a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land," etc.—Prepared Especially for
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—BY—

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OUR carriages announced, we set out from Casa Nova, and were presently speeding along, outside the walls, toward the "Gate of St. Stephen," whence, crossing the Torrent of Cedron and passing between Mount Olivet and the Valley of Jehosopha, we kept on until we reached Bethany, which is about two miles distant from Jerusalem. Here we halted in order to visit the places for which this little ruined village is celebrated: namely, the tomb of Lazarus; the site on which stood the house in which he lived with his sisters, Martha and Mary, and which was the scene of their hospitable entertainment of our Lord and His disciples, as described in the tenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel; and finally the "House of Simon the Leper," immortalized by Mary Magdalen, who, whilst Jesus was at table under its roof, broke an alabaster box of precious ointment and poured it upon His head (St. Mark, XIV.). Of these three venerable objects only the first is still extant. In order to reach this sepulchral cave, which was approached originally from the side of the hill in which it was excavated, we were obliged to mount to the summit of the latter, and then to descend an almost perpendicular flight of stone steps, twenty-four in number and badly worn, leading directly to the anti-chamber of the tomb, in

which, it is said, Jesus stood when He bade Lazarus come forth. The reason of our forced detour on this occasion arose from the fact that the Mohammedans, about the early part of the fourteenth century, built a mosque in such a position as to enclose the primitive entrance of the sepulchral vault; and as they refused to allow any but their co-religionists to make use of it, the Franciscan Fathers—the guardians of the holy places—were compelled to pierce the hill from above, and to make a species of shaft, in which they placed the stairway already mentioned. About the period just mentioned there was a church standing on this hallowed spot, which, indeed, was an object of veneration from the beginning of Christianity. St. Jerome, writing about the end of the fourth century, tells us that there was one in his day, and Bernard, surnamed the Wise, makes a like statement in 870. But this latter sanctuary is believed to have been destroyed by the ferocious Hhakem, and to have been rebuilt in 1103. These several churches were dedicated to St. Lazarus, and many of the bishops of Jerusalem were buried in them. Now, however, there is but little to show that they ever existed, if we except some scant ruins of the basilica erected by St. Helen, consisting of a portion of the apse and some remnants of the mosaic pavement,