

**SEOLA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9781760572730

Seola by Ann Eliza Smith

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Cover @ 2017

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**ANN ELIZA SMITH**

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BOSTON:  
LEE AND SHEPARD, PUBLISHERS.

NEW YORK:  
CHARLES T. DILLINGHAM.

1878.

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By LEE AND SHEPARD.

UNIVERSITY PRESS: WELCH, BIGELOW, & CO.,  
CAMBRIDGE.

## SEOLA'S JOURNAL.

### FINDING THE MANUSCRIPT.

*Extract from the Author's Note-Book of Travel.*

NORTH SYRIAN MTS., May 23, 18—.

THIS month must be marked in white ; it is the date of a wonderful discovery.

Toiling along the steeps of the Anti-Libanus, on our way to Jabrada, we halted for the midday repast, and, while the guides were preparing it, reclined in the shade of the scanty foliage. As we leisurely surveyed the sterile landscape, our attention was attracted to an object quite unexpected in this desert place, a flower of surprising beauty, which hung from a broad shelf of rock opposite. Edmund sprang forward to gather the wonderful blossom, and, upon reaching the perilous steep, to sustain himself laid hold of the root of a decayed tree which had once grown there. His weight had scarce been thus suspended, when the stump gave way and slid down, carrying with it

the earth in which it had been embedded, a portion of the rock, and the rash intruder who had dared disturb its venerable repose.

When it appeared that no injury was sustained, we turned to examine the spot from whence the avalanche descended. Upon the perpendicular face of the rock, now fully exposed, was a clearly defined triangle about eight feet in altitude. A complicated figure sculptured in the centre marked it the work of man. Speculation as to its character was cut short by Monsieur S——, who exclaimed: "That figure is the Phœnician Daleth! Plainly as our own language it says: 'This is a door.' Ah, what lies behind?"

In great excitement we sent to the valley for aid; the triangular rock was removed, and proved to be the door of an artificial cave, about twelve feet square, cut into the mountain. The sides of this cavern were smooth, the ceiling was arched, and in the centre of the dome, among unknown sculptured characters, we perceived a cross of peculiar design.

Upon a marble slab, slightly raised from the floor, a heap of dust, tattered fibre, and shreds of gold outlined two human figures lying in the set



repose of the dead. Diadems that once crowned the heads of the sleepers had fallen to the floor, and by the side of one of the shapes, where the hand had been, was a cylindrical object which we immediately secured.

Then spoke the leader of our party:—

“No doubt this is the oldest tomb in the world. The inscriptions must antedate even those of the subterranean temples of Ellora and Elephanta. But why should we, with sacrilegious hand, disturb these sacred ashes? Let them repose through the rolling ages, as we ourselves hope to rest, till the great day of transformation.”

Without further words he ordered the door to be carefully replaced, and we left the shelving rock, where again the dust of ages will gather, other seeds germinate and shoot upwards, and again a leafy veil shimmering in the wind will shut out from human eyes the mysterious Daleth of Old Syria.

The relic thus obtained (doubly precious now that further spoliation was forbidden) proved to be a cylinder of purple amethyst about a foot in length and three inches in diameter. Upon one side, engraved with extraordinary delicacy, was the representation of a terrible flood, and upon the

other a tree, under whose wide-spread branches were sitting a noble-looking man and woman with young persons grouped around them. Beneath each figure were detached inscriptions.

In removing the dust from the crystal a spring was touched, and the cylinder opened, disclosing a linen roll, like those of Egypt (though incomparably finer), covered with minute characters, which, under the rays of the sun, became intensely blue.

It occurred to one of our number, an enthusiastic archæologist, that this was a memorial of the Great Deluge; the man might represent Japhet, the son of Noah, who, according to the Hebrew scriptures, was the father of seven sons; the woman was his wife, and the other female figures his daughters.

Upon this supposition we applied ourselves assiduously, and, after the most exhaustive comparison and combination, found that the names of the men corresponded with those given in the tenth chapter of Genesis; the mother's name proved to be Seola, those of the daughters Lebuda, Astlik, Simourga, Elbeth, and Jael.

The mystery was unravelled, and we found ourselves in possession of the greatest archæological

discovery of the nineteenth century,—an antediluvian memoir, *The Journal of Seola, wife of the patriarch Japhet!*

Foreseeing the perishable nature of the precious document, travel was suspended, and the energies of the entire party were devoted to the work of deciphering. Under the supervision of our learned archæologist good progress was made, though, in our haste and ignorance, great freedom of translation was unavoidable, and frequently our insight into obscure passages was scarcely more than conjecture.

It was fortunate that no delay was suffered; the delicate characters rapidly faded in the light; the tissue, hermetically sealed for so many ages, had lost its tenacity; day by day it became disintegrated in the unaccustomed atmosphere, and almost before the last pages were finished, it crumbled to powder.

The beautiful but frail casket in which it had been preserved was accidentally shivered, and, but for the story which had so marvellously come into our possession, the adventure in the Syrian mountains might have vanished from memory like a dream of the morning.