

at the ever-broadening splendor of the flames before them. Dora was the first to recover her senses.

"Something *has* happened—there it is."

"Oh, yes!" assented William. "This would have spoiled our wedding to-morrow. It's a good thing we 'took time by the forelock.'"

"And we're neither of us dead!" exclaimed Dora, with more relief in her voice and heart than she would have believed possible.

"Well, then," remarked the old minister. "what you thought was a sunset may be taken as a good sign. It has justified the wisdom of your course, and quieted your fears. That is," he continued, "if you don't choose to consider the loss of the house; but, even then, it is better that a house should burn than either of you die."

"But perhaps the others are not safe!" cried Dora, with a shiver. "Let us hurry and see!"

They soon arrived at the scene of the fire. Tears came to Dora's eyes as she beheld her childhood's home wrapped in flame from basement to peak, with awful tongues soaring yards and yards above, as though they would pierce the blackening sky. The lawn was strewn with heaps of furniture in various stages of demolition, and the grass, flowers, and all, trampled down by the feet of a thousand lookers-on. Nobody seemed to be doing anything—the time had gone by for that. How the fire had started, and passed so suddenly beyond control, was, as yet, a mystery.

But were they all safe—parents, sisters, servants? She had scarcely time to ask the question before she saw the familiar faces gathered around her, not one missing. All seemed to glance curiously at the little group consisting of William and Dora with the old minister not far behind, but for some time not a word was said.

Even a sensation grows monotonous after a while. The fire could only burn itself out. This village, strange to say, while up to the latest ideas in other directions, did not possess either fire-engine or firemen. The neighbors had done what they could by wetting roofs and fences to keep the flames from spreading, but nobody, by simply looking on, could help or hinder. For the whole family to stand there all night was not to be thought of.

"Come," said William at length. "you can't do any good here. You must come home with me,—all of you."

Mrs. Thurston demurred. "It would scarcely do for us to go to your house, under the circumstances," she declared, the conventionalities of her girlhood coming to the fore. "Any of the neighbors would accommodate us."

"You will go to my house," asserted William. "I have the right to take you there. Your daughter is my wife."

"Without wearing her wedding-clothes!" was Mrs. Thurston's singular exclamation, uttered in a voice of involuntary incredulity, mixed with intense relief.

"Yes," was William's simple response. And then, to the amazement of everyone, she literally, to use a Scripture phrase, "fell on his neck and kissed him."

"You have saved her!" was the mother's next singular exclamation—which none of her auditors understood any better than they did the other.

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Months passed, during which Mrs. Thurston's relatives had reason to fear for her sanity, so often would she look strangely at William and Dora, then burst into tears and kiss them. But one day, when her overwrought nerves could bear no more, it all came out; she confessed it to both.

"But for the fire, I think I should have committed suicide that night," she said. "I had borne the burden of fear for over twenty years, and could have borne it no longer. An old woman told me, when Dora was a baby, that she would never wear wedding-clothes. For years I

thought she would not live; then that something would happen on her wedding-day."

"Well, mamma, something did;—the fire."

"That was my fault. I'm glad now that it was. I went to look at that hateful wedding-dress, and accidentally dropped the lamp into it. I never intended you should know."

So the prophecy came true, and everything came right—as it generally does.

MARGARET B. HARVEY.

The Cave of Machpelah.



WHEN Abraham lost Sarah his wife, he chose for her burial-place a cavern admirably adapted for this purpose. The purchase of which seemed like an anticipated taking possession of the Promised Land. He paid four hundred shekels of silver for it, and the land which surrounded it became the property of the patriarch. The oak-tree in the plain of Mamre, under which Abraham met the sons of Heth and bargained with them for the burial-place (as recorded in the twenty-third chapter of Genesis), is still shown, and the traditional tree is known as the Oak of Abraham. The tree probably is a successor of the original oak, or else its longevity is most unparalleled.

The cave comprised three chambers of different levels; and it was in the third, the deepest and most remote, that he laid Sarah's body. There he was soon after laid himself, and the cave became the family tomb. Isaac and Rebecca in their turn were buried there, and the sons of Jacob were taught from their infancy to recognize and reverence the sepulcher of their fathers.

Joseph especially held this memory sacred; and when, having become ruler in the house of Pharaoh, he sent for his father and his brethren, he had no intention of abandoning the tomb. When Jacob died and was embalmed, the preservation of his body as a mummy was indefinitely assured; so with Pharaoh's permission, and according to his father's desire, Joseph departed for Hebron and deposited his father's remains with great pomp in the grotto of Machpelah. Leah had been interred there by Jacob, and the patriarch's body was the sixth and last.

After the conquest of Palestine by the Hebrews, the Cave of Machpelah, which had been like an earnest of their future victory, was, of course, held in highest respect. In David's time a magnificent inclosure, in parallelogram form, was made around the rock. It was built of enormous stones similar to those employed in the foundation of Solomon's Temple. It still exists; the walls are high and thick, ornamented with pilasters without capitals, and surmounted by

cornices. Then came the schism of the ten tribes; the war, exile, and captivity, followed by the return. Everything seems to indicate that a synagogue was built in the inclosure after the restoration of the Jews.

At last we reach the first century; the establishment of Christianity; the war of 66 to 70; and the dispersion of the people of Israel. The Cave of Machpelah, surrounded, or rather, surmounted, by its inclosure, remains intact, passes through all these vicissitudes without suffering. The historian Josephus speaks of the tomb of Abraham; Eusebius and Jerome describe it, and in the sixth century Antoninus the Martyr mentions it, and tells us that the Christians had built a basilica within the inclosure and above the tombs, which basilica replaced the ancient synagogue. The Christians had succeeded the Jews in their veneration for the sepulcher of Abraham. Thus we follow its history from age to age, and find each new generation inheriting the respect

is still surrounded by the majestic inclosure of David's time, which was the finest epoch of Hebrew architecture, and is the most prominent object in or around Hebron, part way up the slope of the hill-side.

The Arabic population of Hebron, and especially the guardians of the Mosque of Abraham, are bigoted beyond all tests. They even resist the seduction of *bakhshish*, which is remarkable in the East; and no Christian may penetrate into the sacred precinct. Three Europeans, however, have succeeded in effecting an entrance. The first was Ali Bey; the Prince of Wales, also, in 1862, was admitted with his suite; and, in 1866, the Marquis of Bute and several Europeans were permitted to inspect the interior. But did they see the tombs? No; for they merely walked about the mosque. They were shown in a vestibule the so-called graves of Abraham and Sarah, covered with a silken tapestry of green; in the middle of the mosque,



THE OAK OF ABRAHAM, NEAR HEBRON.

of the generation which preceded, for this venerable monument.

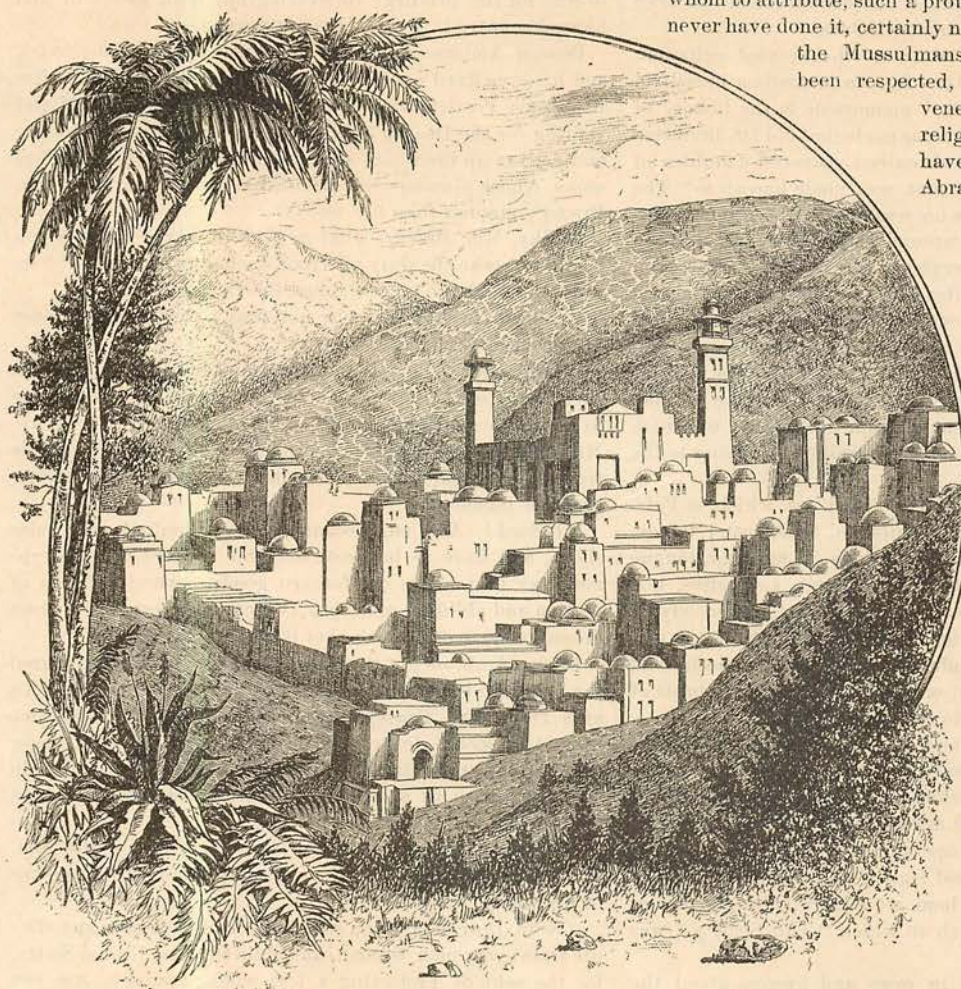
With Mahomet and the conquest of Palestine the cave passed to other owners. But Abraham is for them the "Father of the Faithful"; his tomb remains sacred; they prove this by showing it, if possible, even more respect than the Jews and Christians. The latter became, with the Crusades, for a short time masters of the land, and during this Christian period of the twelfth century the Rabbi Benjamin de Tudèle visited Machpelah. He descended into the cavern, and declares, positively, in his writings, that he saw the three successive grottos; the two first quite empty, and in the third the six veritable tombs, each with its epitaph engraven on the stone.

The Mussulmans, once more possessors of Machpelah, transformed the basilica into a mosque, and called it the Mosque of Abraham. It is called by that name to-day, and

against the pillars at the right, that of Isaac, with Rebecca's at the left; elsewhere, the pretended resting-place of Jacob and of Leah.

These cenotaphs are devoutly revered by the Mussulmans. What we find far more interesting is that the Marquis of Bute saw at the western entrance of the mosque the opening of a cave about four yards deep, and caught a glimpse of the interior. Access to this cave is forbidden to the Mussulmans themselves. What the Marquis saw was doubtless the entrance to the first of the three caverns, which is empty. We know that the second also is tenantless. No one enters; it is probable that no human being has set foot for centuries in the place where lie the remains of the patriarchs, and the mummy of Jacob. The other bodies must long since have returned to dust, but we have every reason to suppose that Jacob's mummy remains intact.

Many mummies, as every one knows, have been preserved



VIEW OF HEBRON.

to our day, and many are as old, even older, than those of Joseph and Jacob. On the first of June, 1886, M. Maspero, in the presence of the Khédive, Sir H. Drummond Wolff, and Nubar Pacha, opened the sarcophagus enclosing the mummy of the great Sesostris (Rameses II.), the same who in all probability persecuted the Israelites so cruelly. The face is admirably preserved; the mask is powerful and grave; the hair white, though slightly yellowed by the process of preparation; the hands folded on the breast are remarkably delicate, and still tinged with the henna used at the last robing of the king. M. Maspero also opened the coffin containing the mummy of Rameses III., not so well preserved, but still fine, the forehead, mouth, lips, teeth, all perfect. Every year mummies are brought to light, dating from all epochs of ancient Egyptian history.

Of all the mummies, two only, those of Jacob and Joseph, seem to have been taken out of Egyptian territory. The former is at Machpelah, the latter at Shechem. Could the mummy of Joseph be found at Shechem? We have no reason to believe so; but for that of Jacob at Machpelah, the fact, strange as it may seem, appears extremely probable. The authenticity of the cavern is certain, the burial there of the patriarchs, particularly Jacob, undeniable. The embalming of his body according to the best and surest Egyptian custom is equally beyond dispute, and consequently the preservation of his body to the present day is evident.

If this mummy does not exist, then it must have been voluntarily destroyed at some period of history, and that is difficult to admit. We should not know where to place, to

whom to attribute, such a profanation. The Jews would never have done it, certainly not the Christians, still less the Mussulmans. The tomb has always been respected, surrounded with deepest veneration by all populations, religions, governments, which have succeeded to Hebron. Abraham is the "Father of the Faithful," whether the faithful be Jews, Christians, or Mahomedans. If any tomb on earth has remained inviolate, it is that of Abraham and his children, the Cave of Machpelah.

But how are we to assure ourselves of what we feel to be so certain? To enter the cavern it would first be necessary to obtain the Sultan's permission, and he would not give it. Even if he did, the consent of all the Arab population of Hebron would have to be gained as well, and, as we have said, nowhere is Mussulman bigotry more narrow, suspicious, fierce, than around the patriarch's tomb. Simply to speak of going into the cave would be to risk immediate destruction. To get there, to see the precious sarcophagus, open it, and examine the mummy, we

must await the end of Islamism in Palestine. The day will doubtless come, but will any man or child of our age live to see it?

And yet, who knows? The time perhaps is not so distant when it may be given to some happy traveler to see the aged Israel sleeping in the stone bed where he has lain nearly four thousand years; to touch the hands that the blind Isaac touched; to see those gray locks about which the old man one day cried: "Then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

EDMOND STAFFER.

A Tariff Powwow.

WHEN Mrs. Nancy Bracey walked into Mrs. Postlethwaite's large parlors, where the Wednesday afternoon Sewing Society had assembled for their weekly labors on the box for the missionary station out in Washington Territory, and the far more important and interesting task of regulating the public and private affairs of the country, the community in general, and their own immediate circle of acquaintances in particular, it was very evident that there was some subject of more than ordinary magnitude that overshadowed the usual serenity of her disposition.

The firmly compressed lips, and the calm, clear radiance of her mild blue eyes gave evidence of a mental struggle and a firm resolve to do her duty or die, at least metaphorically, in the attempt. She came in later than usual, and for some