

Striking Features of Nazareth, Where Christ Spent Boyhood



NAZARETH LIES IN A NEST IN THE MOUNTAINS

TWO PRETTY LITTLE NAZARENES

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NAZARETH—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—This is the home of Christ's boyhood. Here He came as a baby after that long trip to Egypt, where He went to escape the blood-thirsty Herod, and here He spent all but about four years of His life. I want to tell you how Nazareth looks in this year of our Lord, 1911. The town is situated high up in the mountains of Galilee, within sixty miles of Jerusalem as the crow flies and sixty-seven miles from Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. It is within a day's ride on horseback of Mount Carmel, where Elijah slew the false prophets, and within four hours of Capernaum on the sea of Galilee, from where our Savior took His apostles and where He first preached.

Nazareth lies in a nest in the mountains. It is in a little amphitheater of hills with a rough and rugged arena. The houses run up the sides of the hills and there is hardly a level spot in the whole municipality. It is not a large town. It has altogether less than 12,000 people, of whom about half are Mohammedans who look upon Christ as a prophet. The remainder is made up of Greek Catholics, Latins and about 200 Syrians, of the Protestant faith. The town is one of churches and convents. It has some great monasteries and hospices where pilgrims are kept overnight.

The residences of the people are rectangular structures, which look more like great stone boxes than houses. They are usually of one-story, with a door and two windows, and the most of them have flat-roofs, which in the summer form the resting and sleeping places at night. Many of the buildings are in gardens. Some have cactus hedges about them and others are shaded by cypress trees. There are many olive orchards, and figs grow here as luxuriantly as they did in the time of our Saviour.

Nazareth by Moonlight.

The buildings of Nazareth are ugly, but as a whole the city is beautiful. The sky is so blue, the air is so clear and all the surroundings are so picturesque, I shall not soon forget a bird's-eye view I had of the city last night. The moon was at its full and its great round silver disk changed the night into day. Its rays mellowed the yellow limestone of which the buildings are made, and transformed them into ivory. They softened the glare of the white, rocky roads, and made the mountains and valleys look like those of fairyland. From the top of the hills I could see the plain of Esdraelon, which in its fertility vies with the Nile valley; and away off at the west lay the mighty Mediterranean, which stretches on for 2,000 miles to Gibraltar and the Atlantic.

Nazareth by moonlight is wonderfully peaceful. At sunset all business stops and within an hour or so afterward everyone is in bed. There are few places which are so far from the strife of the world, and business seems swallowed in the beauties of nature. The scenery is that of old Greece, and the stars shine gloriously out of skies which are perfectly clear.

The sunsets are surprisingly beautiful. I saw one the other night in which the silvery beams of the sun seemed to form a halo over this, the home of our Saviour. There were many white clouds in the sky, which changed, first to rose and then became golden, the color growing stronger and stronger, until the whole west was one blaze of molten copper and fire.

Among the Nazarenes.

Coming down into the town, after watching one of these sunsets, I saw many Nazarene children and stopped to make notes. The little ones gathered around me, and it was not hard to imagine similar crowds which played in these streets 1,900 years since and of whom the boy Jesus was one. The little Nazarenes wore gowns of brown, red or yellow. The most of them were in their bare feet; the boys had caps of red felt, while the girls wore handkerchiefs or shawls tied around their heads. All were running and dancing and laughing and playing. Some were beautiful and especially the girls. I remember a rosy-cheeked baby which was carried by a roughish bright-eyed maid of 18. I admired the baby and chuckled it under the chin, telling the girl I would like to take it home with me to America. She promptly said I could have it, and thrust it out toward me. My face fell and I ran.

In the Footsteps of Jesus.

There is no doubt but that this is the Nazareth of Jesus, and that the hills and valleys about here were hallowed by His footsteps. It was here that the angel Gabriel appeared unto Mary and told her that she would be the mother of Jesus, and it was

here that she came with Joseph after the flight into Egypt. She waited only until King Herod was dead and then came to Nazareth, the child Jesus being still an infant in arms. It was from Nazareth that Jesus went to the Jordan to be baptized by John, and it was here that after He had begun His work our Lord came and preached in the synagogue, where upon the Nazarenes cried out:

"Is not this Joseph's son?" And they were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built that they might cast Him down headlong. But He, passing through the midst of them, went His way."

I was shown the hill to which the Nazarenes led the Savior, intending to cast Him down. It is about a mile and a half from the town. The exact locality of this place, however, is questioned.

There is another spot in Nazareth, now owned by the Roman Catholics, which claims to be the original site of the shop where Joseph worked as a carpenter. The place is in the Mohammedan quarter, not far from a bazaar where the Turkish merchants sit cross-legged and sell to the Christians. When I visited it I met Father Kersting, who came here about three years ago, and is now superintending some excavations which are being made. He has a number of Arabs working under him digging up an old church which was built there by the crusaders.

Where Joseph Worked.

They have just uncovered a grotto which Father Kersting tells me is undoubtedly the place where Joseph had his carpenter's shop, and where, if so, the little Christ must have played among the shavings. I took a photograph of the excavations.

The various sects here make all sorts of claims. The Latins allege that they own the table upon which Christ dined with His disciples before and after the resurrection. It is a block of hard chalk eleven feet long and nine feet in breadth. In another place in the Latin monastery is what is known as the angel's chapel and the chapel of the annunciation, where the Virgin received Gabriel's message. There is also an old cistern which is called the kitchen of the Virgin, and in the center of the town is Mary's well, or, as it is sometimes called, Jesus' spring, or Gabriel's spring. This is undoubtedly authentic, for it is the only spring or watering place that Nazareth now possesses or ever has possessed. It is, therefore, certain that the child Jesus and the Virgin frequented it, and that Mary came here daily for water. This is a fountain rather than a well. The water gushes forth in two streams into a stone basin, and from there flows into a stone-enclosed pool. There are always women with water jars about it, and the scenes of today are probably the same as they were in Christ's time.

In the Bazars.

Nazareth has thousands of pilgrims who come here every year to visit the places hallowed by the Savior, and it is also on the main line here from the mountains of Lebanon to Jerusalem. Caravan routes from Damascus to Egypt wind about it, and it has always been a place of more or less traffic.

The bazars of today are of about the same character as they were in Christ's time. They are narrow, cave-like stores, lighted only from the front. The merchants sit there walled around with goods, and the customers stand out in the cobblestone roadway and bargain as to their prices. The streets are dirty and camels and Bedouins are continually moving through them. The men wear turbans and gowns and the women are veiled or unveiled, according as they are Mohammedans or Christians.

I was interested in the mechanical work going on in these bazars. I stopped in a carpenter's shop and photographed a workman of just about the age Joseph must have been when our Lord was a boy and passed as his son. I asked as to carpenter's wages, and was told they ranged from 50 cents to \$1 per day. In another business street I stopped awhile with the blacksmiths who were making knives, razors, plow points and the long, thin, crescent-shaped sickles used here for harvesting. The sickles have teeth like a fine saw, the wheat and barley being saved off, as it were. I watched a blacksmith shoe a horse. He used a plate of iron of the shape of the hoof about an eighth of an inch thick. It was solid with the exception of a hole as large as a finger ring in the center. There were three small holes on each side for the nails which were driven into the hoof. When shod the horse's foot was entirely covered by the iron, with the exception of the small hole in the center.

The Boys in Nazareth.

During my stay here I have paid especial atten-

tion to the children. They are the best part of the Holy Land, and are as full of fun and as delightful as our children at home. I have seen families which recall that of Joseph and Mary. Here in Nazareth I see the little ones everywhere playing. There is a threshing floor on one side of the town, a place where the earth has been stamped down and where the grain is flailed or trodden out after harvest. This is one of the great playgrounds, where the boys come with their marbles and where they play ball. They have a game in which the boys try to throw the ball so as to hit a stone mark set up for the purpose. They also strike the ball with a club and send it beyond the threshing floor to be caught by the boys outside. They play blind man's buff, leapfrog and hide-and-seek, and as I went through the streets the other day I saw two little ones rising and falling on a board resting on the edge of a sharp stone making a seesaw.

One of the games played is like our "Button, button, who has the button?" The boys stand in a row with hands folded and the one who is it goes along and rubs his two hands, holding the pebble over which pair of folded hands, endeavoring to drop the pebble into one without being caught. It is then necessary to guess who has the pebble. We play the same game with the button.

Another game is known as the "tied monkey." In this the boy who is "it" catches hold with one hand of a rope, which is fastened to a peg in the ground, while others beat him with handkerchiefs or ropes in which knots are tied. If he can catch one of them without letting go his hold on the rope the boy caught takes his place.

Worth More Than Girls.

I observe that the boys here usually play by themselves. They rather look down upon their sisters, and the ordinary family considers the girl of but little account. When a girl is born no fuss is made, but when a boy comes the friends of the family run through the streets crying out, "Good tidings! Good tidings!" The father prepares a feast and all of the friends of the family give presents of money for the

The Anti-Modernist Oath

FOLLOWING is a translation of the Anti-Modernist oath now being taken by Catholic priests, as directed in an encyclical letter from the pope:

"I accept and firmly embrace everything that has been defined by the unerring magisterium of the church, whatever has been declared and promulgated, especially those doctrines which are directed against present-day errors.

"In the first place, I profess that God, the beginning and end of all things, can, by the natural light of reason, be known and even demonstrated, through those things which have been created, namely the visible works of nature, as a cause through its effects.

"Secondly—I hold and admit the external arguments of revelation, namely, Divine works, especially miracles and prophecies, as most sure signs of a

Christian religion Divinely established, and I hold those same things to be true for all ages and men, even of our own time, and they are strictly conformable to reason.

"Thirdly—I firmly believe that the church, the custodian and teacher of the Revealed Word, through the very historic Christ, when He lived among us, was proximately and directly instituted, and this same church was founded upon Peter, the prince of the apostolic hierarchy and his successors to last forever.

"Fourthly—I sincerely accept the doctrine of faith in its entirety as it has been transmitted to our times by orthodox preachers; and, moreover, I entirely reject the heretical dictum of the evolution of dogmas of those who transfer the meaning of those dogmas from one sense to another, differing entirely from that previously held by the church.

"Fifthly—I hold as most certain and sincerely profess that faith is not a blind result of a religion breaking forth from a darkened subconsciousness and proceeding from the heart and flexible will alone, but which is conformable to reason and has been revealed by a personal God, our Creator and Lord, and we believe it to be true because of the authority of God, who is eminently truthful.

"I firmly believe and with due reverence submit to all condemnations and declarations which are contained in the encyclical letters 'Pascendi' and in the decree 'Lamantabili', especially concerning that which they term dogmatic history.

"I likewise reject the error of those that affirm that the faith proposed by the church is repugnant to history, and that Catholic tenets, in the sense in which they are now understood, cannot be reconciled with some reliable origins of the Christian religion. I likewise condemn the opinion of those who maintain that the learned Christian man possesses a double personality—the one a believer, the other an historian.

"I disregard also that system of interpreting sacred scripture which prefers the methods of rationalists to the tradition of the church, the doctrines of the faith and the rules of the Apostolic see.

"Finally and in a word, I profess myself opposed to the error of the modernists, who hold that there is nothing Divine in sacred tradition, or what is still worse, admitted in a Pantheistic sense, so that nothing remains of it but the bare and simple fact, just as is the case with other historical facts.

"I promise that I shall faithfully and in the sincerity of my heart observe all these by never deviating from them in any way, either in teaching or in word or writing. So I promise, so I swear."

Loafing

"Tain't no use complainin' 'cause the frost is in the air
And there ain't no birds a-singin' in the treetops anywhar;
These modern institutions that the landlords all provide
Have sweet and soothin' comforts, it will hardly be denied.
There's a radiator boomin' with a warmth that's soft and mild
And an easy chair in waitin' when there's time to be beguiled.
The north wind shakes the shutters, then discouraged passes by,
For loafin' in December's jest as good as in July.
The city folks in summer to the farm come troopin' down
An' when old winter's here it looks right good to me in town;
I miss the clouds a-driftin' o'er the distant sky so blue;
But the paper on the ceiling has a mighty pleasant hue.
And the window, when the climate has set in for snowin' hard,
Is the frame around a picture prettier than a mailin' card;
And life seems kind and peaceful as I notice, with a sigh,
That loafin' in December's jest as good as in July."
—Washington Star.



A NAZARETH CARPENTER.

benefit of the boy. Immediately after the child is born it is rubbed over with salt; it is then wrapped in swaddling clothes so tight that it cannot move and kept in that state for about a week; it is then unfastened, washed with fresh oil, salted and bound up again. This wrapping, oiling, salting and rewrapping goes on for about forty days, when the child is ready to wear the ordinary clothes of babyhood. This usually consists of one garment, and in the summer if the child be poor that is omitted, although a naked baby may wear a skull cap. The ordinary garment is a shirt which reaches to the knees, and as the children grow older they may have a jacket over the shirt.

One of the important ceremonies is naming the boy. In this the name of the father is always added. In olden times if the son of James was named John his name would be John, son of James, but now the words "son of" are omitted and he is known as John James.

Pretty Little Nazarenes.

I am surprised at the beauty of the Nazarene girls, and especially of the little ones. They have rosy cheeks and bright eyes and are quite as good-looking as our American babies. They dress in bright colors, some having rows of coins on their headresses and rings on their fingers.

I see many little girls at the fountain of Mary, each carrying a jar in which to bring water home. This is the work of almost every woman in Syria. The little ones are taught by beginning with a tiny jar which they steady on the head with the hand. As they grow older they use larger jars, until at last they are able to walk through the streets carrying four or five gallons of water on the head without touching the jar. This work gives them erect figures, and there are no stoop shoulders nor curved spines among them.

When a girl reaches 10 or 11 years of age she begins to think of marriage, and it is not an uncommon thing for her to be a mother at 13 or 14. After marriage the wife becomes a member of her husband's family, and, for a time at least, she lives with her mother-in-law. For this reason people believe in early marriages, whereby the girl may be trained by her husband's mother into a suitable wife when she grows up.

A Look at the Schools.

I wonder if the boys of our Savior's time studied as do the Nazarene boys of today. Many of them are taught by the sheikhs, as half the town is Mohammedan. They sit on the floor and sway back and forth as they recite the verses and texts they are trying to learn. The teacher is sometimes blind, but he knows the verses so well that when one stops he can strike the place where that boy should be sitting with a stick to start him again. In our Lord's time the Scriptures were probably taught the same way to the Jewish children. The slates used here are largely made of cast-off coal oil cans, the tin being cut into squares and pounded out flat. The Arabic characters are painted upon such tins with brushes and India ink.

The chief study of the Mohammedan boys is the Koran, and of the Jews the Psalms. At harvest time the schools close and the children go out into the fields, gardens and vineyards. They are accustomed to work and everywhere I go I see them herding the sheep. The boys use slings just as David did and they are skillful in sending the stones where they please.

Like Little Americans.

Some of these Palestine children are polite and others are the reverse. When the good Arab boy comes into a room full of older people he goes around and kisses the hand of each one and places it on his forehead. He can be so sweet you might think him the soul of innocence and piety, but take him outside and he will fight, kick and scratch with his fellows. A great deal of slang is used and in a quarrel the most common expressions are those of cursing your enemy's ancestors. One boy will say to another, "Curse your father!" and the other will reply, "And your grandfather!" And so they will go on to the fourth and fifth generations, cursing the various branches of the other's genealogical tree. Here at Nazareth we find the children very polite, but at Nablous they throw stones at me and called me "a Nazarene," a contemptuous term which the Mohammedans of Samaria use for all who are not of their faith.

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