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HICHENS "HOLY LAND"

The Holy Land. By ROBERT HICHENS. Illustrated by Jules Guérin and with photographs. New York: The CENTURY COMPANY, 1910. pp. x + 302. 58 illustrations.

THE enthusiasm of Robert Hichens for Egypt and for the desert have been made known to the reading world by his novels, his book on Egypt, and other more ephemeral writings. The present volume, beautifully printed by the De Vinne Press and splendidly illustrated, is a well written book of travel. Of scientific discovery there is none to be expected. The author makes observations from time to time of a special Jewish interest; thus he is of the opinion that Jerusalem "despite the growing dominion of the Jew . . . is for the Christian," a prediction about which both the Jew and the Moslem may have his reasonable doubts.

Hichens, however, views the Jewish colonists with a sympathetic eye. This is his description of what he calls a colony of German and Polish Jews.

"Toward evening we came to a definite road running straight between tall ranges of eucalyptus-trees. Behind them were plantations of almond and fruit-trees symmetrically arranged, and carefully tended vineyards. In the gold of the evening, flocks of shaggy sheep, herds of small bullocks and goats, were being driven home by fair men, with pale faces, weak eyes, and noses of mark, whose long-haired heads were crowned by hideous hats of soft and dusty felt. We turned to the right, climbed a steep road covered with enormous, firmly fixed stones, passed through an avenue of cypresses, and came into one of those strange little worlds which are scattered about Palestine—'a colony.' This colony was of foreign Jews, Polish and German. The well-built stone houses, many of them with little gardens, were alined on each side of a street rising in steps up the mountain, and as I stood upon the small, grassy terrace—almost like a natural balcony jutting out over an immense view which embraced Lake Huleh, with its papyrus-covered northern shore—on which the camp was pitched, I heard behind me a chorus of Jewish voices lifted in what

seemed an antique evening hymn. The hymn persisted. Up from the plain pattered the flocks and herds. Mares, attended by prancing foals, went by. I heard the baaing of sheep, the lowing of cattle. Dogs barked. Yes, this was a 'home'—a home bathed in the pure air from the mountains. Lights shone from the windows. Jewish mothers were putting their children to bed—little Palestine Jews and Jewesses who knew not the lands of their parents. In the darkness the hymn sounded older, full of pathos—yet full, too, of the strange determination—of the wandering nation that denies and is so often denied. And I thought of the 'songs of Zion,' and I thought of the strange land. Here at least they could sing, strangers though they were."

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