

Judea than in the same amount of territory anywhere else the world over. A shipload of these Bethlehem maidens, if they could be transported to the great northwest, would capture the bonanza farmers of the Dakotas just as Ruth captured this great landowner, Boas, and when they came back to Washington as Senator's wives they would be the belles of the capital. These Bethlehem maidens are fair skinned and bright eyed. They have straight, well-rounded forms, which they clothe in long dresses of white linen so beautifully embroidered in silk that a single gown requires many months' of work. This dress is much like an American woman's night gown without the frills and laces. It falls from the neck to the feet and is open at the front in a narrow slit as far down as a modest decollette dress. Over this gown they wear sleeveless cloaks of dark red stripes and the head they cover with a long shawl of linen embroidered with silk. Each girl wears her dower on her person in the shape of a necklace of coins and the forehead of each maiden is decorated with a crown of coins, some of which are silver and others gold. They do not hide their faces like the Mohammedan women and their features are clean cut and refined. I have seen fair samples of the pretty girls of most of the countries of the world and the Bethlehem girls are the equals of any. They are as intelligent as they are pretty, and I found that those whom I traded with usually got the best of the bargain. There is little poverty in Bethlehem, and the girls whom I met were well dressed, for the orient, and the seemed well-to-do.

As you near Bethlehem you find the hills grow more ragged. Their sides are covered with stones, and you see that they were terraced into gardens in the days of the past. About a mile from Bethlehem I stopped for a while before the tomb of Rachel. It is a little square building, about the size of a smoke house, covered with a white dome, and it is situated in the midst of a Mohammedan cemetery. It is worshipped by Musselmen, Jews and Christians, and its walls are covered with the names of travelers. A little further on you find David's well, and then go round a corner and come in sight of Bethlehem.

HOW BETHLEHEM ROOMS.

The Bethlehem of 1894 is one of the most prosperous towns in Palestine. It is bigger today than it has ever been, and it now contains about 6,000 people. It does a big business in making beads for the Catholic pilgrims and the Russians out of mother-of-pearl, and the most of the pearl paper cutters which come from Palestine are made at Bethlehem. The people make a great many backs for prayer books, and they are thrifty in the extreme. The town runs along the sides of the hills in the shape of a horseshoe, and it stands out against the sky, with big hills rising all around it. Its architecture is much like that of Jerusalem, save that the houses are newer and cleaner. They are built of stone, and they are more like stone boxes than comfortable homes. Most of them are one story, and they stand close to the cobblestone sidewalks, without yards or gardens. There are no sanitary arrangements to speak of, and these houses and a lot of big churches make up the town. The people composing it are chiefly natives. They are Greek Christians, and there are only

three hundred Mohammedans and sixty Protestants in the place.

WHERE CHRIST WAS BORN.

I asked for the stable in which Christ lay in the manger. I felt use of finding it, for in Palestine every spot is marked, and, though it is now nearly 2,000 years since the events of Christ's life took place, the guides of Judea can show you every spot which His fingers touched and mark out every foot of land upon which His feet stood. I was told that it was at the western side of the town, and I found a great church built over it. Just opposite this church there was a saloon, and my turbaned driver spent his time in this while I visited the church. It is a great stone structure, ragged and old, with centuries of hard usage. It was built, it is said, 1500 years ago by Emperor Constantine. Its roof was once covered with lead, but the Turks stripped this off and made it into bullets when they captured it, and killed Christians with the product. The church has again passed into the hands of Christians, and the services were going on as I entered. I stopped for a moment and watched the Greek priests, who, in long black gowns, were chanting their service, while boys in bright-colored dresses swung incense lamps to and fro. There were, perhaps, 200 men and women standing at worship within the great hall, and the ceremonies were very impressive. Leaving this hall, I was taken down into the crypt of the church and thence to the stable where it is said Christ was born. I went down a winding staircase carrying a candle and at last found myself in a great cave about twelve feet wide and forty feet long, the ceiling of which was about ten feet high. This cave like room was floored with marble. Thirty two lamps burn day and night within it, and it has an altar at one end, under which is a silver star set into the marble pavement, where you find an inscription in Latin stating that on this spot the Virgin Mary gave birth to Christ. I was not surprised to find the stable a cave. I saw many such in Palestine, and a great part of the animals of the country today are stabled in caves. This stable, however, has been changed by the decorations of the church, and it is impossible to realize the real scene of Christ's birth while in it. I looked at the manger. It is made of marble, and it is said to be the identical manger in which He rested. This, of course, is a fraud, as is also the well at the other side of the crypt, where the holy water is said to have burst forth at this time for the use of the holy family. I looked down into this well. It is said that the star that guided the Magi fell into it and that it still shines down there in the water, but that it is only visible to the eye of the purest virgin. I looked into it, but, being of the other sex, could, of course, not see it.

There are a number of other chapels about the stable, each of which has its traditions, but the incense, the marble and the gaudy church decorations about them take you far away from the reality and make you think rather of the marble stables in which the Roman Emperor Caligula kept his golden-shod horses rather than the donkey and camel stable in which Christ was born.

HOW CHRIST'S BIRTHPLACE REALLY LOOKED.

From the real stables of the Bethlehem of today one can better learn just how

the stable of Christ appeared. I visited one after leaving the bedizened and over-decorated sanctuary under the church. The stable is a cave, the floor of which is a rough stone. It has a number of chambers, which open into a sort of a court, and in these chambers are donkeys, camels and horses. They eat out of stone boxes, and in front of them on the floor men and women lie sleeping on the stones. There is no bed clothing, except their blankets, and they squat upon the stones when they eat their meals. A ragged, dirty Bedouin has charge of the whole, and his rates are about five cents a day per animal. The manger of Christ was probably one of these hallowed out stone boxes, and the Virgin Mary, in all probability, slept on the stones, or the straw. Within one of these stables I saw a Bedouin woman with a sleeping baby on her knee. She had just been feeding her child and one breast peeped out between the folds of her coarse rough gown. Her head was bound with a gaily colored shawl. There were rings on her fingers, bracelets upon her fair round arm, and a gold ring in her nose. Her face was, however, as sweet as that of any Madonna I have ever seen upon canvas, and her baby, just out of its swaddling clothes, looked as pure and innocent as the most famous representation of Christ. It was a scene for a painter.

CHRISTMAS IN BETHLEHEM.

Christmas is always a great day in Bethlehem, and the coming Christmas will be celebrated in its usual splendor. Thousands of people go from Jerusalem, and while you are reading this letter, the priests are preparing for the service of Christmas night. There will be sermons in the churches, beginning at 10 o'clock, and then in a procession the priests and the monks will march down the winding stairs into the crypt and visit the grotto of the nativity. They will carry with them a waxen image of a little child, which they will place in the manger, and as they do so they will chant the story of the nativity. This child will be dressed in the finest of lace and it will rest in the manger on rose-colored cushions of silk embroidered with gold. During the service the patriarch of Jerusalem will go through the ceremony of taking up and laying down the child to correspond with the words of the chant, and the service will last for several hours. On Christmas night all Bethlehem watches, and the day is one of joy and feasting. Bethlehem has more Christians than any other town in the orient, and its people are proud of the fact that Christ was born within their walls.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

A shocking murder has been brought to the attention of the people of Pocatello, Idaho. A mother and her baby were found in a deep crevice in the rocks near that city. It is supposed that they had been murdered, and thrown there. An effort is being made to fathom the mystery.

William Akerson, the Horse Creek trapper, yesterday brought in twenty-six coyote and four wolf skins to the county clerk's office, says the Cheyenne, Wyoming, Leader. The bounty on the lot amounted to \$58. One gray wolf skin was the largest ever brought into the office, being over eight feet in length.