



The Desert and the Sown

Gertrude Lowthian Bell

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This historic book may have numerous typos and missing text. Purchasers can usually download a free scanned copy of the original book (without typos) from the publisher. Not indexed. Not illustrated. 1907 edition. Excerpt: ...skilfully. When we returned to Sheikh Hassan's house we related this conversation to the subject of it, and Jerudi pulled a wry face, but expressed himself satisfied. Sheikh Hassan then took me to see his wife--his fifth wife, for he had divorced one of the legal four to marry her. He has the discretion to keep a separate establishment for each, and I do not question that he is repaid by the resulting peace of his hearths. There were three women in the inner room, the wife and another who was apparently not of the household, for she hid her face under the bed-clothes when Sheikh Hassan came in, and a Christian, useful in looking after the male guests (there were others besides Jerudi and Sel'm) and in doing commissions in the bazaars, where she can go more freely than her sister Moslems. The harem was shockingly untidy. Except when the women folk expect your visit and have prepared for it, nothing is more forlornly unkempt than the r appearance. The disorder of the rooms in which they live may partly be accounted for by the fact that there are neither cupboards nor drawers in them, and all possessions are kept in large green and gold boxes, which must be unpacked when so much as a pocket-handkerchief is needed, and frequently remain unpacked. Sheikh Hassan's wife was a young and pretty woman, though her hair dropped in wisps about her face and neck, and a dirty dressing-gown clothed a figure which had, alas! already fallen into ruin. But the view from Naksh Pendi's balcony is immortal. The great and splendid city of Damascus, with its" gardens and its domes and its minarets, lies spread out below, and beyond it the desert, the desert reaching almost to its gates. And herein is the heart of the whole matter. This is what I know of...

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