

**THE WELL IN THE DESERT:
AN OLD LEGEND OF THE
HOUSE OF ARUNDEL**

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The Well in the Desert: An Old Legend of the House of Arundel by Emily Sarah Holt

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EMILY SARAH HOLT

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WELL IN THE DESERT:

AN OLD LEGEND OF

The House of Arundel.

BY

EMILY SARAH HOLT,

AUTHOR OF "MISTRESS MARGERIE," "SISTER WORM,"
"ASNCIFFE HALL," ETC.



"And Thou wert pitiful. I came heart-sore,
And drank Thy cup because earth's cups ran dry;
Thou slew'st me not for that impiety,
But mad'st the draught so sweet, I thirst no more."

—MISS MOLOCH.

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P R E F A C E .

IT is said that only travellers in the arid lands of the East really know the value of water. To them the Well in the Desert is a treasure and a blessing : unspeakably so, when the water is pure and sweet ; yet even though it be salt and brackish, it may still save life.

Was it less so, in a figurative sense, to the travellers through that great desert of the Middle Ages, wherein the wells were so few and far between ? True, the water was brackish ; man had defiled the streams, and filled up the wells with stones ; yet for all this it was God-given, and to those who came, and dug for the old spring, and drank, it was the water of eternal life. The cry was still sounding down the ages,

“If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.” And no less blessed are the souls that come now : but for us, the wells are so numerous and so pure, that we too often pass them by, and go on our way thirsting. Strange blindness !—yet not strange : for until the Angel of the Lord shall open the eyes of Hagar, she must needs go mourning through the wilderness, not seeing the well.

“Lord, that we may receive our sight !”—and may come unto Thee, and drink, and thirst no more.

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CHAPTER I.

MY LADY'S BOWER IS SWEPT.

"I am too low for scorn to lower me,
And all too sorrow-stricken to feel grief."

—EDWIN ARNOLD.

SOFT and balmy was the air, and the sunlight radiant, at an early hour of a beautiful June morning; and fair was the landscape that met the eyes of the persons who were gathered a few feet from the portcullis of a grand stately old castle, crowning a wooded height near the Sussex coast. There were two persons seated on horseback: the one a youth of some twenty years, in a page's dress; the other a woman, who sat behind him on the pillion. Standing about were two men and a woman, the last holding