

Original Communications.

VISIT TO BETHLEHEM AND THE HOLY PLACES.

BY REV. V. D. COLLINS.

I suppose one of the dearest wishes of every Christian heart, is to visit the Holy Places made sacred by the footsteps of Christ.

At mid-day, one Friday, just as the Turkish guard were closing the gates of Jerusalem for Mohammedan worship on Mount Moriah, I passed out of the Jaffa gate on foot, to visit, by the same road, the spot which, long centuries before, the wise men had sought by the guiding Star.

The distance from Jerusalem to Bethlehem is about six miles in a southerly direction. After leaving the Jaffa gate I turned to the left, down the valley of Gihon, and crossed it on a solid causeway which forms the southern dam of the lower pool of Gihon, and then ascended on a rough stony path, the hill of Evil Council.

Since the journey of the Holy Family, what a long array of pilgrims, scholars, crusaders, and men of peace have streamed over this rugged road, and every year increasing—seeking the birth-place of Jesus.

The highway from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, though not very hilly, is exceedingly rocky; not only does the living rock crop out continually, but the road is full of loose stones, both small and great.

The first view of Bethlehem is quite picturesque, or even imposing, covering the ridge and northern slope of a hill on the southern side of a deep and extensive valley, running nearly east and west.

I need not say that the experience of the first hour spent in threading the streets of Bethlehem, was of genuine, unalloyed satisfaction.

The town of Bethlehem has, at the present time, about 3,000 inhabitants, chiefly Catholics, Greeks, and Armenians; generally very ignorant and poor, but industrious, virtuous, and happy.

tion, prove what Solomon was able to do in horticulture, in landscape gardening and botanical studies. "I made me," he declares, "great works. I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards; and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits; I made me pools of water, to water therewith, the wood that bringeth forth trees."

The chief occupation of the inhabitants of Bethlehem, besides horticulture and the ordinary tillage of the land, is in the manufacture of all kinds of holy wares—mementoes of the place, from wood, mother of pearl, ivory wood, and Dead-Sea lava stone.

After having examined the town, sufficiently, I made my way to the birth-place of Jesus, situated in the Eastern suburb. It is said to be a natural grotto, now under a church, first erected, by the Empress Helena, who thus fixed the exact location of many of the so-called holy places.

In connection with the church of the Nativity, occupied by the Greek Communion, is the monastery where the priests reside, and where pilgrims lodge from time to time. From different parts of the monastery to the grotto of the Nativity, there are several passages—the Greek Church possessing the main entrance, unlocked by a silver key.

While standing in this grotto of the Nativity, beneath the mellow light of many golden lamps, and amidst the profoundest silence, contemplating the spot, the event, and the results of that birth in a manger, a poor, foot-sore pilgrim woman entered, knelt, and then kissing the spot of birth, broke forth into tears and sobs!

Whether I was standing in the very stable where Christ was born, or not, I did not stop to argue. I was, at least, standing in Bethlehem, without the shadow of a doubt, at the very fountain-head of history, where an event occurred, which, to-day, is gratefully acknowledged, and celebrated throughout the world, starting thrills of joy in millions of human hearts.

After visiting another grotto, where Jerome translated the Bible into the Latin "Vulgate," I was taken to the upper terrace of the convent, to enjoy the view of the country around. The atmosphere was remarkably clear and serene.

the green valley of the sacred Jordan, winding like a thread of emerald, with its wealth of trees and vegetation, in that otherwise barren land. Here and there, eastward down the mighty gorge, I could catch glimpses of the Sea of Death; while beyond, stretching north and south, were the dark mountains of Moab, piled up by volcanic force, in grand and awful desolation.

THAT LITTLE SHAKER.

There it hangs on its nail, at the end of the wardrobe. It is old—half-worn—the straw is broken—and why let it hang there? Ah! stranger, it has a history. Shall I tell you? That little shaker once covered my idol.

Occasionally there was a rap at my study-door, and a sweet, gentle voice would call, "Papa, may I come in?" "Not now, darling—wait a little," and away, tripping, light and happy, went the little shaker.

By and by it returned, and again, "Papa, may I come in now?" "Yes, darling." Open flies the door—in rushes Nellie—my little angel-child now.

I can see that sweet face, and hear that gentle loving voice now, just as 'but yesterday, and though the memories are sad, yet are they pleasant. That little shaker, like Bro. Cuyler's "Empty Crib," (which I hope some day to read,) is dearer to me than jewels, or gold; for the associations are very precious.

Another reason was, that, as a pastor, I might know better how to sympathize with the afflicted of my flock. Two little brothers used to pass, hand in hand, daily, on their way to school. They were in the infant department in our Sabbath School.

And still another reason for removing my lovely one was, my own sanctification and growth in grace. It was a cold day in January, 1867, when I carried her to church (for the snow was too deep for her to walk) for the last time.

That affliction was sanctified to my good, and to that of others. May its influence never cease. Since then my prayer and my song have been:

Nearer, my God, to thee, Nearer to thee; Ev'n though it be a cross, That raiseth me."

With the Psalmist I can say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, for, before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word"—would that I had kept it better.

THE LIMIT OF THREE SCORE AND TEN.

In regard to man, and especially to man considered as a fallen and sinful being, and with reference to the problem of redemption, the following may be suggested as reasons for fixing the limit of his probation at three-score years and ten.

(1.) It cannot be doubted that the time is sufficiently long to enable him to prepare for the future world. The plan of salvation is so simple, and the terms are so easy, that far within that period any one can do all that is needful to be done to prepare for a future state, even for a vast eternity, and if a man closing life at seventy, is not prepared for heaven, it could not be alleged as an excuse that ample time has not been allowed him for such a preparation.

mediate attention to religion, and the danger of delay, than these facts—that there can be no hope of preparation beyond the period of three-score and ten, and that anywhere within that period life may terminate, or that there is a possibility, and in fact a strong probability, that that outer limit will not be reached.

(2.) The great purposes to be accomplished in the world can be better secured by the present arrangement than they could be by one which would greatly protract the life of man. The present arrangement has all the advantage of bringing new and varied powers upon the earth to meet the new circumstances of the world in the development of the divine plans; the advantage of bringing more actors on the stage, and of preparing more immortal beings for a future world; the advantage of greatly multiplying the number of the redeemed, and consequently of glorifying the Redeemer and augmenting the joys of heaven; the advantage of preventing the evils which would arise from the vast accumulation of wealth and power in the hands of a few individuals, and creating a permanent tyranny in the hands of a few—it being far better for the liberty and happiness of the mass of men that a man of accumulated or accumulating wealth should lose his hold on his property at the age of three-score and ten, and that it should be distributed in society, than that he should be allowed to go on absorbing the wealth of the world for a thousand years, as it was of advantage to the world that Xerxes, Caesar, Alexander, and Napoleon should die rather than that they should live to confirm and establish a tyranny for centuries.

It is an advantage to the world that men should die; that, having accomplished the great purpose of life, they should give place to others; and that what they have gained in any respect should go into the common stock for the good of the world at large, and for the benefit of coming generations, rather than that it should be retained by themselves under the form of vast monopolies. At the same time it is to be remarked, that a man will be more likely to attend to the interests of his soul when he knows that the affairs of the world are of so little importance to him, and that all that he can acquire must soon—very soon—pass into other hands, than he would if he felt that what he could gain would continue to be his, and would be constantly increasing for a thousand years.

As man, therefore, is a fallen being; and his great interests lie beyond the grave; as this is essentially a world of probation; as all that any one can gain here is a trifle of no value compared with the great interests beyond the tomb; as it is important that man should constantly feel and realize this; as it is important that all the means possible should be used to fix his attention on these facts, and to prevent his jeopardizing his eternal interests by neglect and delay; and as the period of seventy years furnishes ample time to prepare for the world beyond, and to secure the salvation of the soul, we can see that it is a wise and benevolent arrangement by which the existence of man on the earth is bounded by three-score and ten years, or by which this should be fixed as the outer limit of human life. Man must be content with this. He has no power to remove the limit. Science, time, experience, prudence, medicines, do nothing to modify this law of our being, or to secure to us any longer duration on earth than God has assigned us. Death respects at all the boastings of science in this respect, and so far as anything future can be considered as certain, it is certain that the period of human life settled in the time of Moses will continue to be the boundary, to the end of time. The tables of life Insurance and Annuity companies now acted on will continue without essential modification to be the tables employed to the end of time.

REV. A. M. STEWART'S LETTERS.—XXVIII.

Treasure City, Nev., Dec. 1868.

My visit to White Pine District is about to terminate, duty calling elsewhere. The stay and labors have already been lengthened beyond intention or arrangement on first coming. Amid so intense and fevered an interest in connection with silver hunting, a feeble effort has been made to induce this marvellous community to think of something better. The extreme beauty of the November weather, running into December, has also conducted to this prolonged stay.

Winter seems now fairly setting in, and the snow is said to fall on these mountains to the depth of eight or ten feet. There are certainly as yet no shelters erected sufficient for half the people who are still flocking hither. Could any compensating good be effected by the stay, I have no fears of snow, and no special objection to roughing it out with this multitude through the winter. No place possible can however be had for continued preaching in-doors; and nothing special can be effected in such a place without a church building. Even now, and with money sufficient, lumber could not be had the present season for building.

A prayer-meeting held twice a week and very hopefully attended has been organized in Treasure City. A Sabbath school is also in full working order. A prospectus has been issued, requesting the organization of a Presbyterian church, with over twenty names, and a promise of con-

siderable money for church-building during the coming season. Preparatory arrangements have also been made for starting a Sabbath school both in Hamilton and Silver Spring, at the east and west base of the mountain. While visiting the various families in these places a surprising want of books, even Testaments, was discovered. And so very far is this place outside the ordinary channels of communication it is difficult to obtain them, save by heavy expense and long waiting.

TREASURINA.

During my mission in Treasure City the first native was added to the fast multiplying inhabitants—a daughter—the mother a member of the Presbyterian Church. An impromptu consultation of mine owners, agents and others was had respecting some fitting expression of interest towards the first citizen. As the name of the city is Treasure, from the untold amount of wealth supposed to lie underneath; the name of the child, must needs have some connection therewith. The English appellation was Latinized, and made feminine—the name must be Treasurina. This on condition, that the godfathers should endow the nominee, with a silver brick and other valuables connected with the treasures of the new location.

So, after my last sermon here, the child was duly recognized to be by covenant in connection with Christ's family, and according to the forms of baptism practised in our Church, sealed as a member—receiving at the same time, the pleasing name of Treasurina.

ANOTHER INCIDENT.

Among the new-comers, in order to get or increase wealth, are a husband and wife—he a Jew, she a devoted Catholic. Through invitation, persuasion, curiosity or other motive, the husband was at one of our very interesting evening prayer-meetings, held in a tent near his own dwelling. On going home from which, his wife was on her knees at her evening devotions. Seeing which, he did what he had never done before;—he approached softly, kneeling down beside her, putting his face between his hands and remaining there until she had ended. The wife hardly believing her senses at length asked; "George, why have you done this?" "I was at a prayer-meeting to-night and on coming home saw you at prayers and could not refrain from kneeling alongside." Early next morning the wife was out joyously to tell what had happened to some who had been at the prayer-meeting. At the next meeting for prayer, husband and wife were both present.

A. M. STEWART.

COLORADO FOR CHRIST.

Partly for health and to visit our children in Denver, Col., we (wife and self) spent a few weeks in that delightful region during the extreme hot weather last summer. I say delightful, because of its grand scenery, its pure air, its cool mountain streams, clear as crystal, fresh and constant from the snowy range, its rich minerals, its fertile soil, its enterprising inhabitants, its beautiful cities and villages, quite up to the snowy range, and its undoubted future for wealth and influence among the stars of our American galaxy. While I beheld all this with admiration, my spirit was stirred within me, and I was led to exclaim, "Say not, four months and then cometh harvest! behold I say unto you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. The harvest truly is great but the laborers are few." Over these vast plains, where the Indians now roam and massacre unoffending women and children, and in these Rocky Mountains quite up to where the white drapery covers their venerable heads, Christ's ministers must go and preach his Gospel and secure this beautiful country for Christ, to whom it belongs, from the grasp of Infidelity, Romanism and Satan. I had the pleasure of preaching Christ to attentive hearers at Denver and Golden City.

Yours in the bonds of Christian love, M. G. CASS.

OUR TEMPERANCE GOVERNOR.

Governor Geary held his annual reception in the Executive mansion at Harrisburg on the evening of the seventh. It is described by the reporters as the most brilliant one he has ever given. His Excellency and lady received their guests in person, and not a few of our readers know from experience how admirably they can do it. One thing more the reporter adds, which is no surprise to those who know the stanchness of our Governor's temperance principles: intoxicating beverages formed no part of the entertainment. "In this and many other respects," he continues, "the standard of the gubernatorial reception has been raised within the past few years." We quote this last as evidence of a public sentiment approving the Governor's course, and as encouragement to others in high places to go and do likewise. For instance, we should like to see the Union League of this city dispense with intoxicating drinks at its banquets. And we earnestly hope that Gen. Grant will closely follow such illustrious examples as those of Lincoln and Geary in the social arrangements of his term of office, keeping as far from the course of his immediate predecessor as possible. Gen. Geary and Reform would be a powerful rallying cry for the friends of Temperance.