

SENTINEL

Jerusalem and Its Churches.
Full Mail Magazine.

The entrance into Jerusalem, by the Jaffa Gate, is disappointing; the new French and Russian suburb has so extended that, before reaching the city walls, you drive through rows of new houses, much like the outskirts of a modern town, which quite take away any illusion from the entrance to the Holy City. In such a place, where every spot has some sacred or historical association, it would be difficult to say which is of paramount importance; perhaps it would not be far wrong to consider the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem, the ride round the Mount of Olives, and the Mosque of Omar, standing on the site of the Temple, as the places of the greatest interest. There have been many new theories as to which is the true site of the Holy Sepulchre, but learned opinion seems now coming again to the belief held by all Christians since the fourth century, that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, hallowed by so many centuries of Christian devotion, marks the real spot. Some rather valuable confirmatory evidence has been found in recent excavations made for building purposes between the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and what was the old city. An old wall has been discovered with another running at right angles to it, as in the present gateways at Jerusalem; and this wall is built of massive stones bevelled as was the Jewish custom, which would point to the conclusion that it was part of the old city walls—probably a gateway. Also tombs have been found on the farther side of the wall, and within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; and as the Jews never bury within the city walls, this again tends to the belief that the site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, though now inclosed within, was without the city walls in the time of our Lord, which is the fact that has to be proved in order that the genuineness of the site should be in accordance with the Gospel narrative. Then all round the Church is the Christian quarter, which is again confirmatory evidence that the site is the true one, for this part of the town would naturally have grown up since the Christian era, and yet may well have been the garden of Joseph of Arimathea at the date of the Crucifixion.

On reaching the church itself there is a very picturesque crusaders' door in Gothic architecture, dating from the eleventh century. The general plan of the dome has a certain grandeur about it, and the choir, belonging to the Orthodox Greek Church, is beautifully ornamented; but the place of places to every Christian heart is the Holy Sepulchre itself, standing in the midst of the dome. It has been built over and lined with marble and hung with lamps, &c., &c., till it is no longer a rough hewn cave; but on entering into it (a task of considerable difficulty through the narrow low arch roughly hewn out in the rock) and on seeing the rocky slab on which lay the body of our Lord, you feel it is the true site, for it conveys the impression that it is just the sort of a cave that would be used for sepulchral purposes and these alone, and not a shrine built to accommodate the thousands of pilgrims who flock there annually. Within it the slab of rough hewn rock lies altar wise against the side of the cave, and is about the width and length that would be filled by a dead body; the top of it is now covered with a marble slab to protect it from the kisses of the pilgrims, which would long ere this have worn away the stone. There is just room in front of this slab for about four persons to kneel; all the sides of the caves are hung with lights, jewelled icons, and pictures. To attempt to describe the feelings evoked in the Christian soul when adoring at such a spot would be beyond human pen. The Russian pilgrims have a touching habit of bringing their bundle of grave clothes and laying them on this holy slab in order to bless them for their future use. Of course there is always a Greek ecclesiastic present within the holy shrine, to watch over it, just outside the cave is a small alabaster ornament marking the traditional spot where the angles stood as they announced, "He is not here, but He is risen."

There is something very catholic in the fact that within the walls of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre are altars used by the Greek, Latin, Armenian, and Coptic Churches; and latterly the Anglican Church has been permitted to have celebrations in Abraham's chapel within the church. There is in the Greek Orthodox choir a marble pilaster showing the spot which, according to medieval tradition, marked the centre of the earth. It is curious how history repeats itself. There is a new suggestion that Jerusalem should be the place at which the time should be registered for all the civilized world, in order to avoid that most irritating arrangement to railway passengers—namely, the change of time when they cross the various frontiers. This plan would re-exalt the Holy City to its medieval position as the centre of the world.

At Bethlehem is the church built by the Empress Helena, a handsome building in the Basilica style; and beneath it is the Grotto of the Nativity, a rocky, dark cave, the stone left just as it was hewn out, and merely decorated with hangings. In a recess a silver star is set into the pavement, and on it is written: "Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus Natus Est" ("Here of the Virgin Mary Jesus Christ was born"). A little farther on is a ledge in the rock, which is the manger where lay the cradle. No one who has not actually been present can understand the intense interest of such a spot, with its holy associations, and it is enhanced by

the fact that no one has ever for one moment disputed that this is the true site of the Nativity. The fact of its having taken place in the stables of a well known inn or khan has made the identity certain, for to this day caves or grottoes underneath the houses are used as stables. In the crypt of the church is also to be seen the cell of St. Jerome, to whose writings we are much indebted for the identification of this and other traditional sites.

Li Hung Chang's Furs.

Spectator.

Li Hung Chang is believed to be the richest man in the world. This belief certainly gains credit from a glimpse at one portion of his invested capital which has recently made its appearance in the city of London. Among other sources of income, the great Chinese satrap draws an annual tribute of precious furs from one of the northern provinces. This is said to be the mountain and forest district of northwest Manchuria, whose "natural commodities" of fur bearing animals are mentioned by the Emperor Kien Lung in the pious work in which the imperial auhor describes the country still held sacred as the dwelling place of the spirits of his ancestors. Part of the tribute of the Russian Tartar tribes is also collected in the form of fables, and it is known that while the poor Tartars send in the finest skins in true loyalty to the Czar, dishonest officials substitute inferior furs, and the choice skins in the imperial wardrobe come not from tribute, but from purchase. They manage these things better in China. Li Hung Chang has immense warehouses in Peking crammed with precious furs from top to bottom, and no middleman pilfers the choice skins on their way to this repository. It has been done, but Li Hung Chang is a watchful ruler, and it is rumored the punishment inflicted was so appropriate and diverting that no one has ever meddled with Li's tribute fables since. There is an immense demand for rare furs in China. A nation in which neither men nor women wear jewels, but which has an exquisite taste for personal luxuries, finds a substitute for jewels in costume. An Indian or Afghan Prince will perhaps dress in white cotton, provided this be set off by some priceless gem on his sword, dagger and turban. A Chinese Mandarin's sole jewels may be a few bits of jade or carnelian, but he makes up for this in summer by the richness of his silks, and in winter by wearing robes of furs so splendid that it needs a certain education to appreciate the full beauty of the costume.

It has long been known that the Chinese furriers were the best in the world; and that except in the dyeing of sealskins, their treatment of the fur itself, especially in improving its tint and lustre, was unrivalled. It was not, however, suspected that they could improve on the work of nature. An inspection of some of Li's furs recently sent to London showed that this was a task not beyond the art of the ancient civilization of the Far East. There were three or four robes which raised a certain excitement of admiration, even among the purely commercial experts of the wholesale fur trade. One of these robes was constructed with a special object. The aim of the Chinese furrier had been to make skin of sable magnified to the size of a skin of a bear. In addition to creating a gigantic sable, this genius also wished that the animal should have fur with the hair all lying parallel; whereas in nearly every fur except that of the seal, when the long hairs are removed the grain and direction follow the anatomy of the body, and give an unevenness to the whole. To effect these objects the artist had cut out the "ti-bits" from an inch to half an inch in length. These strips were all from the same part of the sable's body, and were covered with fur of even length, lustre and thickness. They were then sewn together with minute art, so that at the back the fur looked like a patchwork of tiny parallelograms like the squares on a tritillary flower, averaging from three to four in the square inch. In front the fur was absolutely uniform, homogeneous, and apparently without seam or joining—the kind of giant sable skin which might appear in dreams as the ideal of a Russian bride's trousseau. But Li Hung Chang's furriers had produced something better than this—a fur robe which can justly claim to be an improvement on anything that nature has given us in the rarest furs of beasts. Sable was again the material used. In this robe also the skins were divided and rejoined so as to secure uniformity of tint, fur and setting. But in the robe so made the artist had inserted at intervals the skin of the sable's shoulder and forepaw. This, when cut out, laid flat and sewn together, with a little addition to the curves, forms an "ocellus" like a peacock's eye in sable damask, for the tint of the robe was uniform, and only the difference in the lie and texture of the fur produced the ornament. The result was the creation of a sable skin, adorned at regular intervals with an apparently natural ornament of peacock's eyes, such as one sees in the tail of the white peacock, indicated by the same alternations of reflection and lights as in damask. The magnificence of this conception needs no comment.

SPEED AT WHICH CLOUDS TRAVEL.—Although the movement of clouds very often appears imperceptible, yet as a matter of fact it is very great, but owing to their great height, appears otherwise. Clouds in winter have an average speed of 100 miles an hour, while they sometimes attain a velocity of 250 miles in the same period.



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