

**GEOGRAPHIC
INFLUENCES IN
OLD TESTAMENT
MASTERPIECES**

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Geographic influences in Old Testament masterpieces by Laura H. Wild

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TO
THE FRIEND
WHOSE COUNSEL AND ENCOURAGEMENT
HAVE BEEN THE CONSTANT INSPIRATION OF MY WORK

PREFACE

It is not the purpose of this book to teach the geography, history, or nature study of Palestine in detail, but rather to give illustrations of how Old Testament literature is interpreted through the geography, history, botany, and zoölogy of the land in which it was written. Every one should know something of these subjects. There is no better way to impress these great facts upon our minds than to connect them with the poetic outbursts they have inspired in great authors, and nowhere did nature seem to have a more impressive effect upon the mind of man than in Palestine, becoming a necessary part of the expression of his soul. We lost all that during the Middle Ages. Not until the time of Wordsworth and his contemporaries did the great nature poets begin to appear in the West. To-day in our public schools we are trying to teach our youth to come close to the very heart of life by drawing close to nature. It is fitting, then, that we should go back to the great nature poets of Hebrew literature to help us on our way, for "true poetry has always come back to the realities of Nature and life," and some of the world's greatest masterpieces are to be found in the Old Testament. We are beginning to show appreciation of this fact by introducing the Bible as literature into many of our schools,¹ but

¹ See recommendation of the Committee on College Requirements; also the North Dakota Plan, *Biblical World*, June, 1913, and "Academic

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a real interpretation of these masterpieces is utterly impossible without some knowledge of the land itself—without, figuratively speaking, breathing the same atmosphere which inspired the author. The two things, then, work together: a knowledge of the nature of the land interprets the literature, and the literature interprets our knowledge of all nature and life.

The selections included in this little book are illustrative of some of the main geographical features of Palestine which affected the life of the people so strongly. Most of them are great poems or stories depicting historical events. They introduce some of the forms of literature peculiar to the Hebrews and of which their great writers were such unconscious masters. They also touch upon botany and zoology, the nature study with which these Hebrew poets were saturated and which reveals the everyday life of the people.

The text quoted unless otherwise indicated is the American Revised Version. The special translations inserted are taken from many scholars. They are not meant as a substitute for our familiar versions, but rather to illumine the passages by looking at the original Hebrew in the light of the gifted scholarship of our day. Any version—the King James, the Revised, the Douay, or the Jewish translation of the Hebrew Scriptures—will serve for the use of the students.

Credit for Bible Study," *The Independent*, March 9, 1914; also a statement of the Colorado Plan, the Gary Plan, the New York City Plan, the Pennsylvania Plan, the Pittsburg Plan, the Australian Plan, and the Saskatchewan Plan in the *Twentieth Century Quarterly*, September, 1914. This Quarterly is edited by Dr. Wilbur F. Crafts, Washington, D.C. See also "The Biblical Knowledge of High School Students," *Religious Education*, August, 1914.

PREFACE

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