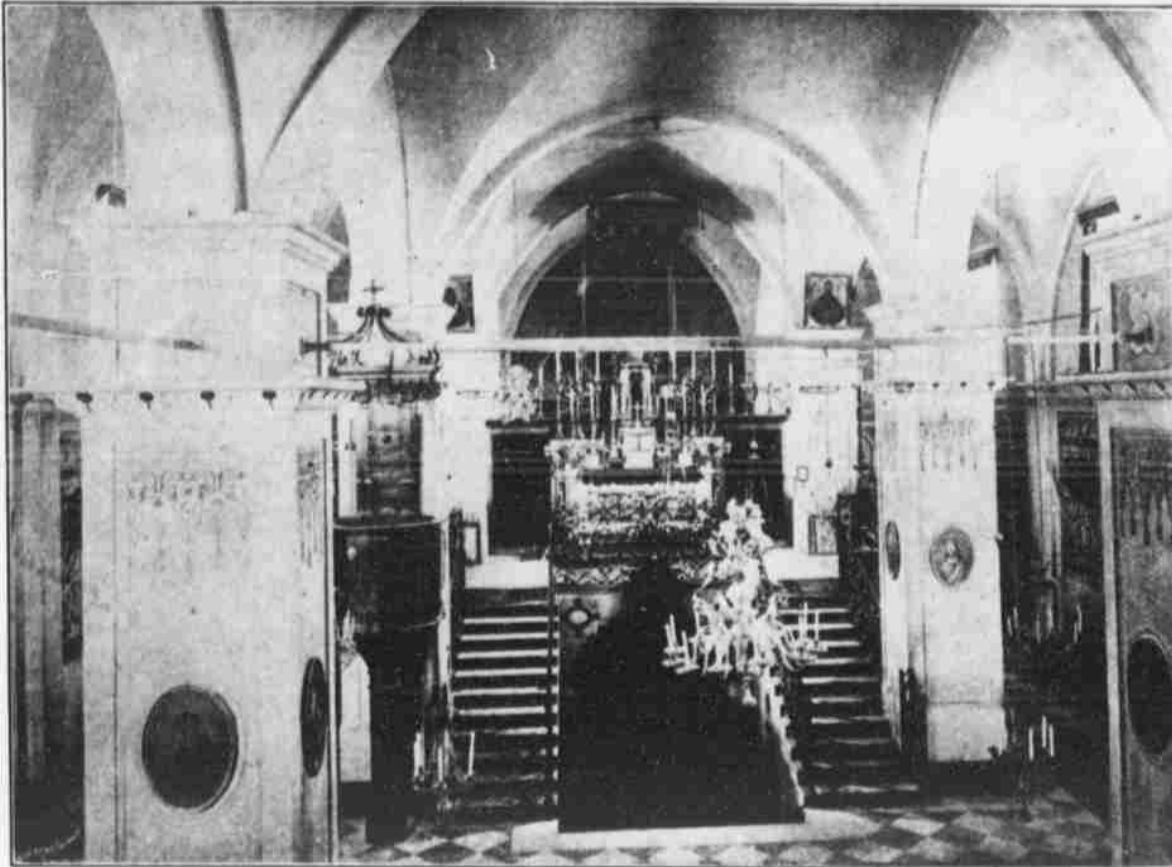


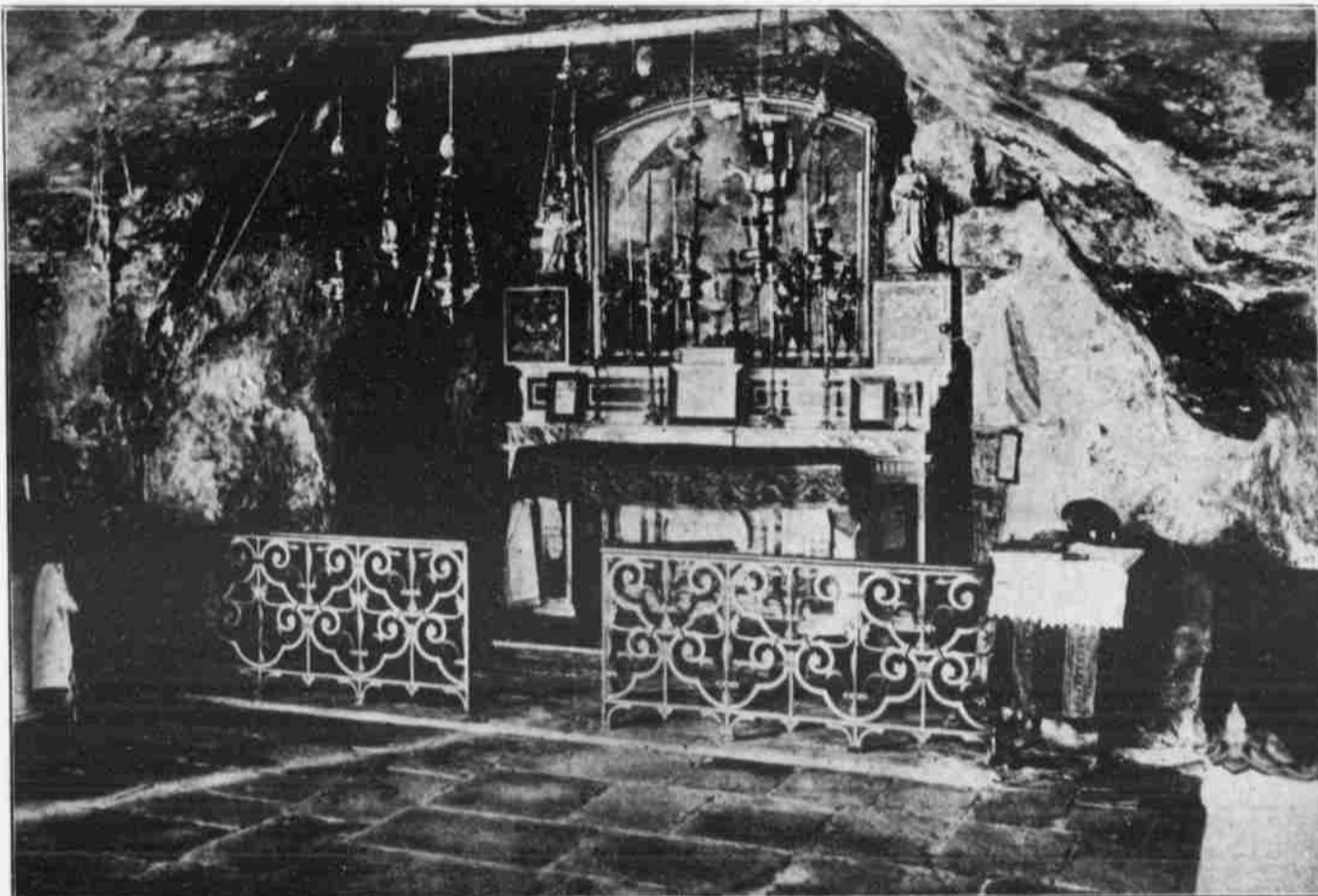
# Present Day Scenes Where Christmas Had Its Origin



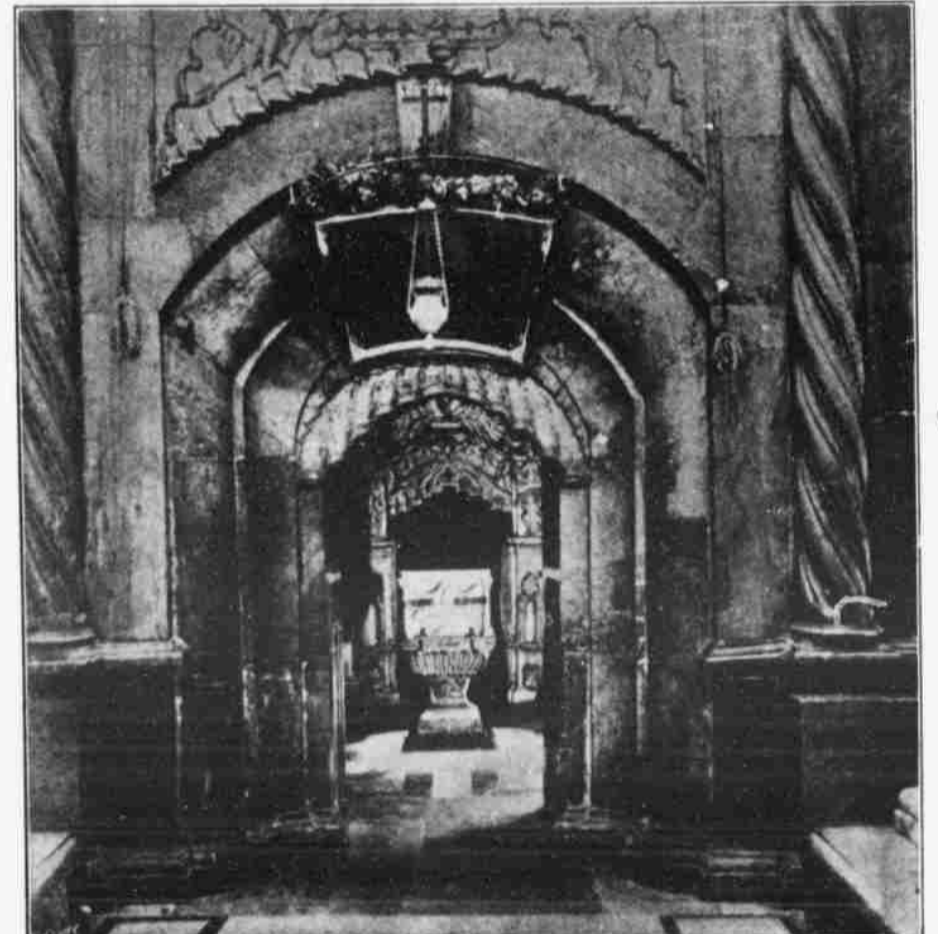
HOME OF JOSEPH AND MARY.



CARPENTER'S SHOP, NAZARETH.



GROTTO OF THE AGONY.



THE ANGEL'S STONE.

**H**OLY OF HOLIES, sacred to three great religions, the land of Palestine is as that splendid star that shone over it 1,900 years ago, when there began the most beautiful life of which song or story or creed has ever told. As mankind turns to the Star with every recurring Christmas eve, so does its longing turn ever toward the Land of Galilee, the land where there lie Jerusalem the Queen and Bethlehem and the Place of the Cross and the Resurrection.

"Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" sang the Hebrews to their harps by the weeping willows of the Brook Kedron. "If I ever forget thee, Jerusalem, may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth and my right hand wither."

"Star of Bethlehem," sings the Christian in all the world under many far stars. From the Northern Lights to the Southern Cross he dreams of that one cold, pure star, shining over the beloved city, as instinct today with the Nazarene as when He trod its narrow streets.

Yet that Holy of Holies is the one spot in the world that is apparently forever out of his reach.

Almost year after year is a renewed attempt to form a coalition of religious interests to get possession of the sacred sites. In its latest form the attempt comes as a proposition that all the Christian creeds combine in a great crusade to collect enough millions of dollars to buy the Holy Land from the Turkish sultan.

But to those who know the motley politics and enmities of Palestine's present owners the possibility of purchase can only appear a faint one. For, in the first place, the land is holy to the Mohammedan no less than it is to the Christian and the Jew. He would be both an impious and a daring Moslem ruler who would essay to sell the country that contains the tomb of Rachel, held to be so sacred by the Turks that they will not even permit excavation near them.

Even should the Moslem dare it, he

could not deliver the purchased property, for in that tract of 6,000 square miles there dwell fierce Arab fighting men, some of whom barely acknowledge the rule of the Turk, while others do not acknowledge it at all. To seize the land from them might well be a bloody performance—as bloody as the attempt of the twelfth century crusaders, and, perhaps, with as little success.

The dream that was dreamed by hundreds of thousands, when the emperor of Germany went to Palestine, that he would be the modern Godfrey to win the Holy Land for Christianity (albeit by purchase or treaty and not by arms) has faded away. And what may be expected in the form of a united Christian movement can be estimated by viewing the strife and feud that exist all the time between the Christian sects that have a foothold in the holy city now. The Turk maintains an armed guard at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre itself to keep the peace between the adherents of the Greek and Latin churches there.

The idea of purchasing the Holy Land for the Christians is opposed, also, by the plan of the Zionists to purchase Palestine for the Jews.

The plans of both are opposed to the interests of Russia. That government today has its strongholds in most of the principal towns of Palestine. They are called monasteries, but are actually forts, and the czar would resent the control of the sacred places by any power other than his own.

Bethlehem is a Christian city and Nazareth contains a large number of Christians, but with these two exceptions, Christian power is very small. Jewish control is altogether wanting, so that it is the Turk who stands guard over the holiest places toward which the hearts of the true believers turn.

Even when it comes to studying the Holy Land the efforts of Europeans are hampered on every side by the Turkish regulations. It is true that the English Palestine Exploration fund has made an excellent survey of Palestine, the only complete work

done there in the interest of science.

When it comes to excavation the sultan is slow to grant firmans, and even when these permits are signed, sealed and delivered, if it happens that any spot appealing to Mohammedan faith is to be disturbed, the work of the investigators must stop at the stone barrier of Turkish prejudice.

It is due partly to this cause that so little really effective work in the line of discovery has been done. Colonel Conder has, it is true, followed a part of the wall of Jerusalem, and what is supposed to have been a part of the wall of Solomon's temple has been found; but the greatest work of the kind was done by Dr. Bliss at Lachish, or, as it is now called, Tell-el-Hesi.

In this "mound of many cities," as Dr. Bliss calls it, were the strata of the civilization through which the Holy Land had passed, age by age. The spade cut down through the Turkish period, through the Crusaders, through the Roman, Persian, Greek, Hebrew—down deep into the Amorite, or earliest historic age. From seven to nine distinct layers were found by Dr. Bliss, and it was proved that it was indeed the ancient city of Lachish, besieged in former times by Egyptian and Assyrian.

Unfortunately the limit of the time and means were such that Dr. Bliss could merely cut out a slice from the great mound, the rest of which still awaits the hand of the excavator.

The Palestine exploration fund has been doing some additional work lately in Phocaea but as yet the results are not great. Much is expected from a German and French expedition that is preparing to work there, and especially from the American School for Bible Study, which has been founded in Jerusalem.

This college is supported by contributions from twenty or more of the leading American universities, from among whose students a fellow is selected each year by competitive examination, one of the professors in Semitic being chosen as the professor of the college each year. While this

institution has not begun the work of excavating, its field director, Dr. James B. Nies, is gathering a large fund to defray expenses and in a few months will probably begin operations on a large scale.

It is possible, Bible in hand, to go through Palestine from Dan to Beersheba and pick out this or that mound and say: "Here must have been such and such an ancient city or fortress." But it is impossible to be certain until excavation exposes the character of the buried monuments.

Tradition has done much to preserve the historical associations of the various spots. A chapel is erected in the carpenter shop at Nazareth and there is another chapel in the home of Joseph and Mary.

Bethlehem is filled with grottoes identified with the life of Jesus from the grotto of nativity with the stone manger in which the infant was supposed to have been laid, to the cave in the field of Boaz, where the shepherds were when the star appeared to them.

With infinite care the church has preserved objects such as the stone which the angels are said to have rolled away from the mouth of the tomb at the resurrection. Tradition is probably correct when it selects a certain grotto in the Garden of Gethsemane as the grotto of the Agony.

There is, too, the stone of the Anointment, on which the body of Jesus was prepared for burial, but there are many doubtful points connected with the various cities and sites of Palestine.

The Turks guard with zealous care any attempt to examine the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and ascertain what tombs are there. They will not permit the examination of the tomb of Rachel. Neither Jew nor Christian is permitted to approach nearer than the grating. It would be a great triumph for the Bible if it were possible to open this tomb and find there the embalmed body of the wife of the patriarch, but Mohammedan prejudices oppose the suggestion unalterably.

It has been estimated that there are at

least 300 tells or mounds of ruins scattered over Palestine awaiting examination. It is known that the Arabs, wherever they find an ancient tomb, rifle it for jewels and sell any ancient object found in it to the first pilgrim that passes. In this way the historic value of the tomb is lost, because it is most necessary to know where these objects are found in order to date them and place them historically.

It has been suggested that the great mound covering what is supposed to be the site of ancient Samaria would be a most fruitful field of investigation. Here once stood the ivory palace of Jezebel, looking out over the sea, the discovery of which would go far toward establishing the value of many statements in the biblical Books of Kings.

The climate has prevented any attempt to examine the remains of Jericho, yet that interesting southern capital will some day yield valuable finds to an excavator who will brave the perils not only of Arab chiefs, but of the fevers of this low-lying district.

It is not enough for the investigator to receive permission from the sultan to work upon any of these buried cities, but he must gain the good will of the Arabs around him, for the Turkish soldiers are so few and scattered that their control of conditions is limited; as a result preserving the peace depends more on the tact of the excavator and the way in which he distributes bribes to neighboring chieftains than upon the good will of the sultan.

There are many scenes which, of course, are open to no question, such as the sea of Galilee and Jerusalem itself, but whether men are right in locating the ancient Cana, where water was turned into wine, as being on the road to Tiberias, four miles east of Nazareth, or, as others would have it, at Kana-el-Jelli, near Sephoris, nine miles north of Nazareth, can be decided only by excavating.

Catholic tradition has marked out a spot upon the Mount of Olives as the place of the ascension, but many biblical scholars

(Continued on Thirteenth Page.)