

# **“What the Arab Saw”**

*The Present Truth* – October 21, 1897

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Keep your eyes wide open and your thoughts wide awake to everything that is good, and you will be in the way of learning many useful lessons. One boy or girl will see nothing interesting, and learn nothing, where another who has learnt to use his eyes will be learning all the time. The habit of observing is useful not only in work but may teach of the life to come; for the Lord teaches us of His own power and salvation by the things that He has made. So He says all are “without excuse” who do not know Him. They see His works, but do not truly observe them and learn of His power.

The Arabs have a story, showing how much may be seen by the observing eye. It is in this wise:—

“What are you looking for?” said an Arab to a man who was walking fast across the desert, looking this way and that way and seeming to be in great trouble.

“I’m looking for my friend,” the man replied. “We were travelling together, but this morning I slept too long and he started without me. All day long I have sought for him, but in vain. I can see him nowhere. And I am almost in despair.”

“Was your friend,” said the Arab, “a lame man and heavy?”

“Yes,” said the stranger eagerly. “Have you seen him? When? Where? Oh, tell me, that I may find him!”

“Since sunset last night,” said the Arab, “I have seen no man till I saw you. But your friend—was he lame on the right leg? and did he carry a stick in his left hand?”

“You must have seen him!” cried the stranger; “he limped badly, for he had hurt his foot. Which way did he go? Tell me, for without him I will die.”

“Your friend,” said the Arab, “I have not seen. But three hours ago such a man as you describe, clad in blue raiment, was leading a light-coloured camel that was blind in one eye, and was laden with a burden of dates. He passed this spot on his way to Damascus. There, if you hasten, you will find him.”

“Are you a wizard that you know all this?” cried the stranger. “You describe my friend, but you have never seen him. You tell me all about his old camel, and where he has gone. How do you know about him?”

“Stranger,” said the Arab, “God has given all men eyes, but only to a few has He given the power to use them. All that I have told you, you might have seen for yourself if you had but used your eyes.”

“Say not so,” replied the other, “for I have looked everywhere, and could see nothing.”

The Arab said nothing, but with a sign he motioned the stranger to follow him. As they walked a little way they came to the fresh track of a camel, and on the right-hand side the track of a man.

"See," said the Arab, "there are the foot-marks of your friend and his beast."

"Of a man and a camel, truly," replied the other; "but how do I know that the man was my friend?"

The Arab trod on the sand by the foot-prints. "Look," he said; "do you see any difference between my foot-prints and his?"

The other looked for a time. "Your feet," he said, "sink equally into the sand, but the other's not equally. One foot sinks more deeply, much more deeply, than either of yours, the other less deeply."

Then said the Arab, "We all tread lightly on a lame foot, and a heavy man sinks deeper into the ground on one leg than a spare titan on two."

"True," said the other; "but how do you know the colour of his camel and the hue of his garment, or the burden with which the beast was laden?"

"Is it so difficult, then," replied he, "to see the colour of the fragment of apparel caught by the thorns, or the hairs that were left on the sand where the camel rested?" And as he spoke he pointed to where the traveller had left behind him a shred of his raiment.

"Yes, I see," said the other; "but how do you know the camel bore a burden of dates, and was blind in one eye?"

"Can you," replied the Arab, "not see the flies feasting on the date juice that dropped on the sand by the side of the camel's track? And wherever the camel browsed, it only grazed on one side, the side on which it could see."

"Verily I perceive thou art a man of wonderful discernment," said the stranger; "but answer me this also: How couldst thou tell that it is but three hours since he passed this spot?"

"Hast thou, then, eyes and seest not?" said the other scornfully. "Mark the spot where they lay in the shade of this spreading palm. The shadow of the palm-tree is as the hand of the dial. It was three hours since any shade was possible on that spot. Farewell. Hasten along the road that leadeth to Damascus, there thou wilt find thy friend."