

VAGABOND VIGNETTES.

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VII.

JAFFA AND THE PLAIN OF SHARON.

ON the afternoon of Saturday, the 19th of March, 1887, leaning over the rail of an Austrian Lloyd's steamer, at her moorings in Port Said, I was watching a couple of Arab boys diving for piastres flung to them by the passengers. As we tossed the coins into the water the swarthy youngsters would dive after them like seals, "bobbing up serenely" after each quest, to show the coin for a moment in their fingers, and then putting it into their mouths for safe-keeping, gesticulating wildly as they trod water for further incentive to try their skill.

Turning away from this *diversion*, the tricks of an Indian juggler on deck next engaged attention. Shabby in dress, swarthy of face, and subtilely suppliant in suavity of manners and speech, with his only accessories a dirty boy and a poor little scared-looking rabbit, he showed an ingenuity of operation, and an adroitness of hand that would have shamed many a more pretentious professor of the black art, and won not a few encomiums and coppers from the good-natured crowd of tourists who surrounded him. For the steamer's deck was a focus-point to which had converged lines of travel from many a distant and widely-sundered scene.

It was the height of the season for Oriental travel, the most delightful time for visiting Palestine; and there was a suppressed eagerness, and an undercurrent of satisfied desire among the passengers, that made itself evident in overflowing good-nature, sometimes almost boyish in its manifestations. And yet there was, withal, a seriousness and quiet of demeanour which comported well with our position and our anticipation. For were we not pilgrims; utter strangers to one another, for the most part; diverse in dress, and speech, and creed, and country; and yet drawn from east and west, and north and south, by the magnetism of a common interest, by the magnetism of a Name, and a Life, and a Death, and a Resurrection, which stand out before all time as the proof of God's love to universal man? "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me," He had said; and something, at least, of this mysterious magnetism was acknowledged by those who