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Fred L. Warron, Manager

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BETHLEHEM

The Bethlehem of today, where the Savior was born, writes Frank G. Carpenter, is a little city, and the stable which is shown as the birthplace of the Savior is opposite a saloon under a great church, where the different sects of Christians fight over the right to pray in certain places. One part of the building is controlled by the Armenians, another by the Greeks, and three are Mohammedans on hand to keep the worshippers in order. They fight as to the right to take care of the birthplace of Jesus, and not long ago a controversy arose as to the right to clean one of the windows. Both the Armenians and Greeks were quarrelling over it, when the Mohammedan government came in and forbade either sect touching it. Therefore that window is unwashed to this day.

The stable is under the church. You reach it by a winding staircase, and going down come into a cave about 12 feet wide and forty feet long. This room is floored with marble, and 22 lamps burn day and night within it. There is a star set in the marble pavement, and there is an inscription over it stating that on that spot the Virgin Mary gave birth to Christ. This star is held down by nails. About a year ago the Armenian who had the right to clean it was working away when he knocked off the head of one of the nails. This caused a great commotion. The Greeks, Latins and Armenians began to fight over it, and the governor of Jerusalem, to settle the dispute, called in a blacksmith to drill out the old nail and put in a new one. The blacksmith was a Latin, and the Greeks and Armenians would not let him go to work because they did not want any Latin marking the birthplace of the Saviour. In order to settle the trouble the governor called in a gypsy, who had no religious standing whatever, and he replaced the nail without opposition.

While in this grotto under the church I tried in vain to imagine the scenes of Christ's birth. The decorations were out of all keeping with the place, and the warring Christians prevented any reverent thought. Besides, there was a marble floor, the decorated walls and the lamps. I got a better idea by going into some of the actual stables which are in use in Palestine today, and which are just about the same now as they were 1900 years ago. I remember one such stable near Jerusalem. It was a cave, with a floor of rough stone. The cave was divided into chambers or stalls which opened into a sort of a court, and in these chambers were donkeys, camels and horses. There were men and women sleeping on the floors of the courts, with the animals eating out of their stone boxes or mangers about them. The people had no bedding except their blankets, and they ate their meals on the floor. It was on such a floor that Mary had to lie, because there was no room at the inn, and the manger in which the baby Christ lay was probably a hollowed out stone box, such as those in which the donkeys were eating. Within this stable was a Bedouin woman with a sleeping baby on her knee. She had just been feeding the child and her breast peeped out between the folds of her coarse, rough gown. Her arms were bare to the shoulders and there were bracelets upon her wrists. Her face was as sweet as that of any madonna I have ever seen upon canvas, and her baby, still in its swaddling clothes, looked as pure and as innocent as the most famous representation of Christ.

It was in a stable like that that the Wise Men knelt and presented their gifts. It was there that the shepherds were led by the star, and it was there that our Redeemer first saw the light of this world.

Bethlehem was so small that it must have been difficult to hide the infant when the command was given by Herod to search for Him, and it is no wonder that Joseph and Mary took the Holy Child and fled with him to Egypt.

The most of the pictures painted in illustration of this journey represent Mary with the child in her arms, on a donkey, with Joseph walking beside it. This, in all probability, was the method of travel. They must have taken the road to Hebron and passed near the cave of Machpelah, where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Ja-

cob and Leah were buried, and from there gone on into Arabia, crossing the faithless of Huez somewhere near Iamala, and making their way through old Goshen to the site of the present city of Cairo. The Scriptures give no record of their travels, but there are traditions in Egypt which state that they went out to the pyramids, and which even fix upon a certain tree under which Mary and the baby Jesus were said to have slept. This tree is not far from the obelisk of Heliopolis. It is about five miles from Cairo, and the ground upon which it stands is a private farm of the present khedive. The tree is an old acacia, gnarled with the age of many years and scarred with the knives of tourists. A fence has been built around it to keep it away from the relic hunters, and when I photographed it I had to bribe one of the khedive's servants to allow me to do so. There was an orange orchard nearby, and after taking the picture I sat in the shade of the acacia outside the fence and wondered whether Mary and Joseph had not perhaps thus quenched their thirst in that same place, now more than fifteen centuries ago. As I went on to the obelisk I saw a young woman of perhaps 17, who had a baby in her arms. She must have been of about the age of Mary when Christ was born.

But let us go back to the Holy Land and see something of the village where Christ spent his boyhood, and indeed almost the whole of his life until he began to preach, after he was baptized in John. We have gone back to Judaea and have traveled across Samaria to the mountains of Galilee. We are now about sixty miles north of Jerusalem and sixty-seven miles from Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. We are in a little nest in the mountains inside a quaint town, the houses of which cover the sides of the hills. The houses are great stone boxes of one and two stories. The most of them have flat roofs and some are surrounded by gardens. The country about is covered with grass and flowers. There are fruit trees almost everywhere and especially orchards of olives and figs.

This is the town of Nazareth which stands in some dire as the home of Joseph and Mary. The place has now about 12,000 people, and, like most of the holy spots of Palestine, it has many convents and churches. It was here that Joseph worked at the carpenter trade and here the boy Jesus played about with his fellows as the little Nazarene do today. It was here that Jesus came after he had been baptized in the Jordan, and here he preached in the synagogue when the Nazarenes cried out: "Is not this Joseph's son?" and in their anger were about to throw him from the brow of the hill whence the city was built, "but he, passing through the midst of them, went his way." That hill is still shown to tourists. It is about a mile and a half from the town. In the middle of Nazareth is a fountain or spring which supplies water for the community. The women go to the spring and carry the water in jars on their heads to their homes. Mary undoubtedly used that spring for her family water supply, and the boy Jesus must have drunk there. The surroundings of Nazareth are beautiful. I doubt whether there is

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more beautiful scenery to be found in England or Scotland, or even in the Blue Ridge mountains of Virginia, for which God has done much for man stand in the city or near it and look out over the plain of Esdraelon, and by climbing the hills he can see Mount Carmel, where Elijah hid the prophets and later on slew the false prophets of Baal. It is only a few hours ride in a carriage from Nazareth over the hill to the Sea of Galilee, where the Nazarene boys even now sometimes go fishing.

Superintendent of Schools Carl R. Marussen showed good judgment in not expending the \$100 allowed him to advertise Carbon county schools in the Salt Lake special editions. After looking at the matter from all sides Mr. Marussen decided that what little advertisement might be secured through this means was not worth it. The fact of the matter is these bulky editions in the manner in which they are put out are of very little advertising value and it really seems a useless expenditure of good money to patronize them. A large fund of information is combined in them to be sure, but the benefit is so fleeting in its nature as to be worth next to nothing. Once read they are cast aside and like the mass of the daily press are lost forever. Were the same money expended it could be put out one of these editions put into a concise, permanent magazine binding the publishers no doubt would feel that they had given value received and the patrons that they had received their money's worth.

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