

that obedience to His laws would bring its own reward. In consideration of the good deeds of the people of God, our Lord and Master would make known His reign, by pouring out His blessings upon them, and helping them on, just as they attempted to help themselves.

The choir sang the anthem:

God of Israel hear our prayer.

Benediction was pronounced by Elder C. W. Penrose.

JENSON'S TRAVELS.

Friday, July 10, 1896.—I spent the day in and about Jerusalem. Toward evening I visited the so-called Tomb of the Kings, situated north of the city near the road leading to Nablous. The grotto, which is inclosed by a wall and belong to the French consist of a regular system of underground rooms from which tomb chambers, shaft tombs and shelf tombs extend in all directions in systematic order. The careful construction of these catacombs leads to the inference that they were the burial places of persons of high rank, and are much revered by the Jews, who from a very early period have called them the Cavern of Zedekiah. But what they really are is not known. They were, however, understood to be tombs as early as the Fourteenth century, and were sometimes referred by tradition to the early kings of Judah; on this account they are still called "tombs of the kings."

Saturday, July 11. I left the hotel at 6 a. m. and walked to Bethlehem, which is situated about five miles southwest from Jerusalem and about six miles from the Olivet house, where I stopped. After leaving the Yafa gate the carriage road to Bethlehem crosses the upper end of the Valley of Hinnom, leaving the railway station to the right and the Hill of Evil Council to the left. The top of this hill commands a good view of Jerusalem and surroundings. There are some ruins on the hill which traditionally are called the Country House of Calaphas, but may be simply the remnants of an Arabian village. A short distance to the south is shown the tree on which Judas is said to have hanged himself. Continuing the journey I crossed an elevated plain extending toward the south. It is called Beka'a, and is supposed to be identical with the valley of Rephaim, through which the boundary of Judah and Benjamin ran (Josh. 15: 8 etc.). The Philistines were frequently encamped in this valley, and here they were defeated by David (2 Sam. 5: 18, etc.). Several villages are seen to the right, where also a Greek settlement lying on an eminence called Katamon, some distance away, is said to have been the house of Simeon (Luke 2: 25). Further on, to the left of the road, the traveler sees a cistern, which tradition points out as the Well of the Magi (Bir Kathisma), where the three wise guiding star (Matt. 2: 9). At the southern extremity of the plain of Beka'a the road ascends a hill to the monastery of Mar Elyas, which is very pleasantly located on the saddle of the hill from which a good view of Jerusalem to the north and Bethlehem to the south is obtained. On the left of the road is a well from which the holy family is said once to have drunk water. Beyond the monastery the road leads to the right skirting a cultivated valley, and the traveler soon reaches an insignificant building standing on the right of the road styled the Tomb of Rachel (Kubbet Rahil). The dome of the tomb closely resembles those of the innumerable Muslim wells, or tombs, found in Palestine. The tomb is revered by Muslims, Christians and Jews, and is much visited by pilgrims, especially Jews. Bedouins bring their dead to be buried in the adjoining graveyard. In this instance tradition

appears to agree with the Bible narrative. Rachel died on the route to Ephratah (which an old gloss identifies with Bethlehem), in giving birth to Benjamin, and was buried on the way (Gen. 35: 19). Throughout the whole of the Christian period, the tradition has always attached to the same spot, and for many centuries the supposed tomb was marked by a pyramid of stones, of which the number was said to be twelve, corresponding with the number of the tribes of Israel. The monument appears to have been altered in the fifteenth century, since which time it has been repeatedly restored.

At Rachel's tomb the road forks. Taking the left hand one I reached Bethlehem after walking about a mile.

On my arrival in Bethlehem I made my way through the narrow streets to the Church of St. Mary, also called the Church of the Nativity, erected over the traditional birthplace of Christ. The church is owned conjointly by the Latins, Greeks and Armenians. A Greek servant took me up in the high tower arising from the roof of the Greek monastery, after which a Latin monk, who could speak German, guided me through the Latin part and the interesting grottoes under the main floor of the church. He also showed me a very old tree standing in the monastery yard.

The tradition which localizes the birth of Christ in a cavern near Bethlehem extends back as far as the second century. In 300 a handsome basilica was erected here by order of Constantine. The assertion that the present church is the original structure is based on the simplicity of its style and the absence of characteristics of the subsequent era of Justinian. In the year 1010 the church is said to have miraculously escaped destruction by Moslems under Hakim; and the Franks, whose aid had been invoked by the Christians of Bethlehem, found the church uninjured. On Christmas day, 1101, Baldwin was crowned king here by the crusaders. The church has undergone frequent repairs and improvements. Toward the close of the 11th century the Turks stripped the roof of its lead, in order to make bullets. On the occasion of the restoration of the church in 1672 the Greeks managed to obtain possession of it. The Latins, who had been excluded, were admitted to a share of the proprietorship of the church through the intervention of Napoleon III in 1852.

On entering the church the visitor is struck by the grand simplicity of the structure. The building consists of a nave and double aisles. The floor is paved with large slabs of stone. The columns, including capitals and bases, are 19 feet high. The church is lighted only by windows in the upper part of the wall, each window corresponding to a space between the columns. Below the great choir is the Crypt, of which the Chapel of the Nativity is the most important part. It is lighted by 32 lamps, which are kept burning night and day. The chapel is 40 feet long, 12 feet wide and 30 feet high. The pavement is of marble, and the walls, which are of masonry, are lined with marble. Under the altar in the recess to the east, a silver star is let into the pavement with the inscription, "Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est." Around the recess burn 15 lamps, of which 6 belong to the Greeks, 5 to the Armenians and 4 to the Latins. This sacred spot was richly decorated as early as the time of Constantine.

Opposite the recess of the nativity are three steps descending to the Chapel of the Manger. The place of the manger, in which, according to tradition, Christ was once laid is here represented by a manger of marble, the bottom being white and the front brown. A wax doll

represents the infant. The finding of the genuine manger, which was carried to Rome, is attributed to the Empress Helen. In the same chapel, to the east, is the Altar of Adoration of the Magi, belonging to the Latins.

Following the subterranean passage toward the west, the visitor observes at its end a round hole on the right, out of which water is said to have burst forth for the use of the holy family. In the fifteenth century the absurd tradition was invented that the star which had guided the Magi fell into this spring, in which none but virgins could see it.

Passing through a door, and turning to the right, we enter a narrow passage in the rock leading to the chapel covering the traditional spot where Joseph was commanded by the angel to flee into Egypt. Five steps descend hence to the chapel of the Innocents, where, according to tradition, Herod caused several children to be slain, who had been brought here for safety by their mothers.

A rather unpleasant feature of the Church of Mary, as I noticed it, was the presence of Turkish soldiers. On inquiry I was informed that a military guard was kept here night and day to insure order and safety to visitors and local worshippers. The church being the joint property of three Christian denominations, quarrels and differences often arise, which occasionally have ended in bloodshed. It is to guard against a repetition of such occurrences that the Turkish guard is stationed in the church.

After visiting the Church of the Nativity, I walked about one and a half miles down into a valley lying southeast of Bethlehem, to visit the so-called Shepherds' Field, on which there is a grotto which has been transformed into a chapel. It belongs to the Greeks who have also quite a handsome church in the neighboring village of Bet Sahur, which is supposed to be the Ashur mentioned in Chron. 2: 24. Near by the Field of the Shepherds is a piece of land which tradition points out as the field of Boaz, connected with the beautiful story of Ruth. The Grotto of the Shepherds is situated in the midst of an enclosed group of olive trees. A tradition extending back to the year 670, makes the angels appear to the shepherds here. For centuries a church and a monastery stood on the spot, but there is no mention of a grotto until the Crusaders' time. Returning to Bethlehem I visited the Milk Grotto or Woman's Cavern, thus named on the strength of a tradition which alleges that the holy family once sought shelter or concealment here, and that a drop of the Virgin's milk fell on the floor of the grotto. For many centuries both Christians and Moslems have entertained a superstitious belief that the rock of this cavern has the property of increasing the milk of women and even of animals, and to this day round cakes mixed with dust from the rock are sold to pilgrims.

In Buedeker's "Palestine and Syria" I find the following about Bethlehem: "In the name of this town which in Arabic is called Bet Lahem, and has existed for thousands of years, is perpetuated a very ancient popular tradition. In Hebrew, the word means the 'place of bread,' or more generally the 'place of food,' and is probably derived from the fact that the region about Bethlehem has from very remote antiquity presented a marked contrast to the surrounding wilderness. The epithet of Ephratah (Micah 5: 1) indicates the district in which the town lay. Bethlehem is the scene of the beautiful idyl of the book of Ruth, which forms an introduction to the history of David, and it is to that monarch, who especially at a later period, was looked upon as an ideal type, that the little town owes its celebrity and importance. In