

Pictures with Pen and Camera of Bethlehem Today



A Bethlehem Family

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JERUSALEM—Come with me this morning and take a look at Bethlehem as it lies out here on the hills of Judea 1,910 years after our Savior was born. The town is only seven miles from Jerusalem. It is a Sabbath day's journey, and it can be reached in three-quarters of an hour in a comfortable carriage. The usual price for the round trip is \$2.40, and in addition you are expected to give a small fee to the driver. There are riding horses outside the Jaffa gate which will take you there and back for less money, and if you would go still cheaper you can hire a donkey or travel on foot. There are scores of pilgrims from Russia, Armenia, Syria and even as far as Abyssinia, who tramp over the road every day, and we shall meet many parties of them strolling along with staffs in their hands. The Russian peasants wear rude shoes of straw or top boots, the Syrians have shoes of the hide of the camel and the Abyssinian and others are often barefoot.

By Carriage to Bethlehem.

We shall take carriages for our trip from Jerusalem. We start at the Jaffa gate, next David's Tower, on the top of Mount Zion, near where, it is claimed, the crucifixion took place. The gate has been widened by the breach through the wall made in honor of Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany, and all sorts of vehicles can now go in and out. As we leave the gate we pass coffee houses, in which the people of a dozen different nations are drinking; go by the railroad station, where the locomotive just in from the Mediterranean is puffing and smoking; skirt the valley of Hinnom, in which is the Pool of Gihon, where David was anointed, and a little later on top near the village where King Saul was crowned.

The road is excellent. It is of a hard limestone wall on each side by limestone fences and backed by green fields which are now covered with the dust of the road. The traffic is constant and the dust makes the air white. It fills our eyes, mouth and nostrils and turns our clothes into those of a miller. We cover our eyes with smoked glasses to keep out the glare. The road is dazzling white, the fences are white and a white dust covers the green of the fields. The sky is light blue and the sun beats down, sending out millions of silver white rays. We are going toward the south and the sun is full in our faces. It is hot, although a cold wind is blowing over these hills of Judea which whirls the dust around and sends columns of it into the air.

Reclaiming Palestine.

Soon after leaving Jerusalem we cross a depression covered with green, which is known as the Valley of Roses. Farther on are olive groves, and as we near Bethlehem there are great fields of green, and off at the left we can see the plain where the young widow Ruth garnered wheat for old Boaz and thus got food and a husband.

All the way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem the country is growing. There are signs of increased cultivation and every bit of available land is being set out in orchards and gardens. I went over the same road twenty odd years ago. The country then was bare rocks, with bits of grass here and there. Today the land is divided into fields. The surface rocks have been gathered together and laid up in fences as high as my head. The land which is cleared is now planted in wheat, corn and barley and the country has the appearance of a cultivated mountain garden. New olive orchards are rising and many of the old ones still stand. The trunks of the latter are knotty and gnarly, but the leaves are of green dusted with silver, and I am told they bear fruit. I photographed one tree not more than thirty feet high which had a trunk as thick as a hoghead and branches which shaded a large tract of ground. The soil of Palestine is as fertile today as it was when Joshua led the Israelites across it, and, barring the fences, I doubt not the landscape is about the same now as it was when Christ was born.

In the Footsteps of the Magi.

Every bit of the way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem is historic ground. It was over this same road Abraham traveled to Mount Moriah and that the Wise Men of the East followed the star on their way to the stable in which Jesus was born. They had called upon King Herod at Jerusalem to ask about the King of the Jews. He had told them to find where He was born, that he might come and worship Him. The road goes by a well where it is said these Wise Men stopped to drink. It is known as the "Well of the Magi," and it is near an olive grove on the east side of the road. It is covered with marble stone as big around as a cart wheel, in the center of which a hole has been cut, through which the water is raised by a



Bethlehem Boys

bucket and rope to the surface. The stone is kept clean and well polished by the kisses of the pilgrims. The story is that the Wise Men as they trudged along the road in the gathering twilight sat down on the margin of this well to rest. They stooped forward to draw some water to drink, when they saw in the mirror-like surface the star. They looked toward the heavens, and then, in the words of the Scripture: "Lo, the star which they saw in the east went before them, until it came and stood over where the young child was."

The Plain of the Shepherds.

It was not far from here that I caught my first sight of the field where the shepherds lay that same night when they saw the star. It is said to be the one which was owned by Boaz, upon which Ruth gleaned her wheat. It lies across the valley to the east of Bethlehem. There is a little village in front of it and a part of the field is covered by an olive grove. I saw the sheep feeding upon it, and as I rode to Bethlehem I passed flocks of sheep which were being driven to the Jerusalem market. They were of the fat-tailed variety, some of their tails weighing, I venture, fifteen pounds each.

They were owned by shepherds, dressed in long gowns and wearing handkerchiefs about their heads as turbans. Some of the shepherds wore sheepskins, and it is probable that they were clad much the same as those who followed the star. There is a chapel now in the Field of the Shepherds, and for centuries a church and a monastery stood on the spot.

Judas Iscariot.

Soon after leaving Jerusalem we pass a hill, where, the guide says, stood the building in which Judas Iscariot sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. The site is at the left of the road, and not far away is an old olive tree, upon which the ignorant pilgrims are told Judas hanged himself in his remorse after the crucifixion.

Going onward about four miles from Jerusalem we come to a building which has just received a fresh coat of whitewash. It is known as the Tomb of Rachael, and it covers a spot where she is said to be buried. It is not far from it that David had his fight with Goliath, the ten-foot-high giant of the Scriptures. I am not sure as to the locality, but there are stones there today, and plenty of ammunition for the slings of numerous Davids. Indeed, there is hardly a field on the hills of Judea which is not covered with stones of one size or another, and the shepherds use slings to this day.

The Field of Peas.

And, speaking of stones, reminds me of the Field of Peas, which lies not far from Bethlehem. It is a tract on the side of a hill, upon which the rocks are so thick that if planted to corn you would have to carry earth to cover the grains. As the story goes, our Lord was passing here when he saw a man sowing grain. He stopped and asked him what he was sowing. The man replied "stones," and thereupon the seed peas in his bag turned to stones, and all that he had sown did the same. Some of the stones now on the field are gathered up and peddled to pilgrims as relics.



Where the Shepherds Saw the Star

in the very heart of the Bethlehem of today. There is an open square in front of it surrounded by stores and schools and a great church known as the Church of the Nativity has been built over it. This church is entered by a door which looks like a square hole cut through a stone wall. It is so low that all who enter, even children, must stoop. As I started to go in I saw a Bethlehem woman with a babe in her arms standing outside. The baby was small and I could imagine the woman as Mary and the child as the Savior. I took a coin out of my pocket and asked her to pose for my camera. She did so, stepping into the sun. Near by was a bearded Syrian in turban and gown, and at first I thought he might make a good Joseph to pose with my Mary. He was in the shadow of the church. Upon my bringing him into the light I found that he was a beggar and not fit for the picture, so I enriched him with a gift of 5 cents and sent him back to his seat.

The Stable and Its Manger.

The Church of the Nativity is of great size. It belongs to the Greeks, Latins and Armenians, each of whom has a share in the church proper, and is compelled to worship in turn and in his own quarters. Mohammedan soldiers are always on guard to keep them from quarreling, and this is so not only in the church itself, but in the grotto or stable below, where they believe Christ was born.

This grotto is a sort of a cave reached by a winding staircase which goes down from the church. The cave is twelve feet wide and forty feet long and its roof is perhaps ten feet above the floor. The floor is covered with marble. Many lamps hang from the roof and the walls, and there is an altar at one end under which is a silver star set into the pavement, and above it an inscription in Latin stating that this was the spot upon which the Virgin Mary gave birth to Christ. At one side of the cave is a recess called the "Chapel of the Manger," where it is said the Savior was laid after His birth. The manger is of brown and white marble, and a wax doll lies in it representing the Christ. The Latins claim that they have

the original manger in one of their cathedrals in Rome. It is shown every Christmas.

As I stood in the stable not far from the manger a party of twenty Franciscan monks came in and knelt down and sang a service concerning the nativity. They were burly men, with shaved heads and long beards. They wore long gowns and their heads and feet were bare. They knelt upon the floor as they sang, and at the end each bowed down and kissed the star marking the spot of Christ's birth.

How Christ's Birthplace Really Looked.

During my stay in the Holy Land I have visited many stables which have been used as such for ages and which are probably similar to that in which Christ was born. This Bethlehem grotto, if indeed it was ever used as a stable, has been so changed by the decorations that it is impossible to conceive it to be the place of the nativity. It is probably a fraud, as is also the well at one side of the crypt, where the water is said to have burst forth from the naked rock for the use of the holy family. I looked down into this well. It is said that the star which guided the magi fell into it, but that it is only visible to the eye of a virgin. I looked, but, being of the other sex, could not see it.

To return to the real stables of the Holy Land. They are often caves, the floors being of rough stone; they are frequently large, and some have several rooms filled with donkeys, camels and horses. The mangers are stone boxes, and in front of them on the floor may be seen men, women and children sitting or lying, talking or sleeping. They all wear the clothes of the daytime, and they sit upon the stones at their meals. The man in charge of the stable, or inn, as some of these caves are called, is a ragged Syrian, who collects about 5 cents a day for housing and feeding each animal. The manger of Christ was probably one of these hollowed-out stone boxes.

Bethlehem Babies.

It was here at Bethlehem that occurred the slaughter of the innocents. King Herod had learned that the Savior was born, and he thought if he still lived at Bethlehem he would make sure of His death. So his soldiers killed all the children under 2 years. There is a place here which the guides tell you was used for storing the bodies, and in it are oil paintings horribly done depicting the killing.

As to Bethlehem of today it has entirely recovered from the massacre of Herod. Its streets swarm with babies, many of whom are not as clean as they should be. There are many older children as well, and all howl for bakshesh. The Bethlehemites are noted for their beauty; this is especially so of the girls, who are fair-skinned and bright-eyed; they have plump, well-rounded forms, which they clothe in long gowns of white linen, so beautifully embroidered in silk that one dress requires many months' work. The main part of their costume is much like a lady's nightgown without frills or lace. The gown falls to the feet, being open at the front in a narrow slit. Over the gown they wear sleeveless coats of dark red stripes and cover their heads with shawls of linen embroidered in silk. Each girl has necklaces of coins, and a headress, which is decorated with coins of silver or gold. They do not hide their faces and their features are usually refined. They are very intelligent, and in trading with them I find that they get the best of the bargain.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Bethlehem in 1910.

The Bethlehem of today stands on the site of the Savior's birth. It is on the top and side of a hill. It is a mass of boxlike one, two and three-story houses built along winding streets, which here and there are arched by the houses. The building material is from the limestone quarries near by and the town has many quarries and masons. Entering, we find the business parts made up of cavellike stores and rude workshops, in which the Bethlehemites are making the rosaries, crosses and articles of wood and mother-of-pearl for sale to the tourists and pilgrims. Fully half of the population is engaged in this business, the rosaries being shipped from here to all parts of the world. They are sold to both Mohammedans and Christians and are used to keep count of one's prayers. There are also many crucifixes of ivory and articles of olive wood made and sold for shipment abroad. The people are thrifty and they seem well-to-do. The town is the cleanest in Palestine and its natives have an independent spirit, which you do not find in Jerusalem. This may be from the fact that there are no Jews in the city, and comparatively few paupers, nearly every one supporting himself.

The Church of the Nativity.

The grotto, or cave, in which Christ was born is

Boy's Penuriousness that Paid Handsomely

The following facts about an errand boy who "made good" may encourage other youthful toilers to save their money, says a writer in the Saturday Evening Post. A widow in a suburban town near New York brought up a son and daughter on a government pension, her husband having been a civil war soldier. When the son was old enough to leave school a relative, who owned a clothing store in New York, set him to delivering packages. He soon became a clerk, and ultimately was able to sell more goods than any other employe.

From the first he saved a stated amount each week. Other clerks who spent everything, made fun of his penuriousness and there were times when he was inclined to think that they had more pleasure out of life than he did; but he stuck to thrift and when he was 25 years old had about \$1,400 in cash, though his wages had never exceeded \$16 a week.

At this period his relative died. The heirs closed

out the stock, the store premises were taken by another merchant and everybody had to hunt a new job. The thrifty clerk decided to go into business for himself. About a mile away was a corner-store that could be rented for \$1,500 a year. It stood in a good neighborhood and he figured that many of his old personal customers could be drawn that far. He had some friends in the wholesale trade. They spoke for him to the owner of the place and he got it. When he invested \$900 of his capital in clothing stock they extended credit for as much more and also got him side lines such as men's hats and woollens, on terms that required no investment of capital at the start. When his store was opened he had only \$200 in cash resources, having spent several hundred dollars for fixtures. The business was successful from the outset, and today, after ten years, the proprietor has two retail clothing stores, lives in a fine suburban residence and is well-to-do.