

**ARSARETH: A TALE  
OF THE  
LURAY CAVERNS**

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Arsareth: A Tale of the Luray Caverns by B. C. Warren

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**B. C. WARREN**

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# ARSARETH

A TALE OF THE LURAY CAVERNS

BY

B. C. WARREN

"For through that country there was a great way to go, namely, of a year and a half; and the same region is called Arsareth."—1: Esdras xlii. 45.

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TO  
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# ARSARETH.

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## CHAPTER I.

### BY THE BROOK.

ON a summer afternoon in the year 1830, a young girl stood, fishing-rod in hand, by the side of a brook in one of Virginia's loveliest valleys, the Valley of Luray. No fish had disturbed her hook for more than an hour, yet still the cork floated lightly on the stream.

She was not fishing, but dreaming; indulging in that favorite pastime of girls of her age—a day-dream.

And truly the day was one to dream in. One of those glorious days in mid-summer when the mountains seem asleep in a robe of misty light; the murmur of insect life floats lazily on the air and all nature seems pervaded with the soft influences of sloth and repose.

This Virginia girl, over whose golden hair twenty summers have shed their warmth, is deserving of our attention.

While she stands looking on the stream at her feet, but observing no feature of brook or field or sky, we will take the liberty to study her, for if there ever was a girl whose face was an index of her soul, that girl was Alice Davis.

In that State, noted for its graceful girls and stately ladies, Alice would not be called beautiful; but on a second look there would be something manifest in her, such a forceful character looking out of every feature, as cannot be expressed by the word "beauty" even as it is far above it.

In her blue eyes there is manifest a strength of purpose, that can readily be observed even when her whole nature is, as on the present occasion, in repose.

The lower part of her face indicates firmness, and one would not look twice at her to form an opinion that he was looking at one who possessed a resolute mind and a fearless spirit.

Grace and vigor are manifest in every outline of her body, while her eyes, as they look upon the brook, are expressive of a soul oppressed with melancholy, but warmed with the fires of poetry and love.

Summer in a Virginia valley once enjoyed is never forgotten. The deep, rich hue of sky and water—not a hard metallic gleam, as in more northern latitudes, but an azure glory through which the eye penetrates and beholds hue meet hue, and color melt into color with an enchanting suggestiveness that can be *felt* but never described.

The atmosphere of Virginia is an atmosphere of chivalry and poetry. The winds that blow across the Luray Valley, from the Blue Ridge, as they breathe over its varied surface of hill and dale, and whisper through its pine-trees, seem to greet the fancy with suggestions of romantic story and feed the imagination with thoughts of love.

While Alice Davis, lost in reverie, toys with her fishing-rod, we will take the opportunity to observe at least a few of the natural beauties that abound everywhere through this wonderful valley.

In the distance the Blue Ridge Mountains intercept our vision on the southeast, and, as the afternoon sun strikes them aslant, the far-reaching shadows cover up the lines of light until their summits purple into darkness and mingle with the tracery of cloud that floats above them.

Now let the mind journey across the Great Valley, and we shall see the peaks of the North Mountain standing up above the rocky elevation, like sentinels upon a parapet; while over and among them strange and cloudy shapes glow and change, separate and combine; with fingers of mist comb out the sunbeams and from their prismatic fragments weave for themselves garments of many-colored light, arrayed in which they seem to