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Holy Land

PUT OFF THY SHOES. By
Elizabeth Hamilton. (*André
Deutsch. 16s.*)

By H. E. BATES

A RARE gift for capturing in a mere translucent handful of syllables the cold magic of a winter lake on a candlelit evening in Dublin enabled Miss Hamilton to give us, in "The Year Returns" and "A River Full of Stars," two endearing and glowing miniatures of a great English country house and her Irish childhood.

With the same powers of vision and observation undiminished, and again firmly backed by her training in classical scholarship, she now turns her eye in a totally unexpected direction: Jordan and Israel.

The result is not just another travel book. It is a pilgrimage of most fervent dedication of which the object is not merely to discover for herself the existence of a holy landscape immortally precious to all who share her faith, nor simply to look at the two States snarling in their contemporary tigers' den. It is a most intensely perceptive and personal record: objective but burning, modern but classical, profound in humility but everywhere shimmering with stabbing brush-strokes of detail. Its surface flashes like a gem; its quiet heart is as thrilling and warm, in Miss Hamilton's own words, as "swallows whose breasts were flushed with rose."