

## CONCLUSION

To have worn a large scallop shell in my hat in the streets of London might have been deemed ostentatious, to say nothing of carrying a staff like a long pole; and wearing sandals might have proclaimed rather that I had not come from Jerusalem but from Letchworth, which some identify with the New Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God. Lacking such attributes, I passed through South England as one who might have come from Ramsgate or from anywhere; and the only symbol left to me of my pilgrimage was a cheap ring of metal coloured like copper and brass. For on it was written in Greek characters the word "Jerusalem," and though it may be less valuable than a brass nail, I do not think you can buy it in the Strand. All those enormous and everlasting things, all those gates of bronze and mosaics of purple and peacock colouring, all those chapels of gold and columns of crimson marble, had all shrivelled up and dwindled down to that one small thread of red metal round my finger. I could not help having a feeling, like Aladdin, that if I rubbed the ring perhaps all those towers would rise again. And there was a sort of feeling of truth in the fancy after all. We talk of the changeless East; but in one sense the impression of it is really rather changing, with its wandering tribes and its shifting sands, in which the genii of the East might well build the palace or the paradise of a day. As I saw the low and solid English cottages rising around me amid damp delightful thickets under rainy skies, I felt that in a deeper sense it is rather we who build for permanence or at least for a sort of peace. It is something more than comfort; a relative and reasonable contentment. And there came back on me like a boomerang a rather indescribable thought which had circled round my head through most of my journey; that Christendom is like a gigantic bronze come out of the furnace of the Near East; that in Asia is only the fire and in Europe the form. The nearest to what I mean was suggested in that very striking book *Form and Colour*, by Mr. March Philips. When I spoke of the idols of Asia, many moderns may well have murmured against such a description of the ideals of Buddha or Mrs. Besant. To which I can only reply that I do know a little about the ideals, and I think I prefer the idols. I have far more sympathy with the enthusiasm for a nice green or yellow idol, with nine arms and three heads, than with the philosophy ultimately represented by the snake devouring his tail; the awful sceptical argument in a circle by which everything begins and ends in the mind. I would far rather be a fetish worshipper and have a little fun, than be an oriental pessimist expected always to smile like an optimist. Now it seems to me that the fighting Christian creed is the one thing that has been in that mystical circle and broken out of it, and become something real as well. It has gone westward by a sort of centrifugal force, like a stone from a sling; and so made the revolving Eastern mind, as the Franciscan said in Jerusalem, do something at

last.

Anyhow, although I carried none of the trappings of a pilgrim I felt strongly disposed to take the privileges of one. I wanted to be entertained at the firesides of total strangers, in the medieval manner, and to tell them interminable tales of my travels. I wanted to linger in Dover, and try it on the citizens of that town. I nearly got out of the train at several wayside stations, where I saw secluded cottages which might be brightened by a little news from the Holy Land. For it seemed to me that all my fellow-countrymen must be my friends; all these English places had come much closer together after travels that seemed in comparison as vast as the spaces between the stars. The hop-fields of Kent seemed to me like outlying parts of my own kitchen garden; and London itself to be really situated at London End. London was perhaps the largest of the suburbs of Beaconsfield. By the time I came to Beaconsfield itself, dusk was dropping over the beechwoods and the white cross-roads. The distance seemed to grow deeper and richer with darkness as I went up the long lanes towards my home; and in that distance, as I drew nearer, I heard the barking of a dog.