Oriental encounters: Palestine & Syria (1894-5-6)

Marmaduke William Pickthall

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Excerpt from Oriental Encounters: Palestine and Syria (1894-5-6)

Early in the year 1894 I was a candidate for one of two vacancies in the Consular Service for Turkey, Persia, and the Levant, but failed to gain the necessary place in the competitive examination. I was in despair. All my hopes for months had been turned towards sunny countries and old civilisations, away from the drab monotone of London fog, which seemed a nightmare when the prospect of escape eluded me. I was eighteen years old, and, having failed in one or two adventures, I thought myself an all-round failure, and was much depressed. I dreamed of Eastern sunshine, palm trees, camels, desert sand, as of a Paradise which I had lost by my shortcomings. What was my rapture when my mother one fine day suggested that it might be good for me to travel in the East, because my longing for it seemed to indicate a natural instinct, with which she herself, possessing Eastern memories, was in full sympathy!

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