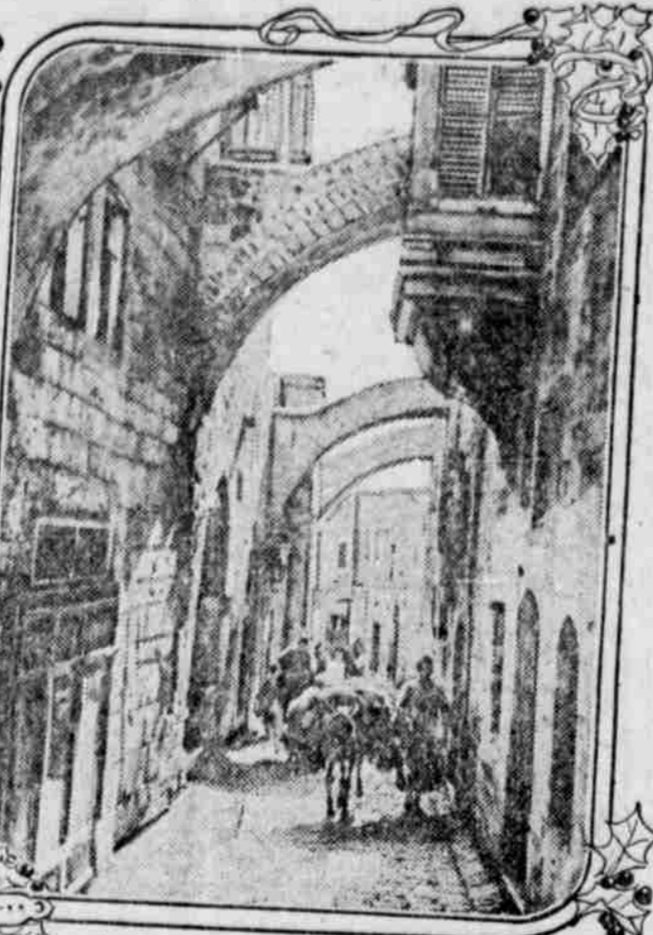


The Shrine of Three Faiths

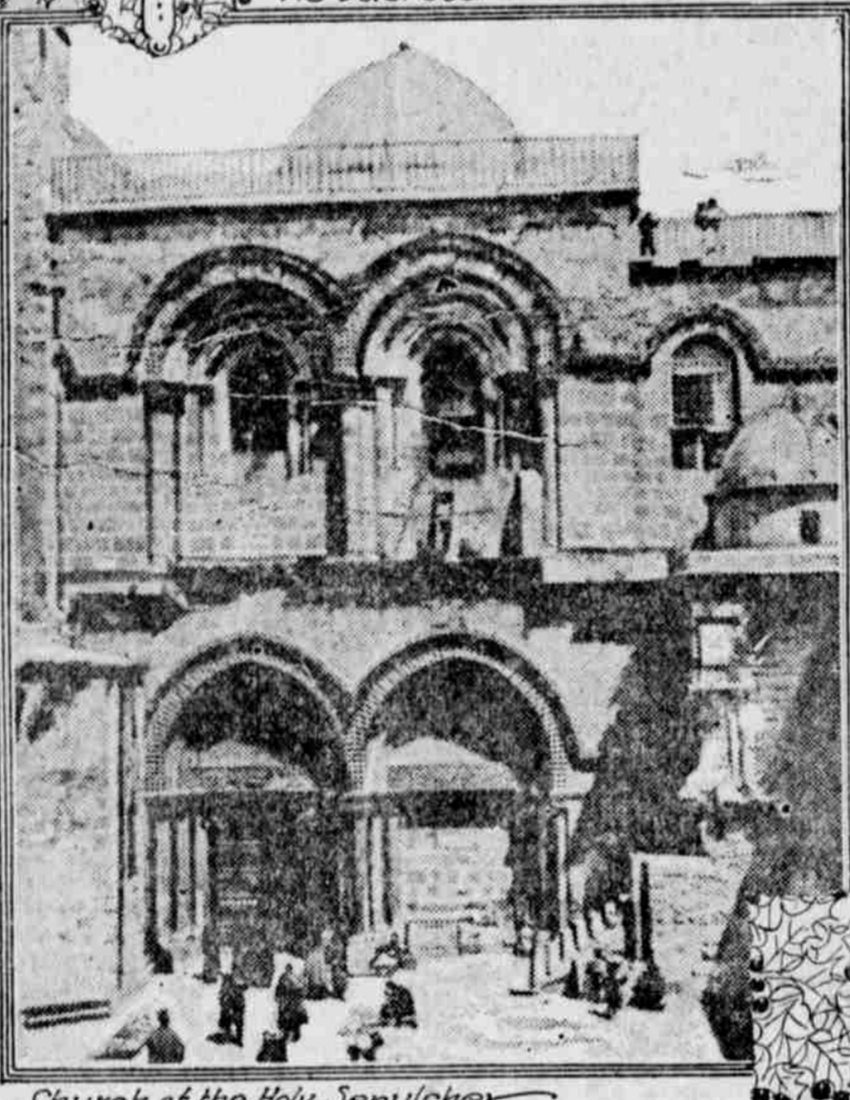


The Dome of the Rock

Photos by American Colony Jerusalem



Via Dolorosa



Church of the Holy Sepulcher

SINCE the great war, Christian, Jew and Mahomedan have been awaiting anxiously the solution of the vexatious questions incidental to the restoration of peace in Palestine, the land which is a holy land to men of three faiths. In Jerusalem, especially, the adherents of the three great religions meet as at a common shrine. That ancient city has furnished a setting for much of the sacred history and legend of each.

Going up to the Holy City for devotional or other purposes was once fraught with grave difficulties. In the middle ages the expression "a pilgrimage to God's sepulcher" became proverbial to indicate the desperate character of any perilous journey. Since then things have changed for the better, writes J. F. Schetteima in Asia. The modern pilgrim to Jerusalem takes a steamer to Jaffa and, on landing there, has himself and baggage conveyed to the railway station in time for the daily passenger train. When under way, it requires some imagination—especially if one is a member of a specially conducted tourist party, piloted to the Holy Land on a return ticket, including accommodation and often inaptly overdone attendance—to realize that one traverses the Plain of Sharon and the Valley of Rephaim; that the stopping places, Akir and Sar't are Ekron (Judges 1, 18, e. a.) and Zorah, where Samson was born (Judges 13, 24), with Samson's cavern farther down the line; that one is a pilgrim in the land where David slew the Philistines with a great slaughter, where Joshua and Judas Maccabeus and Saladin and Richard of the Lion Heart fought their famous battles.

Not a nook or corner in old Jerusalem but has a legend of some kind attached to it. Indeed, the whole of Palestine is rich in legendary lore. Saints of three religions and no particular religion at all, are invoked throughout its length and breadth. There is, for instance, al-Khudr, the evergreen one, the prolonger of life and portal to the fountain of youth near the confluence of two seas, believed to be the Euxine and Aegean, whose waters mingle in the Propontis—a tradition which implies that Ponce de Leon sought the rejuvenating spring in the wrong place. On the eastern bank of the Jordan the exact spot is shown where the Antichrist will make his last stand and, excluded from the Holy City, will affront the faithful assembled on the western bank. But then the Angel Gabriel will hasten to their rescue and hurl three stones at the arch-enemy, the first in the name of the God of Abraham, the second in the name of the God of Isaac, the third in the name of the God of Jacob. And, fleeing, the impostor will be slain at the Bir az-Zaybaq, the quicksilver well.

Of the Christian sanctuaries the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher are the most important. The so-called Cave of the Sepulcher was revealed to the Empress Helena when she dug for and found the Holy Cross. Some five centuries later, the keys of the basilica, built over the sacred spot to replace a Roman temple dedicated to Venus, were sent by Harun-al-Raschid to Charlemagne as a token of friendship and esteem. Again, two centuries later, a less tolerant Fatimid Caliph, Hakim bi amr'Allah, ordered its destruction "so that its earth should become his heaven," for reports William of Tyre, the devil had spread calumnies concerning the servants of the true religion.

In 1149, when new additions to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher were consecrated, the ceremony was attended by King Louis VII of France and his queen, Eleanor, who, two years earlier, had left their royal domain to take part in the second crusade. As their majesties walked in at the head of their gorgeously arrayed cortege, composed of the flower of French chivalry, and were met by the Patriarch and the officiating clergy, a spectral figure stepped forth from a dark, vaulted passage. Its sunken cheeks and emaciated limbs were like those of a resurrected corpse; with glaring eyes and wild gestures, it began to reproach the queen with her criminal amours and generally scandalous conduct. Swords were drawn to stop those insulting remarks, but fell back into their scabbards when the outspoken stranger was recognized as the illustrious lady's father, William, count of Poitou and duke of Guyenne, or, rather, as his ghost, for he had died in 1137 as a hermit near the shrine of St. James of Compostella, where he was doing penance for his own sins. Vanishing as unaccountably as he had appeared, he is supposed to have returned to his grave in Spain after fulfilling his mission, which interrupted the brilliant function in such a painful way. Some time afterward, on the pretext of kinship, King Louis obtained a divorce from his erratic spouse. And the "Rose of Aquitaine," resuming the bonds of matrimony to second husbands with Henry Plantagenet, be-



came queen of England as she had been of France.

Many tales are told of the ghosts domiciliated in the vicinage of the Holy Sepulcher; in particular, of the disembodied spirits of the high personages buried there. Among them are Godfrey of Bouillon and his brother Baldwin, with whom a certain Brother John, for long years a fixture of the church, was reputed to hold regular converse. Haunting the receptacles of their mortal remains, he was heard talking with shadows and receiving answer in supernatural voices.

Brother John made himself useful, too, in a more positive fashion. Going the rounds in the garb of a Franciscan friar—for, though belonging to a reigning house, he had renounced the world and its vanities—he removed the coats of arms and the inscribed tablets left behind by vainglorious pilgrims to bear witness that they actually had been there, as modern tourists deface things of beauty or sanctity with their uninteresting names. Brother John averred that his voluntary task was sanctioned by a permit from both the pope and the emperor. After his death the Turkish authorities continued to police the shrine, exercising a strict supervision over the worshippers of all denominations that flocked to the scene of his whilom labors, for it was God's decree, proclaimed a divine of the fourteenth century, that the Holy Sepulcher should belong to the infidels until the Christians were altogether sinless.

Though as yet that desideratum has not been attained, the Holy Sepulcher, with the other holy places of the Holy Land, is once more in Christian hands. From the Jewish and Mahomedan points of view the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem is the inclosed space where Solomon's temple stood on the site now occupied by the Dome of the Rock and the Jam' al-Aqsa or Distant House of Prayer, on the mount of Abraham's and David's sacrifices. With its latticed screens of ebony, its brocaded curtains, its stained glass and mosaics in their somewhat faded glory, the Dome of the Rock stands in the solitude of the sacred precinct like one of those palaces, bewn of a single opal or turquoise we read of in oriental fairy tales.

Approaching it, the Moslem pilgrim has to observe a strict ceremonial. As he enters he puts his right foot forward, begging pardon for his sins and invoking God's mercy. Walking round the rock, he must keep it on his right hand, reversing the process followed when making the circuit of the Kaaba at Mecca. Before proceeding to the cave underneath, he must probe his heart and strive for humility of spirit, uttering the prayer of Solomon: "O God, forgive those that have sinned and relieve the injured."

Mary's Prayer Niche.

Not far away is a small building which contains a recess revered as Mary's prayer niche, where the Virgin Mother is supposed to have sat devoutly rocking the cradle of her infant son. Here the Moslem pilgrim recites the chapter of the Koran entitled Miriam, because it gives an account of several circumstances relating to the most pious and obedient of the four perfect women.

Close to the so-called Women's Mosque, a side entrance to paradise opens in the Well of the Leaf. This was discovered, during the Caliphate of Omar, by a man of the Banu Tamim who, elud-

ing down in it to get back a bucket he had dropped, noticed a door which led him into a wondrous garden, where he picked a leaf. No one of his acquaintances to whom he showed it had ever seen its like and, since it did not wither, all agreed that it must be of celestial origin, a hypothesis absolutely incontrovertible because the secret door could not be found again. It had disappeared as completely as the entrance to the tombs of the Kings of Judah, accidentally lighted upon, as Benjamin of Tudela informs us, by stone masons and carpenters employed in shoring the foundations of the temples and palaces that successively rose and were razed on the site of Melchizedek's hill fortress.

The northern part of the sacred inclosure is occupied by the Jam' al-Aqsa, or Distant House of Prayer, with its superb pulpit, one of the finest pieces of woodwork extant. It was carved by a celebrated sculptor of Aleppo at the charge of Sultan Nuraddin, and was placed in its present position by Sultan Saladin when, after his capture of Jerusalem, the Christian church became a Mahomedan mosque. This event could not occur, of course, without being duly announced by signs and wonders. In numerous churches of Europe the crucifixes shed tears of blood and a monk of Argenteuil saw the moon descend to earth with weeping countenance. Truly, the city reverted again to the Christians by the treaty of February 18, 1229, concluded between Saladin's nephew Malik al-Kamil and the Emperor Frederick II, but after the departure of that brilliant, if unscrupulous, monarch, the Kharezmians wandered West and prepared the way for Turkish rule of the holy places.

The Distant House of Prayer—in popular parlance the Palace of Solomon—was assigned to the protection of the aristocratic brotherhood instituted in 1118 to protect pilgrims to the holy places and to fight the battles of Christianity. Since the edifice was situated in the temple grounds, the members of that brotherhood became known as Knights Templars. The order ceased to exist in 1314 when its grand master, Jacques de Molay, was burned at the stake. With his last breath he summoned the two puissant enemies who had compassed his fall, to follow and face him before God's tribunal, as they did—King Philip the Fair of France within three, and Pope Clement V within twelve months. The same year, 1314, brought the revival of another brotherhood closely associated with the history of Palestine—the Knights Hospitallers, originally the Brothers of St. John. It was founded just before the first crusade by a certain Gerald of Amalfi, on the lines of an earlier order, the members of which served as ministrants to the comfort of lepers and pilgrims in distress, under the patronage of St. Lazarus. This order of the Hospital of St. John at Jerusalem, to write out its full name, later known as the Order of the Knights of Rhodes and as the Order of the Knights of Malta, is still very much alive in some of its offshoots. In the East it counts descendants of the Sultan Saladin among its pensioners, and also in the West it takes an active part in relief work. During the great war, it supported at Etaples, between Boulogne and Montreal, a large but hospital, where many of those wounded in the German drives toward Amiens and the channel ports, and in General Foch's decisive counter-offensive, were cared for.

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What Next?

At an English school examination the examiner asked one child:

"What are the products of our Indian empire?"

The unhappy infant began nervously to reel off the list she had got by heart:

"Please, sir, India produces curries and pepper and rice and citron and chillies and chutney, and—and—and—"

"Yes, yes," said the examiner impatiently. "What comes after all that?"

"Another infant's hand was raised.

"Well, you tell what comes after that."

"Please, sir, India-gestion."

What the Doctor Did.

Brown's little one was ailing and on his way to work he sent up the doctor. When he got home in the evening he asked her what the doctor had said.

"Nothing, papa."

"Then what did he do, dear?"

"Oh, he just telephoned me all over," was the child's reply.

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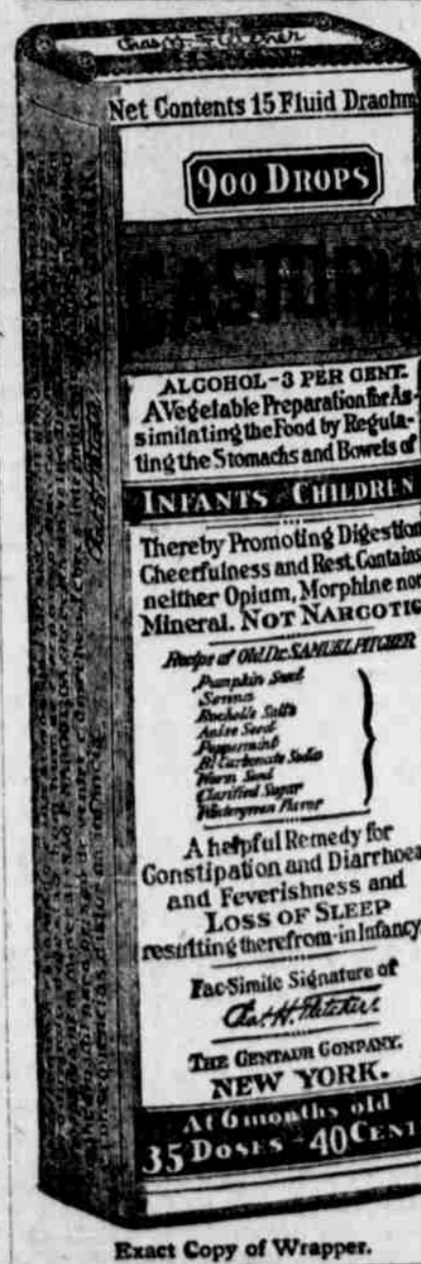
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