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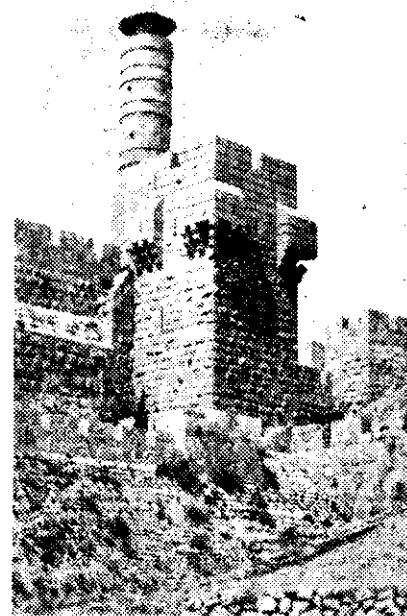
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PALESTINE REVISITED:

ON their way from Egypt to Syria to take up the positions held by the repatriated Australians, troops of the N.Z.E.F. will pass through Palestine. Their impressions of this ancient but modernised land may be much the same as those recorded by the writer of the article



Above: The Citadel of Jerusalem
Left: Arabs leaving a mosque after prayer

SOME years ago, I revisited Palestine. "Don't travel anything but first-class, and don't ever talk to Arabs, especially not those who think themselves gentlemen," was the advice that I was given before starting. "No English lady ever travels anything but first class." I decided that I wasn't particularly a lady and was more New Zealand than English, and so got into a comfortable second class compartment on the train at Kantara. An Arab gentleman of comfortable figure and benevolent smile joined me. "Egypt? Pahl!" he said as he drew off his shoes and shook the dust off them out of the window, "Palestine, that is the land for me. I come to Egypt for business but my home is in Palestine." "I think mine is, too," I said. "At least my mother and grandmother were born there."

"Aha, then we are friends," he said. He ordered cushions and offered me Palestine cigarettes. Finally he tucked me up for the night in my rug, for it was nearly midnight. Never had any British stranger shown such charming and impersonal solicitude for my comfort. I slept with a feeling of perfect security, not remembering until the morning the awful warnings that I had been given.

THE Jerusalem that I had known as a child had grown and shrunk. There was much more of it. Little mushroom settlements spread all around the old city in a most suburban fashion. But the Old City itself was smaller, and the huge walls that surround it no longer reached quite to the sky. The complicated narrow streets and winding alleys that had seemed full of dangers now fell into reasonably straightforward patterns—Armenian Quarter, Jewish Quarter, Greek Quarter, Latin Quarter, Moslem Quarter. But they were essentially the same. There were no beggars, nor

hideous cripples, nor naked, starving little boys such as had once run after us in the streets and made us feel ashamed and overdressed in our respectable European clothes. But there were still the smells, the shouting, and the noises. And what smells! Rich and fruity smells from the bales of piled oranges and grapefruit, from the confectioners shops of nuts roasting, sugared almonds, and the rich and oily sweetmeats so dear to the Arab. There were smells of camels and donkeys as they made their way up and down the flights of steps; and of the piles of vegetables carried by the market women, of the leather makers, of the men's long hookah pipes as they squatted smoking, bubbling, and gossiping. Through the narrow shop openings the craftsmen were busy at work hammering brass or polishing mother-of-pearl, mending carpets or selling silk cloth, tarbooshes or shawls and embroideries. At a street corner, in apparently the most inconvenient place, a group of men would be crouched over a brazier sniffing at a pan of frying rissoles. And always the streets were narrow, running down long flights of steps turning here into a quiet courtyard or there into a black tunnel. Here unexpectedly I saw the high walls of a convent, the solid masonry of a Roman building of two thousand years ago.

ONE day as I wandered through the city I came out through the Damascus Gate. A little way along I saw what looked like the entrance to a cave and a notice "Solomon's Quarries." I remembered that these quarries, rediscovered at the end of the last century, were the quarries from which Solomon is supposed to have drawn his stone for the building of the temple three thousand or so years ago. "All right. Here goes," I thought to myself. Two Arabs were standing at the entrance. I paid admission and found myself standing in a huge cave of gleaming white stone. The floor was covered

with chips of masonry and on the cut walls were the marks of chisels—perhaps those of Solomon's Phoenician workmen. The Arab guide gave me a piece of candle and beckoned me to follow. I followed further and further into the cave. It narrowed and we went along rocky passages. There were pools of water on the floor, and at times precipitous pitfalls. Passages branched off in various directions. The Arab went on into the maze. I suddenly felt I had had enough. I stopped. The Arab came and seized my arm. Another Arab appeared on my other side. The incident swelled and grew to enormous proportions. "I must not get panicky," I said to myself, but I could not help thinking with regret that no one knew I was here or had the faintest idea where I was going that day. I might disappear very completely in this great underworld that stretched under the humming streets of Jerusalem. Fortunately my sense of proportion returned. Why on earth should these old Arabs want to murder me, anyhow? I hadn't more than a few piastres with me. Slowly, in English but with a smattering of Arab words and the mention of a high-placed official or two, I explained that I was being met at the gate; that I must be there at twelve. I pointed to my watch. It was just noon. I must not keep my "official" waiting. The grip on my arm relaxed. I returned and walked firmly in the direction that I imagined I should go—and felt very small when I had to ask for guidance as to the route.

THIS was not the only cave I visited. We went one day over the hills south of Bethlehem to visit the caves of Adullam where David is supposed to have hidden from Saul. And well he might have done so! These caves stretch for very many miles under the hills and unlike most cold and dripping caves I

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