

Mary and Jesus
returning from the well



"Childhood
* * *
* Surroundings
of Jesus." * * *



Mr. Partridge in Syria.



Painting by LeFow
Workshop of
Joseph of Nazareth.

Hester Memorial Window, in the
Church of the Messiah, Brooklyn

(By William Ordway Partridge.)
Kings have waged warfare, armies lost
and won,
Tyrants their battle bolts long years
have hurled;

But lo! the Virgin and her little Son
Still rule the world.—KATRINA TRASK.

DID YOU ever find a lark's nest hidden among the wheat? If so, you may understand how the quiet and beautiful city of Nazareth nestles down among the hills of Galilee. If Palestine was the country of all the world for the Messiah to come to, then was Nazareth, of all the cities of the ancient civilization, the very one for Him to be born in.

You must cross the great plains of Esdraelon, you must go over the shoulder of Gilboa, where Saul fought that last fatal battle, and keep along at the right of the great plain which had been the granary of Palestine for 3,000 years before the coming of the Master, and seems to lose none of its fertility when other parts of Galilee and Judah are sterile and their vineyards a matter of history, till you come to the little quiet village of Nain. Here you get the first glimpse of the minaret and Christian towers of Nazareth.

A great deal has been written by learned men about the childhood of Christ, its environment, and the city of Nazareth, where that boyhood was largely spent. But after the traveler has been upon the spot itself, and has approached it with a feeling of reverence and that strange stirring of the soul that comes when one is in the presence of the hills and valleys which once knew His footsteps, the picture drawn by learned and literary men is inadequate, and must be relegated to the book shelf and the encyclopedia.

Tissot had the rare privilege of traveling through the Holy Land with a man who possessed not only great intelligence, but who had lived as many years in that land as did the Master Himself—Herbert E. Clark, vice consul at Jerusalem. In the last few months the author of this article has had the opportunity of visiting this quiet, unassuming little town of Nazareth, nestled so sweetly among the hills of Galilee, and has seen with his own eyes the places where the Christ Child played and worked and dreamed of that kingdom which was not to be built with hands.

Dreams of the Christ Child.

It is not so much learning that is going to make us understand the childhood of the most wonderful personality that the world has ever known as it is sympathetic appreciation of—perhaps I may call it dreaming over—the spots where those little feet passed so lightly when they were caring for the sheep on the hills above what was then a town of no little consequence, or standing, although aside, leaning on his shepherd's staff and looking from the great caravan route far out upon the great plain of Esdraelon.

In reviewing the pictures of the Christ Child by the great masters one must acknowledge a lack of the reality which the present age demands. Even in the Dresden Madonna, said to be the greatest painting in the world, which has been multiplied a million or more times, there is lacking the touch of the artist who has stood on the

place where the Boy Christ pushed His plane over the work bench, while His father stood silently regarding the work and measuring the ability of his Son to follow him in his chosen craft.

We know very little from history, from written facts, of that life after birth in the hillsides of Bethlehem, of the flight into Egypt and of the return to the beautiful city that looks out upon the plain of Esdraelon, which for centuries has been the granary of Palestine. But, as Aristotle somewhere says, "Poetry is truer than history," and when one visits the spot and is taken possession of by the Christ that is still alive in the Holy Land, one may perhaps divine thoughts of that life which are closer to reality than if some historians like Josephus and others had jotted them down from the standpoint of the Roman or Greek world.

You must watch the little boys at their play along the hillsides, see how gracefully they move in their flowing garments, have them follow your horse and, with their slings of woven cord, throw stones for you with the accuracy that David had in the use of his little sling of the same order, to understand what that boyhood was like. The east does not change, and in 2,000 years, despite the armies that have devastated Palestine, that roadway of the ancient world which was only 150 miles in length and perhaps eighty miles in width, it has remained the same country. The same skies, the same flowers, the sweet May pink that smiled into the face of the Master smiles in your face today, and, above all, Mount Hermon looms beyond, covered with eternal snows as it was when the Christ Child saw the sun set over it 2,000 years ago.

Real Picture Found in Types.

We must take that Child out of the hands of the old masters, out of the conventional draperies that have been wrapped about Him and place Him in the light-flowing garment that the Arab and Bedouin boy wears today. He must have His hair flowing in the wind or bound about with the cloth of cotton which He may at will draw over His face to protect Him from the wind or burning sun. We must look into the blue eyes which one meets occasionally today and which were not uncommon in the days when Nazareth was a Roman possession. We must abandon the idea of His disputing with the doctors in the Temple and understand that He merely talked as a child might do today in the outer courts and look upon much that has come down to us in the symbolical way that the Arab looks upon things today.

We find in the marshy places of the Jordan thousands of Bedouins, with their tents of goatskin, who have had their camping ground there from prehistoric times. They have been driven out only to return after the enemy has left their country or they have been strong enough again to get possession of the land which they felt belonged to them by divine right. One may well speak of the east as unchanging! One lonely minaret, from which at sunset the sheik calls the few Mohammedans who live in this Christian city to prayer, and announces, with his hand at the side of his

mouth to carry his voice over the hills, that there is only one God and Mohammed is his greatest prophet—one minaret alone tells the traveler and the artist that the little town is now a Mohammedan possession. All about us are signs of the Christian faith. The most interesting spot perhaps of any is the small chapel built over the workshop of Joseph on a height which commands the surrounding country to the south and north and from the threshold of which the Christ Child could see the distant hills of Samaria, where in later life He was to stop and talk with the woman at the well and to impress upon her the fact of His divinity.

Scene of the Nativity.

The happiest painting of the past years that has been made is, perhaps, that of Hoffman, of the boy Christ disputing with the doctors. But it is not a great work of art and it is not true to the conditions that existed at that time, nor in costume or guise to the Child it represents. It is in no sense Oriental or eastern, but is a painting made in the studio of the artist, happy in conception. It appeals to the popular sense because the painter has infused into the face of the Child something of the divine life He possessed. But this is an age that demands truth; it is no longer satisfied with flowing draperies and trains of following angels and stage scenery and I count it a happy thing that the age demands not only truth, but character; it shows that man is coming into closer relationship with the Author of all truth—God Himself. When we think, for instance, of the Child being born in the stable in Bethlehem, the Anglo-Saxon imagination thinks of such a stable as we see here—on the east or west side—apart from the dwelling and surrounded by coarse attendants and by the accessories which go to make up the modern stable.

But in the east, at that time, the stable was merely a division or a portion of the large khan, or inn, where the traveler stopped for rest and refreshment, and which one sees in Italy and other countries today. A large space is inclosed by a wall, with huge gates for an entrance, which are shut at night to keep out marauders and brigands. The divisions between the traveler and his camel or donkey are of a fragile nature.

One can see such a khan on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, known as the Inn of the Good Samaritan, where, in truth, refreshment is furnished to man and beast. And no doubt the spot that is pointed out in the Church of the Nativity was merely a portion or a part of a khan, where the traveler rested his horse or donkey, and either ate alongside of his beast or in an adjoining room that had no door for division, but merely a sustaining column or beam to strengthen the roof. Let us, then, forget our modern idea of a stable and think of the birthplace of our Lord as quite a natural one for the time and epoch, where any child might have been born except that of a Roman prince or one of the Roman aristocracy. It might be well to do away with the idea of all that is miraculous in the childhood of the Master, and so bring

it closer to our own childhood and our own children.

The poem hangs on the berry bush
When comes the poet's eye,
And the whole street is one masquerade,
When Shakespeare passes by.

Every child life is miraculous, if we have the insight to see it. That He was a remarkable child cannot be doubted, and yet we must remember that at the age of 12 in the east a girl is given in marriage and a boy is often as far developed as a man of 20 in our land. He does not have to contend with the physical sciences; he does not have thrust upon him books and pamphlets without number, to confuse and distract his plain and simple thinking. Christ was educated as were all the children of His time, first by the lovely and lowly Mary, His mother, a beautiful type of the purest and most gentle womanhood, and a type that the Roman church has used to dignify woman, so that her place has risen from that of a slave or toy to that of a companion and helpmate of man. His father was a man of more than ordinary ability. Tradition, which lives for thousands of years in the east, represents him as a serious, hard-working man, whose interest was largely in his workbench and in developing his children to the best of his ability.

Workshop of Joseph.

But to return to this simple workshop, where the Christ Child spent many hours of His day, when His brothers were tending the sheep upon the hillsides. He brought his wonderful creative ability to bear upon the simple workmanship which was produced by Joseph, His father. In those days the craft of the carpenter was very different from what it is today. Today He would be called a master workman, for then men cared for the impress of the hand upon the work, and each carpenter could turn out all the details of the house and bring to his work the art and training that were necessary to lift him above a mere Bedouin herdsman or a soldier in the armies of Rome.

There is one picture here represented, executed by Murillo, who never visited the Holy Land, but who, through his creative genius, and that divine idealism which is the artist's birthright, gave to it that wonderful touch which must make it live forever. But the face is not intense or forcible enough. The boys of Nazareth have keen, sharp faces, deep set eyes, smooth brows, black or blond and reddish hair, and are quick to learn any word that may serve them in the direction of their work. The frequent allusions in the New Testament to the shepherd and his sheep go to prove that the Master was familiar with every detail of the shepherd's life, and one can scarcely understand that unless he climbs over the hills with their olive trees and sycamores, and here and there a sacred grove, and watches some boy of 10 or 12 call to his sheep and sees them turn suddenly from their grazing and follow him, or dart in another direction with the precision of the shepherd dogs of the Scotch Highlanders. The "sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me"—and we know that those little footsteps went in quest frequently of a lost lamb bleating

upon the hills which had strayed from His father's flock.

Pope Leo's Gift a Wonderful Picture.

Pope Leo XIII gave to that simple chapel, presided over by the Capuchin monks, a wonderful picture—to the author's thinking the most remarkable one and the most accurate delineation of the subject that has been produced in modern times. Reproduction can give only a faint idea of its beauty and color and meaning. In the center stands the Christ Child, with face turned toward the spectator, working intently with a ground plane upon what appears to be a cross. We know that the cross dates back at least 3,000 years B. C., to the Babylonian and Egyptian kings. At first it meant power—since the days of the crucifixion it has come to mean sacrifice.

There, then, is the Christ Child at work. On the right stands his father, looking intently at the work, and the artist has foreshadowed in a most happy way the Christ that is to be—that is, we see that the head of the father is like the heads of the Christ that have come down to us through the ages—not the conventional head, but the traditional head, and the head that one sees now and again on the high roads of Galilee today. The father is intent upon the work, but on the other side of the canvas, seated upon the steps of stone and stucco that lead to an upper sleeping apartment, sits Mary, the mother, with the handloom arrested for the moment, gazing intently upon her child, her heart bent upon her son, dreaming half sadly of His future, with a subconscious thought possessing her or foreboding of the sacrifice and ill that must betide her child.

The artist has made a most happy contrast between the mother and the father. On the ground are some doves picking up bits of straw and the wheat that has fallen from the manger close at hand, where the donkey is kept which was necessary for any man who made journeys over the hills to Samaria, or on to Jerusalem, or down to the Great Plain and back again.

The simple-hearted monk permitted me to sit there quietly and study this picture and seemed surprised that I cared to linger where the average traveler glanced about, consulted his Baedeker and moved on. The artist had come down to Nazareth, had walked over its hills, had watched the children at their play or following the sheep patiently as they grazed from hillock to hilltop. Renan and a few German critics have done their utmost to discredit the historical accuracy of these spots that tradition has held to as the birthplace, the workshop and the place of crucifixion of the Master, but when all is told they only give you their own opinion or what M. Renan thinks or believes, and for my part I prefer, with the men who have loved this life and these holy places, to believe the traditions and the feeling that possesses the poet and the artist as he lingers on these sacred spots. I prefer to believe, indeed, that "poetry is truer than history."

With the Women at the Fountain.

The afternoon is wearing away, the flocks are coming in from the hillsides and the