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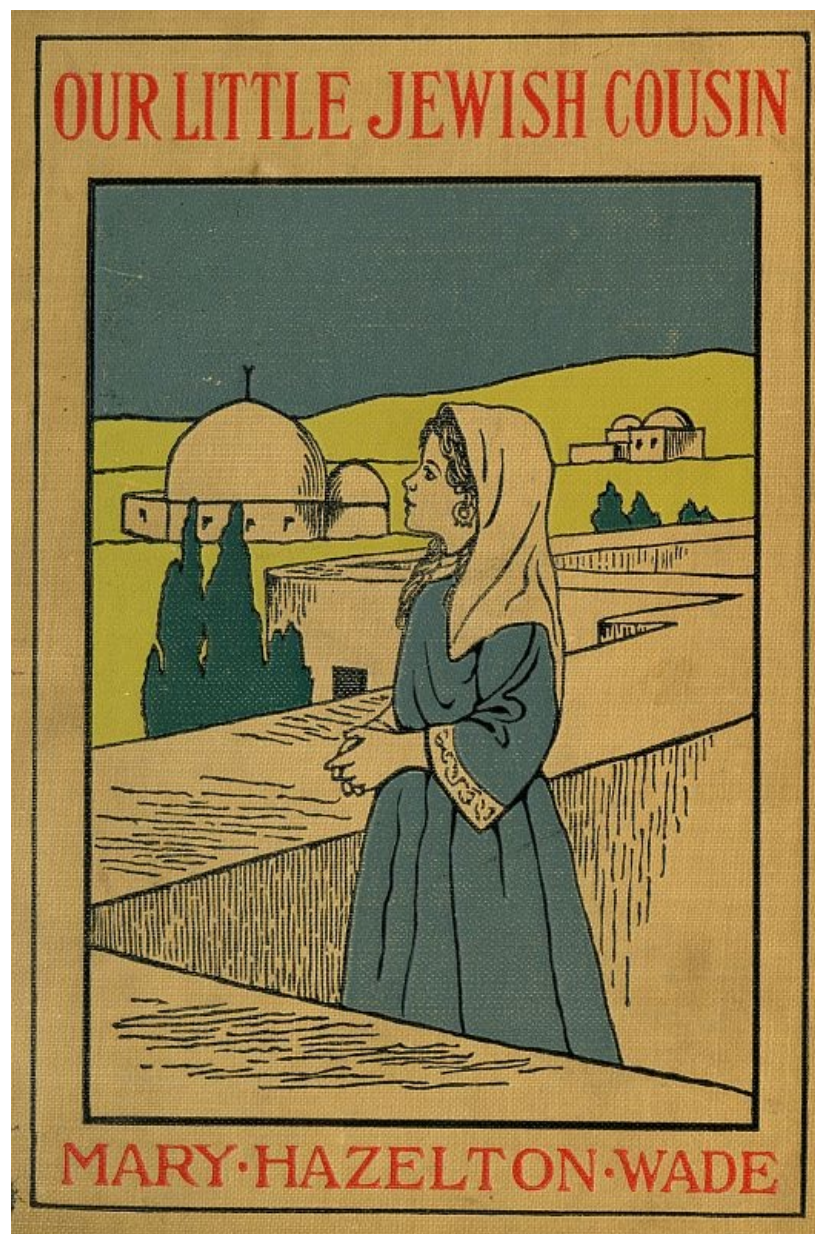
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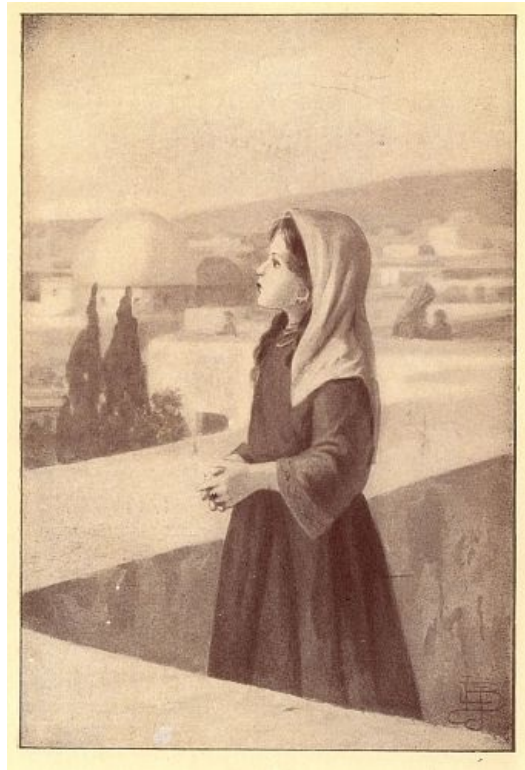
LIST OF TITLES

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Our Little Russian Cousin
Our Little Scotch Cousin
Our Little Servian Cousin
Our Little Siamese Cousin

Our Little Spanish Cousin
Our Little Swedish Cousin
Our Little Swiss Cousin
Our Little Turkish Cousin

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ESTHER.

Our Little Jewish Cousin

By
Mary Hazelton Wade

Illustrated by
L. J. Bridgman



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Preface

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IN whatever direction you may travel,—north, south, east, or west,—you will doubtless meet some of your little black-eyed Jewish cousins. They live among us here in America. They also dwell in the countries far away across the wide ocean.

Why are they so scattered, you may ask. Is there no country which is really theirs, and which is ruled over by some one they have chosen? Is there not some place where they can gather together happily whenever they please? The answer is always no.

They cannot say of this land or of that, "It is ours," for they are homeless. Palestine, which was once theirs, is now in the hands of the Turks. Jerusalem, the city they love best in the whole world, is in the power of those who look with scorn upon the Jewish people.

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For many centuries they have been scattered far and wide. Their children learn to speak the language of the country where they happen to be born. They play the games and dress in the fashion of that country.

What is it that keeps them Jews? It is their religion, and their religion alone. It binds them as closely together now as it did in the days when they worshipped in the great temple at Jerusalem, two thousand years ago.

These Jewish cousins would say to us, "Our people have suffered greatly. Yet they do not lose courage. Our parents tell us stories of the glorious past, over and over again. They will not let us forget it, and they teach us to hope for the time when Jerusalem will again be ours, and a new temple, in which we shall be free to worship, will stand upon the spot where the old one was destroyed."

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Our Little Jewish Cousin

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[1]

CHAPTER I.

THE PLACE OF WAILING

"COME, Esther! Come, Solomon! I am waiting for you," cried a woman's voice.

The two children were in the courtyard, but, when they heard their mother calling, they ran into the house at once.

They knew why they were called, for it was Friday afternoon. Every week at this time they went to the "Place of Wailing" with their parents to weep over the troubles of their people and to think of the old days of Jerusalem, before the Romans conquered the city.

"Esther, your hair needs brushing. Solomon, make your hands and face as clean as possible," said their mother, as she looked at the children. [2]

She loved them very dearly. She was proud of them, too. Solomon was a bright, clever boy, quick in his studies, while Esther was really beautiful. Her glossy black hair hung in long curls down her back. Her black eyes were soft and loving. Her skin was of a pale olive tint, and her cheeks were often flushed a delicate pink.

Her mother looked tenderly at her as she brushed the little girl's hair.

"Mamma, grandma says I look ever so much as you did when you were my age," said Esther, as she trudged by her mother's side down the narrow street.

"Yes, yes, my child, I have heard her say so. But never mind your looks or mine now. Think of where we are going."

It was a hot walk. The sun was shining brightly. The street, the stone houses, everything [3]

around shone dusty gray in colour. There were no sidewalks. When a camel drew near with his load, or a horseman passed by, Esther had to walk close to the walls of the houses for fear the animals would rub against her.

She was born in this old city of Jerusalem. She had never been far away from it, and knew little of the wide streets and broad sidewalks found in many other cities.

She had sometimes heard her father and mother talk of their life in Spain. They came from that country before Esther and her brother were born. It was a long journey, but they had said, "We cannot be happy anywhere except in Jerusalem. That alone is the home of our people."

Esther's father might have grown rich in Spain. He was a trader. He understood his business well. But in Jerusalem it was harder for him to get money. [4]

What a strange name for the place where the family were going this afternoon! But it well deserved to be called "The Place of Wailing." It was a dark, dreary court with stone walls on three sides of it. Many Jews were already there when Esther and her people arrived.

Some of them were seated on the ground. They were weeping bitterly and rocking their bodies to and fro. Others, with sad faces, were reading from the Hebrew Bible. Still others were kissing the wall and bumping it with their foreheads. Some parts of the rock had actually been worn smooth by the lips of those who had come here week after week and year after year. For they really believed it was a part of the old temple wall.

Little Esther, with her glossy black curls, did just what she saw the others do. The tears began to fall from her eyes as she went close up to the wall and kissed the cold gray stone.

Did all of these people really feel as bad as they seemed to do? Certainly. For they were grieving that Jerusalem was no longer great and no longer theirs. It was now in the hands of the Turks, but, long before they came, the Romans had taken the city from the Jews, after a long and bitter fight.

Saturday is the Jewish Sabbath. It is their holy day, and the time when they rest from work. On Friday afternoon they begin to prepare for the Sabbath. Hundreds of the Jews in Jerusalem gather at the Place of Wailing at that time. They not only weep and read from their Bible, but they also pray to the Lord to take their country out of the hands of their enemies and give it back to them.

As Esther walked home she looked up at the mosque of Omar. It is the Turks' grandest place of worship in the city. Her father told her that it stands on the very spot where Solomon's wonderful temple was built. [6]

"That temple was the most beautiful one ever seen by men," said the Jew. "Its brightness was enough to dazzle the eyes of those who looked upon it. Its walls were plated with gold. The very gate was golden.

"A beautiful golden vine, with clusters of grapes as large as a man's body, was draped over the gate. The floor was paved with gold. Golden lilies were carved upon the pillars and mouldings.

"There was no door. But there was a reason for this. It was to show that the heavens are always open. They are closed to no one."

"And now, papa, nothing is left of that beautiful building," said Esther.

"Not one stone, my dear. But we Jews all hope the time will come when it will be rebuilt." [7]

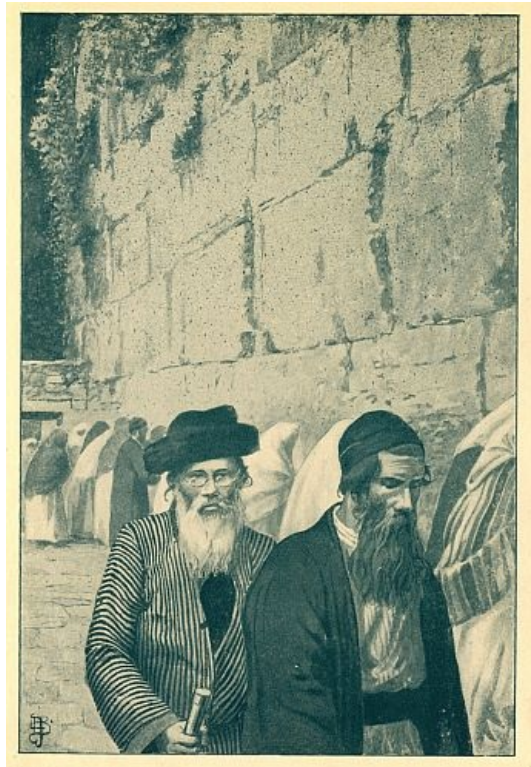
"It was not the first temple which was destroyed by the Romans when they took Jerusalem, was it?"

"Oh, no. The second temple had been standing in its place for hundreds of years at that time. It was wonderfully beautiful, too. Herod the Great spent vast sums of money on it. It was the wonder of every one who looked upon it. But our enemies destroyed it, as you well know."

That evening, while Esther and her brother sat by their father's side, he told them the story of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the brave men and women who tried to save it.

The Jews had feared for some time that something dreadful would happen. They had seen strange visions. While the feast of the Passover was taking place, the great temple was filled with a light like that of noonday. And this happened at the ninth hour of the night. [8]

Something else quite as wonderful as this took place. The bronze door of the Gate Beautiful



"IT WAS A DARK, DREARY COURT WITH STONE WALLS ON THREE SIDES OF IT."

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opened of itself at the sixth hour of the night. Yet this very gate was so heavy that twenty men could scarcely move it, even when the great iron bolts had been drawn.

Esther looked up at her father with surprised eyes as he told of these things. But when he spoke of seven chariots that drove across the sky, and of the armies the frightened people saw in the clouds, she was still more astonished.

"I should think our soldiers would have lost courage before they were attacked," she exclaimed.

"Not so, Esther. But listen, my child, as I describe the mighty Roman army that soon drew near Jerusalem. Multitudes of Syrians had joined them, and these led the way as they came marching up the heights. [9]

"Titus, the Roman general, followed the Syrians. The spearmen came with him. Next came the legions with their terrible short swords and the trumpets that filled the air with word of their approach.

"Every footman among the Romans was armed with a sword, a lance, and a shield. Besides these, he carried with him a saw, axe, hook, pickaxe, and enough food to last him for three days. The horsemen were also furnished with everything they needed for battle or for a long siege.

"This great army steadily drew nearer and nearer. Do you think the brave soldiers guarding our city trembled with fear as they looked forth from the watch-towers and saw them?"

"Not so, father. A Jew fears nothing."

"You are quite right. But now, let us return to Jerusalem as she stood then. A triple wall, thirty feet high, had been built around the city, except where it was separated from the rest of the country by deep ravines. One wall was quite enough to protect it in such places. Many watch-towers had been set up around the city. It seemed impossible to take it by surprise at any point. [10]

"The temple stood on Mount Moriah in all its glory. But it was not a temple alone. It was also a strong fortress."

"How could the Romans take the city, even if their numbers were so great?" asked Solomon.

"They could never have won, except for one thing. Our people were not wholly united. A party of them under the high priest, Ananus, felt there was no hope. They believed it would be wisest to give up at once and make peace.

"But the others said, 'No, we will fight to the end, and will drive our enemies from the city.' If every one had felt from the first as these did, all would have been well. It was too late when the different parties agreed to work for one end. [11]

"The Romans threw immense stones into the city. They cut down the trees in all the country round, and made towers from which they hoped to fire and destroy the buildings inside the walls.

"They succeeded, for they soon made an opening in the outer wall. Then the second wall gave way before the mighty force. And all this time those Romans, who were stationed across from the city on the Mount of Olives, were throwing such huge stones from their great engines that the houses and people inside Jerusalem were being destroyed, both by day and by night.

"Worse still! they began to lack food and to suffer from starvation. They could not hold out much longer. The time soon came when the last wall was broken down and Titus marched through the streets of the city. [12]

"It was very strange that it was the anniversary of the day when the first temple was destroyed by the soldiers of Babylon.

"'It is on fire! The glorious temple is burning!' cried our people, as they saw the flames. A Roman soldier had kindled the fire without the knowledge of Titus, who had not wished to injure this wonder of the whole world.

"Some of the priests threw themselves into the flames. Before it was destroyed, Titus, with his captains, entered the holy place. The Roman general cried, 'It is more beautiful than I even imagined. Its riches are a perfect marvel.'

"The golden candlesticks and tables and cups, the sweet spices of which the priests made incense, the precious stones, were laid at the feet of the conqueror." [13]

"What did he do with all this wealth?" asked Esther.

"He carried most of it back to Rome. But he rewarded the bravest of his soldiers with crowns of gold and chains of silver.

"He had fought for many days before Jerusalem gave up. In that time the country around us had been ruined. The forests had been cut down for the making of engines of war. The herds of cattle had been killed to furnish food for the army of Titus. The harvests had been gathered for the same purpose. As for the people themselves, more than a million were killed and the rest were made the slaves of the Romans."

"Don't feel bad, papa," said Esther, lovingly. "That was a very long time ago."

"Yes, Esther, but our people have been scattered over the world ever since then. We shall never be happy till we are once more the rulers of this city."

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"Mother told me a story, the other day," said Solomon, who had not spoken for a long time. "It was about a family who lived here when Titus appeared before our gates. I think she told it to make me brave."

"What is the story, Solomon?" asked his father.

"There was a brave man in our city. He was of noble blood and true to his faith. He had a faithful wife and seven sons. You shall hear how brave and true they were.

"The Roman army began the terrible siege. Before it was over, the brave noble was killed, but his wife and children lived. After Titus entered the city, he heard of this family. He ordered them to be brought before him.

"As they stood in his presence he spoke to each in turn. He offered them freedom if they would give up their faith and bow down before his gods. But not one of them hesitated. They had not a single thought of giving up their faith in the one living God. No, not for the sake of life.

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"One by one they were led away to death. At last, only the youngest son was left before the conqueror. Titus was moved to pity for the beautiful boy. He really wished to save him. He said, 'My child, see! I will drop my ring for the sake of the gods. If thou wilt pick it up, thy life shall be spared.'

"The boy looked up at him firmly. He answered, 'It shall lie there where you dropped it. I am afraid of no living man. I fear only the thought of life without the One God.'"

"Of course, he followed his brothers. But what became of the mother?" asked Esther.

"She begged to die with her sons. She said Abraham had built one altar on which to sacrifice to God. She had built seven! And she spoke truly."

"It is a noble story of noble people," said the children's father. "There were many like them in that old time. Let us hope there are still many in the world."

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CHAPTER II.

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THE GAZELLE

"SHALL I help?" asked Solomon.

"Yes, indeed. Take the seeds in the skirts of your coat and come along," was the answer.

Solomon and Esther were visiting some friends in a village near Jerusalem. It was the month of December and the time to plant the crops in Palestine.

"After we have scattered the grain," Solomon's friend Levi said, "the camel shall help us plough the ground. Then the seed will take care of itself."

It did not surprise Solomon to hear of a camel drawing a plough.

Levi's camel was as useful to him as horses are to farmers in America. Solomon and Esther had been at their friend's many times when the great, slow, clumsy animal helped his master about the farm and garden.

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"He isn't handsome, but I love the dear old fellow," said Levi. "He is more patient than most camels. I know he is slow beside some of his fellows, but he cannot help that." Levi stroked the camel's head.

"There, see! He likes to have me notice him as well as my new pet."

The camel bent his head down toward his master, with a look that said as plainly as words, "I love you, master, for you are kind to me."

"What is the new pet, Levi?" asked Solomon.

"When I get through my sowing, you may go into the house and call Esther. Then you two shall see it together."

Solomon could hardly wait for Levi to finish his work. But at last the seeds were all scattered.

"I won't go at the ploughing just yet. I am tired, and it is warm. We will rest awhile. I know you are anxious to find out what I have to show you. I got it for my wife, Rebecca."

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Levi was a young man and had been married only a short time. He was very fond of his pretty wife, and liked to have surprises for her. He led the way to the house where Esther was talking with Rebecca.

"Solomon wishes to see our new pet," he said. "Have you told Esther about it?"

"Not yet. We will all go together," answered the young Jewess.

They went out to the stable and Levi pointed to a bed of straw over in the corner. There something lay curled up and sound asleep.

"It's a gazelle. Oh, what a beauty!" cried Esther. "It's only a baby still."

"I never saw such a little one before," said Solomon. "May I take it up in my arms?"

The gazelle waked up at the sound of voices. It opened its soft, dark eyes with a frightened look. [20]

"It is very shy," said Rebecca. "But we pet it so much it will soon get over its fear. You children ought to see it run and frolic with me."

"Here, little one, come and eat," said the gazelle's mistress, in a low, sweet voice.

It sprang up and started toward Rebecca. But, when it had come half-way, it became frightened again at the sight of the visitors. The food looked too tempting, however, and it came to Rebecca's side.

"I believe no other animal has as beautiful eyes as the gazelle. It is certainly the most graceful of all creatures," said Levi.

"See how white its breast is!" said Esther. "The dear little thing! Mayn't I hold it for just a minute?"

"Certainly, dear."

Rebecca was very fond of Esther and her brother. She loved to have them visit her. She picked up the gazelle and put it in the little girl's lap as soon as she had seated herself on a pile of straw. [21]

Esther patted the gazelle tenderly. "It is better than any doll. I wish I had one of my own. I should love it dearly."

"I cannot stop any longer now," said Levi. "My old camel is wondering why I don't go to work. Are you coming with me, Solomon?"

"Of course I am," answered the boy, and the two started for the field.

"What shall we do with ourselves?" asked Rebecca, when she and Esther had been left alone.

"Oh, I know what you would like," she went on. "We will go over into our neighbour's orchard. He is gathering olives, and we will watch him."

"I would like that ever so much," answered her little visitor. [22]

It took them only a few minutes to get to the olive orchard. The owner and his sons were heating the branches with long sticks, and knocking off the fruit to the ground. Two women were busily at work gathering the olives in baskets. As soon as a basket was filled, it was carried away and emptied, and then brought back to be filled again.

It was surprising how quickly the women gathered their loads. Then away they would step with their baskets on their heads, walking as easily and gracefully as though they were free of all burdens whatever.

"Come on and help us," they cried to Rebecca and Esther. "The more at work the merrier we shall be. There are two empty baskets under that tree."

The visitors were soon busy trying to see if they could fill their baskets as quickly as the others did. [23]

"I am not tempted to eat the olives," said Esther. "They are too bitter. But I am very fond of them after they are pickled."

"So are we all," answered one of the women. "I don't know how we should get along without olives and the oil we make from them."

"They say the Christians not only eat that unclean animal, the pig, but they also use its fat for cooking, just as we use olive oil," said Rebecca.

"Ugh! What a horrid idea. I should be afraid to eat anything in the house of a Christian, for fear of being poisoned," cried Esther. "Mamma has told me they sometimes die of diseases we Hebrews never have. It is probably because they eat pork and use lard."

"No doubt of it, Esther," answered Rebecca. "It is a wise law of our religion that forbids us to eat any food obtained from the hog." [24]

"We must not stop to talk too much, though. See! our friends are getting ahead of us."

Nothing more was said for some time.

"It is surprising how quickly we finished," said one of the women to Rebecca, as the last basket was emptied. "It is because our friends gave us so much help. Won't you come to the house with us now and have a luncheon?"

"No, thank you," answered Rebecca. "It is nearly supper time, and I must go home and do some cooking."

"I am anxious to see the dear little gazelle again," said Esther.

As she walked back to her friend's house Rebecca told her stories about wild gazelles.

"They like to keep together," she said. "They are very fond of each other's company. While they are feeding, one of them stands on guard to see if any enemies are stealing upon them. If he hears a sound that means danger, he gives the alarm and away the flock flees like the wind."

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"I have often heard father speak of being as fleet as a gazelle," said Esther. "But what are its worst enemies?"

"The lion and the leopard, I suppose. Poor little creature! If a lion takes it by surprise, there is little hope for its life. Its only chance is in flight."

"There are times when less dangerous animals come upon a herd of gazelles, and then they make a stand to defend themselves. They gather in a close mass, with the mothers and little ones in the centre. The males make a ring on the outside, pointing their horns toward the enemy."

"Isn't it wonderful they should be so wise? How did you learn so much about gazelles, Rebecca?"

"Levi told me. But I must hurry now to get supper. We are going to have something nice."

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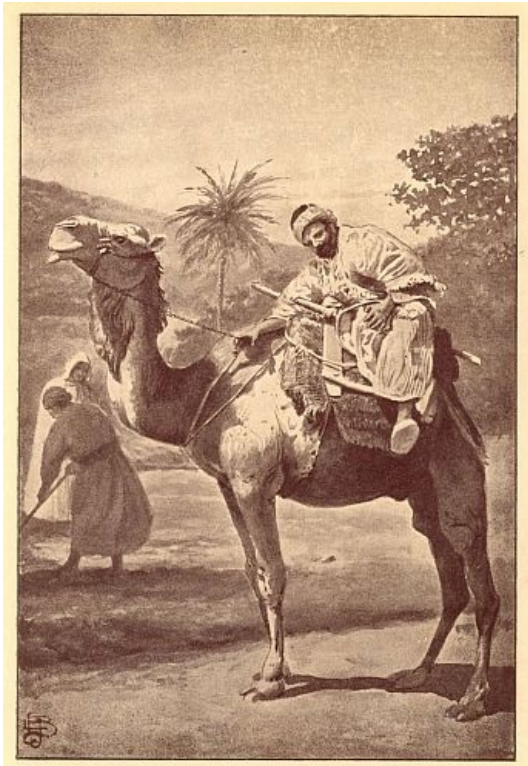
Rebecca was a good cook. Although Esther was quite hungry from being out-of-doors so much, it did not seem very long before a roast goose and a dish of onions were steaming on the supper table.

"It is ready just in time, Levi," said his wife, as her husband and Solomon came into the house.

"I am quite tired, but the smell of the supper is enough to make me forget all about it. Tired as I was, though, I stopped to feed my faithful camel."

"How old is he?" asked Solomon.

"My father had him before he was six months old, and that was twenty years ago. I was a little fellow just toddling about then. So, you see, the camel and I grew up together."



LEVI AND HIS CAMEL.

"It is no wonder you love him, Levi," said Solomon. "I don't believe I ever saw a baby camel."

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"Isn't it hard work training a camel to obey you, and to kneel at your command?"

"Father said he had to use a great deal of patience at first. The camel kicked and fought and grumbled before he could be made to bend his knees. Even now, he scolds a good deal about obeying, as you children know."

"Esther and I saw a camp of Bedouins on our way here," said Solomon. "They were tending a flock of beautiful sheep. One of the shepherds was holding a new-born lamb in his bosom."

"Those fierce Bedouins are tender to their flocks, but cruel to men," said Levi. "You cannot trust them for a moment. They look down upon us village people. But in our hearts we scorn them."

"They are dreadful thieves," said Rebecca. "When I was up in Jerusalem, the other day, I heard a story about a Bedouin woman who went last summer into a rich man's garden. The owner of the place was just coming into the entrance when he met the woman with a basket of lettuce on her head. She was a relation of one of his servants. He stopped and asked her several questions about her errand there. She told him she had just been to his place to try to sell

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her lettuce, but she could not do it, as the garden contained all his family could use.

"The gentleman supposed she was telling the truth. What was his surprise, then, when he found out after she was safe out of sight that the woman had stolen every head of lettuce out of his garden!"

"It is just like the deceitful creatures," said Levi. "I dislike the sight of them."

"Are you going to have much honey this year?" asked Solomon.

"Yes, I have several swarms of bees, and I hope they will do well."

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"It won't be long before we shall have some fresh honey," said Rebecca. "Then you children must pay us another visit, for I know you like sweet things."

"I wish we didn't need to go home to-morrow. But mother said we mustn't stay here any longer this time. By and by, though, there will be more wild flowers to pick, and I had rather be here then. I love to get big bunches of tulips and poppies and trim the house with them."

"How many red flowers we have here in Palestine!" said Rebecca.

She did not know that Christian travellers from other parts of the world speak of them as the "Saviour's Blood Drops." They are sure to notice the fields dotted with brilliant scarlet flowers.

"Do you want me to tell you a story of King Solomon?" asked Levi. "Your speaking of the honey and the flowers put it into my mind." [30]

"Of course we do," said both children.

"Very well, then. It is about the visit of the Queen of Sheba with her generals and armies. As she approached, the great king received her sitting on his throne in that wondrous palace of which you have heard so much.

"'Is he as wise as people say?' the queen said to her attendants. 'I will find this out for myself.'

"Now it happened that her subjects were noted for their skill in making artificial flowers. Those who made it their business to study flowers could not tell the difference between real ones and these imitation ones, they were so perfect.

"The queen decided to test King Solomon's wisdom in this matter. She ordered two beautiful wreaths to be prepared. One was to be made of real flowers and the other of artificial ones. Taking the two wreaths in her hands, she presented herself before the king. [31]

"'Choose one of these for yourself,' she said.

"There seemed to be no choice as to which he would take, although he looked at them closely. But his wise mind told him there must be some difference. The birds and insects could tell him which one to take. He looked out of a window and saw honey-bees in the garden below. Then he knew what to do. He ordered the window to be opened. The breeze carried the odour of the flowers out to the bees and they came flying into the room.

"You can easily guess they alighted on the wreath of real flowers. The artificial ones did not attract them in the least. Then Solomon spoke.

"'The bees have told me which wreath to choose,' he said." [32]

"The Queen of Sheba found out that the king was truly wise, didn't she?" said Solomon.

"Yes, Solomon, and you who are named for him should always remember what the Queen of Sheba learned,—that there is one thing worth more than riches or beauty."

"And that is wisdom," said Rebecca, softly.

CHAPTER III. [33]

THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER

It was the first evening of the seven days set apart to celebrate the deliverance of the Jews from their bondage in Egypt and their safe passage to a new home of their own.

Solomon and Esther were dressed in their Sabbath clothes. So were their father and mother. The house was trimmed as though for a wedding.

"Is the table ready?" Esther's mother asked the servant.

"Quite ready. Everything is in its place, I think," was the answer.

The children's father led the way, and the family gathered around the table. There were lettuce and cress, unleavened bread, wine, and a meat bone which was carefully covered with a fine cloth. [34]

Solomon and his father began to chant. They rocked themselves to and fro at the same time. This motion of their bodies was to express as well as possible the words of the psalm, "All my bones shall praise thee."

When the chant was finished, the master of the house cut a slice from a loaf of bread shaped like a crescent.

"These two pieces of bread," he said, solemnly, "are like the shores of the Red Sea. But now, as I join them together again, it seems as though we could see the waves sweeping over Pharaoh's host."

He then took one-half the loaf and, putting it in a napkin, tied it on Solomon's shoulders. There it remained till the ceremony was over. Everybody drank some wine, and then another chant was sung. After that, they ate some lettuce and jam and chanted again.

Esther's father now took some bread, spread it with jam, wrapped it in lettuce and wound [35] it around it. He gave some of it to each one to eat. This was done in memory of the ten plagues of Egypt.

The service was not finished until every one had eaten eggs. This was a sign of mourning that their temple had been destroyed.

Solomon and Esther understood the meaning of all that was done this evening. They had been carefully taught the history of the "Chosen People," as they liked to call themselves. But at this festival their father once more repeated many of the stories of the olden time.

He said, "We do not celebrate this festival exactly as our forefathers did. They always sacrificed a lamb. They were also careful to eat no leavened food for the whole seven days. We follow the rule about unleavened bread still, and we look upon the first and last days as holy. You must never do labour of any kind on these two days." [36]

Then he went on to tell the story of the first Passover, and how Pharaoh, as the ruler of Egypt was called, wished to keep the Hebrews in bondage. He was building two treasure-cities, and he needed great numbers of workmen to make the bricks. He did not wish the Hebrews to join his enemies or leave the country.

He was a stern ruler, and he made his slaves work very hard. Yet they had many children. The Pharaoh did not like this. He feared they would become too powerful. So he ordered that every new-born boy among them should be killed.

It happened at this time that a little boy was born in a family where there were already two children. This new baby was a boy, and was given the name of Moses. The mother of the child was fearful lest he should be discovered and killed by the cruel Pharaoh. She hid him as best she could for three months. Then she thought: "The danger grows greater every day. I must make some new plan to save him." [37]

She placed the baby in a little cradle or ark, and carried him down to the shore of the river, where she hid him in the reeds. She told her daughter Miriam to stay near her brother and watch over him. Then she went away.

A little while after this, who should come but the noble princess, Pharaoh's daughter. She was going to bathe in the river. It was not long before she spied the smiling baby in the bulrushes. She was so pleased with the little fellow that she said, "I will adopt the child."

Then the little Miriam came to her side and told the princess she knew of a good nurse. In this way it came about that Moses' own mother was hired to take care of the baby. [38]

As he grew up in the king's palace, his mother told Moses all about himself and his people. He was very carefully taught, and soon showed that he was "mighty in words and deeds."

It happened one day that Moses saw one of the overseers cruelly beating an Israelite. He was so angry that he killed the overseer. Then he had to flee to save his own life from the wrath of Pharaoh. He went into the desert not far from the Red Sea, and there he stayed for forty years.

He became a shepherd. Once while he was tending his sheep, he saw a strange sight. It was a burning bush. That in itself was nothing to wonder at. But the strange part of it all was that the bush looked as though it were in flames, yet it did not really burn up. It was a sign from Heaven!

As Moses looked at the bush, he heard a voice. It cried, "Take off your shoes, for you are standing on holy ground." [39]

He listened in wonder as he next received a command from God to seek the ruler of Egypt, who was now treating the people of Israel with great cruelty. He must give the Pharaoh a message. It was this,—that God commanded Moses to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt and into the desert.

At first Moses feared to do this. But the Lord caused some miracles to be performed before his eyes. Then he had faith, and became brave enough to do as God commanded him.

He went with his brother Aaron to the ruler of Egypt. He told him that he had received word from Heaven ordering him to lead the people of Israel out into the desert to take part in a feast.

The cruel Pharaoh did not believe in God. He was angry with Moses and refused to let the people go. [40]

Moses now showed the power the Lord had given him. He lifted his rod and commanded ten plagues to come down on the land of Egypt. This was to punish the Pharaoh and force him to free the Israelites.

One by one the plagues fell upon the country. The waters were changed to blood, and great numbers of frogs appeared upon the land. Besides these creatures, there were swarms of lice, flies, and other pests.

The people of Egypt became sick. The land was covered with darkness. The Pharaoh was frightened and promised to let the Israelites leave his country. Then the darkness lifted and the plagues ceased. But as soon as this happened, the Pharaoh broke his promise.

The troubles began again. Pharaoh made fresh promises, only to break them again as soon as the plagues stopped.

At last, God sent an angel into Egypt to kill all the first-born of the people. The Israelites, however, were not to be harmed. Moses told them to smear their door-posts with the blood of a lamb. [41]

The angel moved from house to house, doing as the Lord had directed. But when he came to a door-post marked with the blood of a lamb, he passed it by, and no one within was harmed.

Esther's father told the story that evening, as though the children had never heard it before. Yet they had listened to it every year since they could remember.

The blood of a lamb! Yes, the people in olden time had good reason to sacrifice a lamb at the Passover.

It was well named the Passover, in memory of the angel's passing over the homes of the Chosen People.

CHAPTER IV. [42]

THE ORPHAN

"DEAR me! How my head aches," said Esther. "I do wish those dogs would stop barking."

The little girl had been ill for two or three days. The hot days of summer had brought on a fever. The doctor had said, "Keep the child quiet. All she needs is rest. She has played too much in the sunshine."

But how could poor little Esther have quiet? The street dogs were noisy enough in the daytime, but when night came, it seemed as though every single one was wide awake and quarrelling with his neighbours.

"They have no home, and are almost obliged to fight, to get enough to eat. I am sorry for them," said Esther's mother. [43]

She felt more kindly to the dogs than most of the people in Jerusalem. They would have been glad to have the city rid of the creatures.

These street dogs look very much like foxes. They have no homes of their own and almost no friends. Those living in one part of the city are always ready to carry on war against those of every other part.

"Let us take Esther up on the roof," said the little girl's father, one evening. "It is such a hot night, she cannot rest in this close room."

Esther felt better almost as soon as she had been carried up and settled on a soft couch. The roof of the stone house where she lived was flat. Most of the houses around her were built in the same way. Many of the neighbours spent their evenings on the roofs, and often moved from one roof to another to make calls on each other. [44]

Esther had been up there only a few minutes before she had a caller. It was a little girl about her own age. She told Esther some news about one of their playmates. She said:

"Only think of it! Miriam's father has just died. You know, Esther, her mother died so long ago that she doesn't even remember her. What will become of her now? There is no one in the world to take care of her."

Esther was very fond of Miriam, and her heart was full of pity.

She thought of her own comfortable home and then of the many Jews in the city who were very, very poor. Perhaps Miriam would become a beggar! It was a dreadful thought.

Just then Esther's mother came up on the roof. She was dressed in a beautiful yellow robe. A rich girdle belted it in at the waist. She wore large golden hoops in her ears, and a heavy chain around her neck. [45]

"Mamma is as lovely as a queen," thought Esther. "I know papa isn't rich. Still, he has enough and to spare, and we have many nice things. I will ask him and mamma to adopt Miriam. Then I shall have a sister of my own.

"Mamma, dear, I have just heard about Miriam, and now I want to ask you something. Will you take her for your little daughter?"

The mother sat down beside the sick girl. Her face wore a gentle smile.

"My dear, I am glad the thought came to you. You are a sweet, loving child. Do you know, your father and I have just been talking about this very thing. There is nothing our Church praises more highly than the adoption of an orphan. It is called 'A good work.' So we have decided to add one more to our little family."

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Esther clapped her hands with joy. "I know I shall get well at once," she cried. "The fever will go away, for I sha'n't have time to think of it."

It was just as she had said. It seemed as though she began to get better from that very moment. She had so much to do trying to entertain her new sister, she did not think of herself.

Miriam was sad at first. She could not help remembering she was an orphan. But her new father and mother were so kind to her, and Solomon and his sister tried so hard to make her happy, she soon forgot to be lonesome and sad.

One day a message came from Rebecca and Levi. They wished all the children to come and visit them. Rebecca wrote:

"We have a new pet, and I know you will be fond of it. It is a beautiful Syrian sheep. Its wool is a soft brown and yellow. Its tail is very broad and flat. It is so tame, it follows me wherever I go."

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"Besides," the letter went on, "we have quantities of fresh figs now, and I know you children are very fond of them."

"May we go, mother? Please say 'yes,'" asked Esther.

"If your father is willing," was the answer. "I shall be very lonesome, but it will do you all good to leave the city for awhile and visit our kind friends."

That evening, Esther and Miriam ran to meet their father.

"I wish father had a little farm," said Esther, as the two girls walked arm in arm down the street. "I should think it would be ever so much easier than being a trader."

"I spoke about that once to my other father," said thoughtful little Miriam. "He said that in the good old times our people were generally shepherds or farmers. But nowadays they are almost all traders."

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"It is because those who do not believe as we do have treated us so cruelly. They have made it hard for us to hold land. We have been forced to become traders. Our people are scattered all over the world. Father said there is hardly a country without some of them."

"Let us ask papa to tell us stories of old times to-night," said Esther. "There, I see his scarlet robe away down the street now."

CHAPTER V.

[49]

THE JEWS OF LONG AGO

"MAY we go to Levi's, papa dear?" asked Esther, when the evening meal was over and the children were gathered with their parents on the housetop. "Mamma said she was willing, but we must ask you."

"I think it would be very pleasant for you, and I know Levi and Rebecca like to have you there. Yes, you may go."

"I knew you would say yes. And now we want to ask you something else. Will you tell us some stories of long ago, before our city was destroyed?"

"I suppose you would like best to hear about the children, Esther?"

"Of course, papa."

"They were very happy. Their parents were as wise and tender in caring for them as they are to-day."

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"When they were yet quite young, they began to study the books of wisdom of our people. They went to school every day. There was one saying they heard over and over again. It was this, 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers.'"

"'Our houses are not for us alone,' their parents said, and taught them this beautiful saying, 'Let thy house be wide open, and let the poor be the children of the house.'"

"There were many pilgrim feasts in those days. People came to Jerusalem to worship in the temple and to take part in the sacred festivals. Yet it is said that not one of these pilgrims ever felt the need of entertainment. The houses were open for all."

"Only think of it! It was a common thing to walk along the street and see curtains hanging in front of the doors. This was a sign that there was still room for guests. Some people went so far

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as to say, "There should be four doors to every house. Then travellers could be welcomed from every direction."

"What kind of houses did the people live in?" asked Solomon.

"There were small cottages where the poor lived, for there were some, of course, who did not have much of this world's goods. Then there were the houses of the middle class. These were built of brick or stone. And besides these there were the elegant marble homes of the rich, built around beautiful courtyards.

"The houses had flat roofs paved with stone or brick. They were made to slant down a little, so as to let the rain-water run off through pipes into the cistern below. These cisterns were needed in the old days just as much as now, on account of the long months when no rain fell and the country became so dry.

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"A railing was built around each housetop. In this way it was made into a comfortable resting-place for the family and their friends. It was cool and quiet."

"We follow the same fashion," said Esther.

"Yes, but in the old times I suppose it was used even more than now. The older people often went up there to pray. Meetings were sometimes held there. It was also a good place to watch for the enemy.

"The rich people often had wide and costly stairs built up to the roof from the street. You can imagine the boys and girls running over these stairs in a game of chase or hide-and-peek."

"How did the people of two thousand years ago furnish their houses?" asked Miriam.

"Very much as we do now. They had couches, chairs and tables, and there were often many soft cushions for the head and arms. The people used candlesticks and lamps, exactly as we do.

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"But I promised to talk most about the children. They took part with their parents in family prayer every night and morning. They washed and prayed before every meal. After it, they gave thanks to God for his kindness to them. As each Sabbath came around, the children looked forward to it as though they were going to welcome a king. It was a time of rest and joy.

"When the father came home on the eve of the holy day, he found the house trimmed up as though for a feast. The Sabbath lamp was lighted. The table was spread with the richest feast the family could afford. Before doing anything else, the father blessed each child with the blessing of Israel. The little ones felt that something beautiful and holy was about to take place.

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"They were quite willing to give up their play for the next day. They would have something better."

"You have taught us all these things, papa," said Esther.

"I know it, my dear. But I tell them again so that you may see we have not changed much since the old days.

"The children looked forward to the feast-days with joyful delight. It is hard to say which they liked best."

"They must have loved the Feast of the Dedication," said Miriam.

"Why, Miriam?"

"On account of the many candles. It is so pleasant to watch a great number of them burning at once."

"Yes, children always love lights and brightness. The first evening of the feast, a candle was lighted for each one in the house. The second evening, two were lighted, and so on to the eighth night."

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"But the Feast of Esther brings more sport," said Solomon.

"You are just like every other boy, Solomon. You like noise and fun," said his father.

"But, think a moment, children. Must not the Feast of the Passover have been the greatest one of all?"

"It was then that the father repeated the whole history of the Children of Israel to his listening children. They loved to hear it. It seemed to them as though they were really following the Chosen People in their wanderings. They looked upon Moses receiving the commandments from Heaven. As they shut their eyes, they saw in their minds the waters of the Red Sea parting to let the Children of Israel pass across in safety. Then, again coming together, the waves closed over their enemies and destroyed them."

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"Father, you tell us the stories as well as any one possibly could," said Solomon.

"I do my best, Solomon. But in the olden days the children were brought nearer to heaven by their visits to the temple.

"Think of that glorious building and its walls shining with gold! It seems as though I could see

the throng of white-robed priests and hear the blasts they sounded on their silver trumpets.

"Listen! A chant from the Psalms rings through the great building. It sounds like heavenly voices." Esther's father closed his eyes and became silent. The children were filled with awe as they sat quietly beside him.

"I wish I could have lived in the long ago," thought Esther. "The temple must have seemed like a part of heaven brought to earth."

"Now we will repeat the night prayer and go to rest," said the father.

CHAPTER VI.

[57]

QUEER SIGHTS

"WOULD you like to go shopping with me?" said Esther's mother, the next afternoon. "I must buy some things you children will need to carry with you on your visit."

Esther and Miriam jumped up from their play. They were always ready to go shopping. They liked to see the pretty things in the shops.

Esther's mother had made herself ready for her walk by fastening a bright red shawl over her head. She never wore a hat or a bonnet, as do her American sisters.

"We will go to the market first," she told the children. "I wish to buy some fruit."

It was quite a long walk, but there was so much to see on the way, Esther and Miriam did not think of that.

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"Do see that drove of donkeys," exclaimed their mother, after they had entered one of the principal streets. "They are laden with goatskins filled with water, I suppose. Listen, children! Their Arab driver is calling to them."

"O-ar! o-ar! derak! derak!" sounded the driver's voice.

A small boy running down a byway mimicked the Arab.

"O-ar! o-ar! derak! derak!"

"See that solemn old camel," said Esther. "He is laden with stones. They must be very heavy. Poor old fellow! I don't blame him for growling at his master for trying to hurry him up."

"His growl rattles so, it seems to come from his inmost stomach," said the mother, laughingly.

"Baksheesh! baksheesh!" yelled a beggar sitting cross-legged against the wall of a house. The man was ragged and dirty. He held a tin pail before him. Kind-hearted people had dropped money, fruit, and vegetables into it as they passed by.

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"There are many poor people of our own faith here in the city," said Esther's mother, as they went on their way. "They really suffer for lack of food. That man is a Turk. It may be that he is really as poor as he looks, and needs all the help he can get. But it is quite possible he has a comfortable home, and only begs because it is an easy way of getting a living."

"Look, mamma, at that woman of Bethlehem," said Miriam. "I know her by the dress."

Miriam pointed to the dark blue robe. Stripes of bright red, mixed with gold, reached down the sides. The sleeves were large and long, and trimmed in the same way. The woman's white veil hung down from a tall cap.

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"How heavy her cap must be," said Esther. "It is like a crown."

"All the coins she owns are sewed on her cap," answered the mother. "It tells every one just how rich she is."

"I don't see how she does her work if she wears that robe all the time," said Miriam. "The sleeves are so large, I should think they must be in the way."

"She probably ties them together behind her. I have been told that is the way. She can use them as pockets."

"I don't see how men ever get used to carrying such big loads," said Esther.

She pointed to two porters who were bent nearly double. Their loads were strapped upon cushions fastened on their backs, and held in place by straps around their heads.

"Each of those men must have almost as much of a load as a camel carries," said Esther's mother. "It seems almost impossible, but it is true. It is a hard life, a very hard life."

While she was speaking they entered the market. The eyes of the little girls were kept busy looking at the many different things of interest.

There were Arabs in charge of camels laden with melons, grapes and figs. There were women selling vegetables, and at the same time taking care of their babies. There were patient donkeys longing to be freed from their loads of goods which their masters were trying to sell.

"Mamma, mamma!" whispered Esther. "There is a baby gazelle in the basket on that woman's head. It is even smaller than the one I saw at Rebecca's. I suppose she is trying to sell the little thing."

"Look at the woman beside her," said Miriam. "She looks very tired. I suppose she has walked several miles from her own village with her baskets of fruit. Her baby boy sits on her shoulders, crowing and laughing at every one who passes by."

"Come, children. We will go now to some shops where I must buy things not sold here," said Esther's mother.

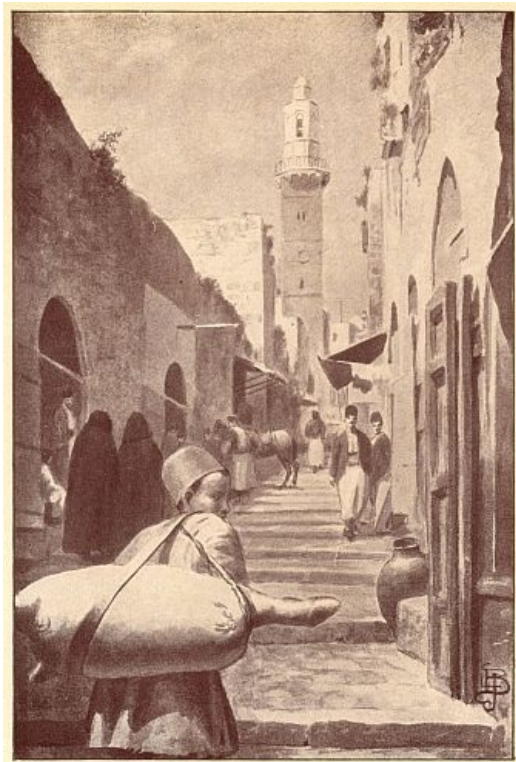
She led the way out of the market and they entered a crowded street. There were Turks in their flowing robes, Arabs, Armenians, Syrians, and Jews. Almost all were gaily dressed, and many of them were handsome. The Arabs were either barefooted, or else they wore red or yellow slippers.

"They lift their feet as though they were passing over a desert," said Esther to Miriam, as they went by some Arabs.



A WOMAN OF BETHLEHEM.

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A STREET IN JERUSALEM.

"I should think they would suffer from the heat," answered her sister. "Their heads look so big, I'm sure they have two or three caps under their turbans."

"Perhaps they think the more clothing they wear, the better the heat will be kept out," said their mother, who heard what they were talking about.

"Here is the shop I was looking for. We will go in."

She led the way into a sort of cave cut into the soft rock. It was a dark, dingy little place. There were shelves around the sides of it. In the middle was a sort of counter, where the storekeeper sat with his goods around him.

As Esther's mother entered, he slowly took his pipe from his mouth and stopped his gossiping with a friend who sat outside on the pavement. He was in no hurry, however. He acted more like a king on his throne than a trader who had to sell cloth for a living.

"Yellow plush, is it?" he asked. "Ah! I have some beautiful, beautiful. It is the very thing."

But his customer was not easily satisfied, and after she had finally picked out the piece she wished, there was a long talk about the price. Both were satisfied at last. The plush was cut off and wrapped up, and the storekeeper was left to his own pleasure.

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Esther's mother still had some errands to do, so they visited several other stores. They were not all in caves, however, but most of them were small and dark.

At last, everything needed was purchased and the lady and children started homeward.

"Look at the sky," said Esther. "Isn't it beautiful to-night?"

The sun was almost setting. The clouds were turning a rosy red. They were so bright that the city itself seemed to share in their glory.

"Jerusalem the Blessed!" said Miriam, in a low voice.

"There is papa. We are late about getting home and so is he," said Esther. "Now we can have his company."

Her father had already seen his wife and the girls, and was smiling at them.

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It was a warm evening, yet he wore his fur-trimmed, round velvet hat over the tight-fitting cap that never left his head in the daytime. A long lock of hair hung down on each side of his face, as it always did after he was dressed for the day.

"Bless you, my little ones," he said, as Esther and Miriam each seized a hand. "Now tell me what you have seen while you were shopping."

The children chattered as they do everywhere in the world. They described the market and the people, the camels and the shopkeepers.

"We were coming to your store when we found how late it was. Then we thought it would be closed, and you on your way home. And so you were," said Esther, laughingly. [66]

By the time the children had reached their own door, they were so tired they thought only of bed and sleep. They were even too tired to care about their supper.

"But you must not slight your night prayer," said their father, soberly.

Esther's and Miriam's eyes winked and blinked a good many times before they got through the prayer.

"It never seemed so long before, except when I was sick," Esther told her adopted sister, when they were at last stretched on their beds. "And, do you know, Miriam," she added, sleepily, "I believe Solomon doesn't always repeat it all. He says our people have so many prayers he gets tired of them sometimes. Isn't that dreadful?"

But Miriam was already sound asleep, and did not answer.

CHAPTER VII.

[67]

THE CAVE

"WHICH way did you come?" asked Levi, as he helped the two little girls down from the ass's back. Solomon had walked by their side all the way.

"We passed through the Jaffa gate and then took the shortest way down here into the valley," said Esther.

Jerusalem is surrounded by walls. There are seven gates through which the city may be entered or left. But the Jaffa and Damascus gates are the ones most used.

"We saw a Bedouin riding a beautiful horse. He was in full dress, and looked just elegant," said Solomon. "I should like to own a horse like his."

"Tell me how he was dressed," said Rebecca. [68]

"His long, wide cloak must have been quite new. I could tell, because the yellow stripes looked so clean and bright. The shawl bound around his head and hanging down over his shoulders was pure white," said Miriam.

"His high red leather boots were the handsomest part of his dress. There were tassels at the sides, of course," interrupted Solomon. "But his sash! You ought to have seen the shining dagger and the pistol that were stuck in it. My! the man looked as though he were ready to meet any one.

"His horse was a beauty, too. She was decked with red woollen tassels that reached clear to the ground. She snorted and stepped off with the spirit of a war-horse. You know the tassels are useful in keeping off the flies. There are such swarms of them the poor beasts suffer very much."

"But come along, children, I know you want to have a romp under the trees. You need not stay here talking any longer." [69]

While Levi was speaking, Rebecca put her arm around Miriam's waist and tried to make her feel at home. She had not been to Jerusalem since the little orphan had come to live with Esther and Solomon.

"She is a sweet child," she thought. "Not as strong as Esther nor as brave as Solomon. But she will be grateful for kindness. I feel sure of that when I look into her eyes."

In a few minutes Rebecca and Levi were playing with their young company as though they were children themselves.

"To-morrow we will have a little picnic, and I will take you to a cave you have never visited," promised Levi, as his young visitors were bidding him good night.

"It is a pleasant walk there, and not so far as to tire us," added Rebecca.

The next morning was bright and clear. The breakfast was soon eaten, after which, Esther and Miriam helped Rebecca clean up the house and [70]

prepare the lunch they were to carry.

While they were waiting for Levi and Solomon to finish some farm work, the little girls had a chance to pet the gazelle and the tame sheep of which Rebecca had written them.

At last they were all ready to start. It was a pleasant walk, as Rebecca had said, yet there were several rough and rather wild places to pass through.

"Almost all the caves around here are made of limestone," said Levi. "It is so soft that the rains wear great hollows in the rocks."

"Did you ever go to the cave of Adullam, Levi?" asked Solomon.

"Yes, once when I was a boy. It is beyond Bethlehem. I had heard father speak of it. He told me that King David hid there with four hundred of his followers."

"Four hundred! It must be a very big cave, then," said Esther.

"You would think so, if you once got inside. There is one hall that is thirty-eight yards long. There are several passages leading into it. Some are so low that one has to crawl through them on his hands and knees. Others spread out into large chambers. Many of these chambers are very beautiful. The water has trickled down the walls and worn the soft limestone into the loveliest patterns."

"How could you see, Levi? wasn't it dark inside the cave?" asked Solomon.

"Of course it was, but every one in the party carried a lighted torch or candle. The torches gave light enough to show the beautiful ornaments."

"There is our own cave ahead of us," said Rebecca. "Of course I mean it is the one we are to visit," she added, with a laugh.

All the children could see was a great mass of rocks on the side of a hill. As they drew nearer, they spied a small hole near the ground.

"Must we crawl through that hole?" asked Esther, with a shiver.

"It is larger than you imagine," replied Levi. "Besides, you only have to crawl a few feet. After that the way opens up quite suddenly. I will go first with my torch. Then you can all follow."

"I'm afraid," Miriam whispered to Esther. She did not wish Solomon to hear her. She feared he would make fun of her.

"Hold on to my hand and have courage. I will go ahead of you," was the answer.

One by one, they passed through the opening.

"Isn't this fun!" cried Solomon as they all stood in the chamber worn out of the rocks.

"It makes me feel queer to think of being underground," said Esther.

"Hark! What's that noise?" said Miriam, in a frightened voice.

"It's only a family of bats we have taken by surprise. They are not used to callers," said Levi.

The bats were more frightened than Miriam. They flew about in a blind way. Several times they almost brushed against the faces of Rebecca and Levi, the tallest ones in the party.

"Ugh! I don't like bats," said Miriam. "I am going outside."

"Just wait a minute until I see if there are any pretty decorations on the walls. Look! Here is just what I was searching for."

Levi held his torch up near the roof.

"Isn't it beautiful? How can Nature work in such a regular pattern?" said Rebecca, half to herself.

"It is because she is the handmaiden of the Lord," replied Levi, reverently.

After they had left the cave and were once more out in the bright sunshine, the children were allowed to choose a place for the picnic dinner. They had brought water for bathing the hands and face as well as for drinking. Levi had told them before they started that there was no well or spring near the place.



A BEDOUIN.

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After they had washed and prayed, they were all ready to enjoy the nice luncheon Rebecca had prepared.

"Tell us stories about King David, won't you, please Levi?" asked Solomon. "When you spoke of the cave of Adullam this morning you said David hid there with a great many of his followers. I suppose that made me think of him now."

"I should like nothing better," said Levi, stretching himself out on the ground. "But would you all like to hear about the 'Sweet Singer of Israel'?" [75]

"Indeed we would," sounded a chorus of voices.

CHAPTER VIII. [76]

THE SWEET SINGER OF ISRAEL

"VERY well, then. Let us go back to the days of long ago, long, even, before the destruction of our beloved city. Let us seek David on the hillsides, tending his flocks with loving care.

"One day a visitor came to the house of Jesse, David's father. This visitor was no other than the prophet Samuel. He had received a command from the Lord telling him to take a vial of oil and seek the house of Jesse.

"'There,' said the Lord, 'you will find the new king who is to succeed Saul.'

"Samuel hastened to obey. When he reached Jesse's house, he asked to see his sons. One by one passed before him till the eighth son, David, appeared. Then the voice of the Lord again spoke to Samuel. It said: [77]

"'Arise, anoint him, for this is he.'

"As soon as the prophet had anointed David with the oil, the young man was filled with the spirit and power of God. At the same time, they left King Saul, who did many foolish and bad deeds after this.

"But what of David? Did he go out into the world and declare himself the future king of Israel? Not so. He continued to live his peaceful, quiet life as a shepherd. He learned to sing, and play upon the harp. He now showed himself indeed the 'Sweet Singer of Israel.'

"He began to show power in other ways, too. Many times the fierce lions and savage bears came creeping upon his flocks. Many times David met and overpowered them with the strength given to him by the Lord."

"It seems as though I can see him guarding his flocks," said Solomon, as Levi stopped talking to rest for a moment. "His beautiful black eyes are looking out into the night and watching for danger. He looks at his sleeping sheep to see if all are safe. Then he hears the sound of foes drawing near and springs to meet them." [78]

"I like best to think of him with a tiny lamb in his arms," said Esther. "He holds it lovingly against his breast, as though he would say, 'I will save you from all harm, poor, helpless creature.'"

Levi now went on with his story.

"While David was still tending his flocks, King Saul was waging war upon the Philistines, the bitter enemies of our people. They became more and more daring, until at last they gathered on the side of a mountain right here in Israel.

"Three of David's brothers were fighting in Saul's army and went out to meet the Philistines. David often went to the camp to visit his brothers. He happened to be there once when a Philistine giant marched forth and dared any Israelite to fight with him. [79]

"There was no one who felt able to say, 'I am not afraid; I accept your challenge.'

"'No one,' did I say? At first, this was true, for every one in Saul's army kept silent. But when David saw this, he felt the spirit of the Lord stir within him. He arose, saying, 'I will meet you.'

"He was now led before Saul, and there, in the presence of the king, he said he had faith that God would save him from harm, even from the hand of the giant. At first, Saul thought:

"'It is of no use for this young shepherd to go out alone to meet the giant. He will only lose his life.'

"But when he heard what David said, he changed his mind. He got out a strong suit of armour, and even helped him to put it on. David was not used to such things. The armour weighed him down so that he staggered and almost fell. He said: [80]

"'It would be better for me to carry only such weapons as I know. Let me take my shepherd's staff and the sling I have used so often in meeting the wild beasts.'

"He was allowed to do as he chose. He went forth to meet the giant with nothing to help him save his staff and sling.

"And what did the giant, Goliath, say when he saw the young shepherd draw near? He spoke in scornful words. But he suddenly became silent as David sent a stone from his sling that passed through his forehead and entered his brain. As soon as David saw the success of his shot, he rushed to the giant's side, seized his sword, and cut off his head.

"The watching Philistines were filled with fear. They began to flee. But Saul's army followed and overtook them and killed great numbers. [81]

"All Israel now began to praise David. Saul, too, was filled with delight. He declared he was willing David should marry his elder daughter after a while.

"Now the king, as you know, often did wild and foolish things. This was, perhaps, because he gave way to fits of bad temper. When he learned of David's power to play and sing, he often asked the young shepherd to quiet his angry feelings with the sweet music of his harp and voice.

"He was very fond of David in those days, but after a while he became jealous when he heard the constant praises of the people. They said, 'Saul hath slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands.'

"His anger was now turned against the brave shepherd. At one time, he threw his spear at David. It was when the lad was playing on his harp. But Saul failed to do what his wicked heart desired. The Lord was protecting the future king of Israel. [82]

"Again he tried to kill David, and again he failed. Saul must have thought that it was of no use, so now he sought to injure the young man in a different way. He gave the daughter he had promised David to another lover.

"But Saul soon found that his younger daughter loved David. He now said:

"'You may have Michal if you will first kill one hundred Philistines.' He only said this because he hoped David would be killed by the enemy."

"I know what David did," exclaimed Solomon, who could keep still no longer. "He went out and destroyed two hundred Philistines, instead of one hundred."

"Yes," said Levi, "and he brought back the spoils and laid them at the feet of Saul. The king was now obliged to have David for a son-in-law. But he hated him as much as ever. [83]

"So he told his son Jonathan and some of his attendants to kill him. Now Jonathan, as you must know, loved David as a brother. He did all in his power to make his father feel more kindly toward him. He had almost succeeded, when Saul was seized with a new spirit of madness. All his wicked feelings came back, and he hired some bad men to take David by surprise when he was asleep, and kill him.

"Somehow or other, Michal heard of the plot. She warned David, and he fled from the palace. But Michal did not stop here. She made the shape of a man and placed it in David's bed. In this way the bad men who came to kill him were deceived.

"I am rather tired, Rebecca," said Levi, when he had got this far in his story. "Won't you go on and tell the children about David's flight?" [84]

"Certainly," said his wife. In her sweet, clear voice she made a picture of David hiding near Ramah. "But he was not safe, for Saul heard where he was. He sent men there to take him prisoner. A strange thing happened on their way. They were overcome by the spirit of the Lord, and they did not dare seize David.

"When Saul was told how they had failed, he went himself in search of David. But he, too, was overpowered by the spirit of the Lord. And what do you think happened? Instead of harming him, he asked David to come back to the palace.

"But David did not feel sure that Saul was a true friend. He thought it would be the wisest thing for him to see Jonathan first and ask him to find out how his father really felt.

"Jonathan was a true friend. It did not take him long to learn that Saul was as much an enemy as ever. He must now let David know about it, and prevent his return to the palace. He knew where David was hiding, but he did not dare seek him out. [85]

"Instead of that, he started from the palace to go shooting. He took a boy with him. When he had come close to the place where his friend was hidden, he began to shoot. He spoke to the boy from time to time. He used such words as to let the listening David know that the king was no more his friend than ever."

When Rebecca had got thus far, Miriam looked a little perplexed.

"I don't see how David could understand what he meant," she said.

"He had agreed with Jonathan that certain words should mean certain things, my dear."

"Oh, I see now. Go on with the story, please."

[86]

Rebecca smiled pleasantly, and went on.

"David prepared to flee at once. But he had no arms or food. He must have both.

"He went to the house of the High Priest. When he had entered, he told him he had come with a message from the king. He asked for the sword of Goliath, which was in the High Priest's keeping. He also asked for five sacred loaves of shewbread, which no one dared to eat except the priests.

"When these had been given him he hurried away. He had one adventure after another. It was about this time that he hid in the cave of Adullam. His brothers and a great many other Israelites joined him there.

"While he was hiding in the cave of Adullam, the prophet of God came to him, telling him to go into the land of Judah. He started at once to obey the prophet's command. Saul heard where he was and followed him. On his way, the king heard how David had been helped by the High Priest. He was so angry that he ordered not only the High Priest to be killed, but also his eighty-five helpers, and all the people of the town in which he lived. [87]

"The son of the High Priest managed to escape. He fled to David and told him the sad story. You can imagine how bad David felt when he learned what had happened through his own deceit. But his mind was kept busy with plans to keep out of Saul's reach, for the king followed him from place to place.

"One night while David was hiding in a cave, the king stopped to rest at that very spot. Little did he dream who was so near him. While he lay sleeping David crept to his side and cut off a piece of his cloak. He might have killed Saul at this time, but he had too great a heart.

"The next day, just as the king was riding away in his chariot, David appeared in the mouth of the cave. He held up the piece he had cut from Saul's cloak. Then the king knew he had been in David's power. He saw how generously he had been treated. He felt such shame that he determined to do the young man no more harm. But his heart soon grew wicked again and once more he began to persecute him. [88]

"David again showed him how generous he was. He crept into Saul's tent one night. The king's army was encamped all around him. Only a servant went with David on this dangerous trip.

"No one saw them as they stole along. No one heard them as David stepped to the side of the sleeping Saul and seized his spear and cup; then away they sped till they reached the hilltop opposite the one where Saul had taken his stand.

"David now cried out in a loud voice to wake the sleeping army. He showed the cup and spear he had taken away from Saul's tent. Saul saw that David had spared his life a second time. He was again filled with gratitude. [89]

"But David had learned not to trust him. He sought a home among the Philistines and helped them in their wars. They treated him with great kindness and their king became his true friend.

"Not long after this, the Philistines went out to battle against Saul. David was not with them at this time. It was a sad day for the Israelites. They were badly beaten and Saul's sons were killed. Yes, even David's faithful friend Jonathan lost his life. Saul was overcome with sorrow. He threw himself upon his sword and died by his own hand.

"When David heard the news he felt very sad. He mourned bitterly over the death of Jonathan. But this could not be helped now, and there was much work to do for his people. [90]

"The Israelites were in a pitiful state. The Philistines had most of the country in their power. A leader was needed. That leader was at hand. It was David, the hero, the Sweet Singer.

"'How just he is!' said the people. 'How brave he is!' all cried.

"Not long after this he was crowned King of Israel. At first, he lived in Hebron, but afterward he went to Jerusalem, where a beautiful palace was built for him and his family. And now he went on and became great, for the Lord God of hosts was with him."

Rebecca bowed her head as she said these words.

"Let us chant one of the psalms of David," said Levi. "It is a good way to end our afternoon." [91]

Rebecca began the words of the beautiful twenty-third psalm. The others joined their voices with hers.

THE END.

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