

CHAPTER XLVII.

The Sacred Places.

The Haram Esh-Sherif—Herod's Temple—Mosque of Omar—Mosque El-Aksa—Wailing Place of the Jews—*Via Dolorosa*—Church of the Holy Sepulcher—Identity of Site.

THE Haram Esh-Sherif is in the southeast quarter of the modern town, surrounded by walls in which are eight gates. The moment we entered our attention was attracted by two edifices of imposing aspect on the summit of Mount Moriah, which many believe to be the spot where Abraham offered up Isaac, but this belief is not universal among scholars. Probably very near this spot David erected an altar, and the evidence that Solomon built the temple here is almost conclusive; though some place it in the southwest and others in the southeast corner.

Many suppose that the temple stood in the very center, elevated above the surrounding ground upon foundations constructed for that purpose. Not a trace can be discovered of the second temple erected by the Jews after their return from captivity.

I examined the ruins of Herod's temple. On the south side are massive foundations, and in every direction underground excavations have proved that walls existed. Disputes have arisen and continue concerning the site of Solomon's Porch, of which John says: "And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch."

This temple, one of the most magnificent works, adorned with plates of gold, was protected by a castle to the north, from which Titus watched the destruction of the building, over which he is said to have expressed regret. The columns the Jews had already destroyed, but the foundations remain.

So bitter was the animosity between Christians and Jews that when Jerusalem fell into the hands of the Mohammedans,

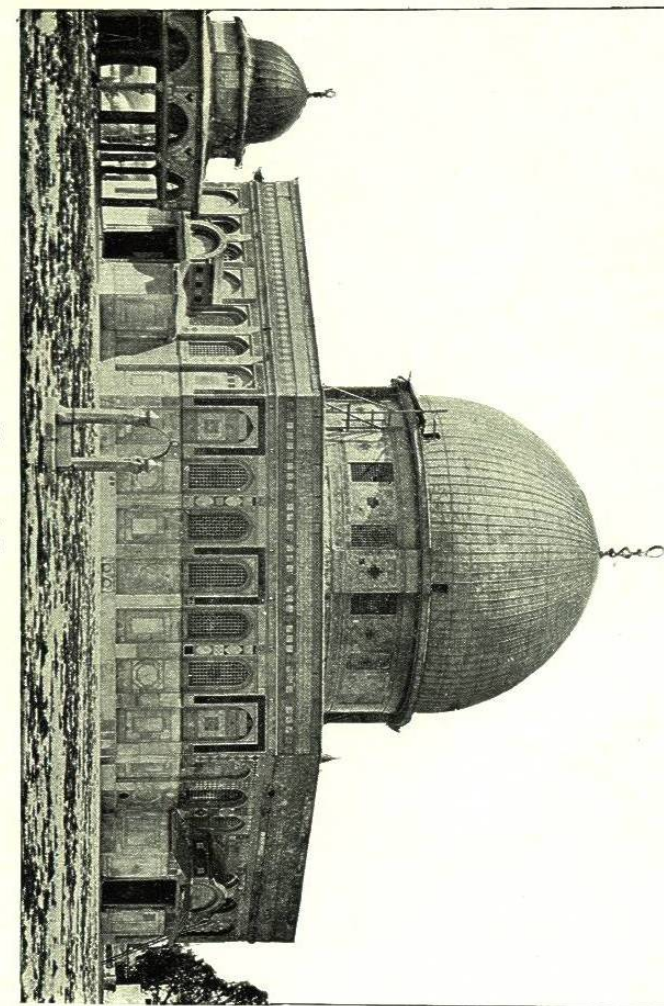
and the Caliph Omar requested the patriarch to conduct him to the spot where the Temple of Solomon stood, he found it covered with rubbish, which the Christians had scattered in contempt of the Jews. Till forty years ago both Jews and Christians were excluded from this whole territory, few exceptions being made. Since then no serious obstruction has been placed in the way of properly accredited explorers.

Mohammedan traditions are numerous. The Koran declares that God conveyed the prophet from the Temple El-Haram, in Mecca, "to the most distant temple whose precincts we have blessed"—that is, the Mosque El-Aksa within this quadrangle—and because Mohammed claims to have been here in person the Mohammedans consider it the holiest of all places after Mecca.

The Mosque of Omar, built over the rock and often spoken of as the Dome of the Rock, is a splendid building, octagonal in shape, each side being sixty-six feet long, having gates facing each of the points of the compass. On entering I gazed about me with awe. The light came dimly through thirty-six stained-glass windows, when suddenly the sun, emerging from a cloud, lighted up the dreadful gloom which oppressed the mind and pained the eye, and the long cloisters appeared. We stood upon a pavement of elegant marble mosaic, and above us rose a dome to a height of ninety feet, having a diameter of sixty-six feet. The walls are covered with tiles of every hue, of priceless value, and the frieze consists of tiles which bear written inscriptions from the Koran. Below these, which were laid three hundred years ago, the building was covered with marble.

Inscriptions in the building definitely state the issue between Mohammedanism and Christianity. These are specimens: "The Messiah, Jesus, is only the Son of Mary, the Ambassador of God and his Word which he deposited in Mary. Believe, then, in God and his Ambassador, and do not maintain that there are three." "Praise be to God who has had no son or companion in his government, and who requires no helper to save him from dishonor; praise him!"

But beyond everything else in interest is the Holy Rock. From early times the Jews have believed that Melchizedek and



Mosque of Omar.

Abraham offered sacrifices here. The Ark of the Covenant stood here, and it is believed to have been hidden by Jeremiah, and to be buried beneath the rock. For ages it was thought to be the central point of the world, and on it was written the great and unspeakable name of God. It is fifty-seven feet long and forty-three wide, and rises six and a half feet above the pavement. The Mohammedan notion is that it hovers over an abyss without support. Descending to the cavern we found that there are various supports, but "the earth rings hollow from below."

The guide showed us the spots where David, Solomon, Abraham, and Elijah were in the habit of praying. According to the Prophet one prayer made in that spot is worth a thousand elsewhere. The claim is that after Mohammed had prayed he was translated to heaven riding on the back of his famous steed, El-Burak. As he went by the directest route, he knocked a hole in the ceiling, which is still pointed out. They affirm that the rock opened its mouth, and so a tongue is depicted over the entrance. Another thing they tell is that the rock made desperate efforts to follow Mohammed to heaven, to prevent which the angel Gabriel held it down, the prints of his hands being plainly visible! The greatest legendary curiosity is a slab of jasper set in the ground in front of the northern entrance. It is alleged that Mohammed drove nineteen golden nails into this; at the end of every great epoch one nail falls out, and the day of judgment will come when the last nail is gone. The time must be near, for the devil succeeded in surreptitiously destroying all the nails but three and a half. The angel Gabriel interfered at that point. I saw that there are but three and a half nails left, and what better proof of the truth of the whole story could one desire? Ancient copies of the Koran, hairs from the beard of Mohammed, and other curiosities may be seen, but not touched.

The Mosque El-Aksa is also a notable building, but is not connected with either Jewish or Christian antiquities. "Solomon's Stables" are singular, being within the precincts of the Haram, and consisting of vaults twenty-seven feet high, standing on a hundred square piers. Whether they date from

the time of Solomon may well be doubted; but, as his palace was near here, "they may have been built upon the ruins of his stables." From the walls of the Haram imposing views are obtained.

On leaving the Haram we went direct to the wailing place of the Jews, the most melancholy spot in this melancholy city. Against this old wall, regardless of the weather, Jews lean, and from time to time kiss the stones and burst into uncontrollable weeping. Here Jews of all nations assemble; on Friday especially and on festival days the number is great. Here they lament over the calamities which have befallen them, and their litany is so beautiful, and expresses so fully their spirit, that I give a specimen:

Leader. For the place that lies desolate :

Response. We sit in solitude and mourn.

L. For the palace that is destroyed :

R. We sit in solitude and mourn.

L. For the walls that are overthrown :

R. We sit in solitude and mourn.

L. For our majesty that is departed :

R. We sit in solitude and mourn.

L. For our great men who lie dead :

R. We sit in solitude and mourn.

L. For the precious stones that are burned :

R. We sit in solitude and mourn.

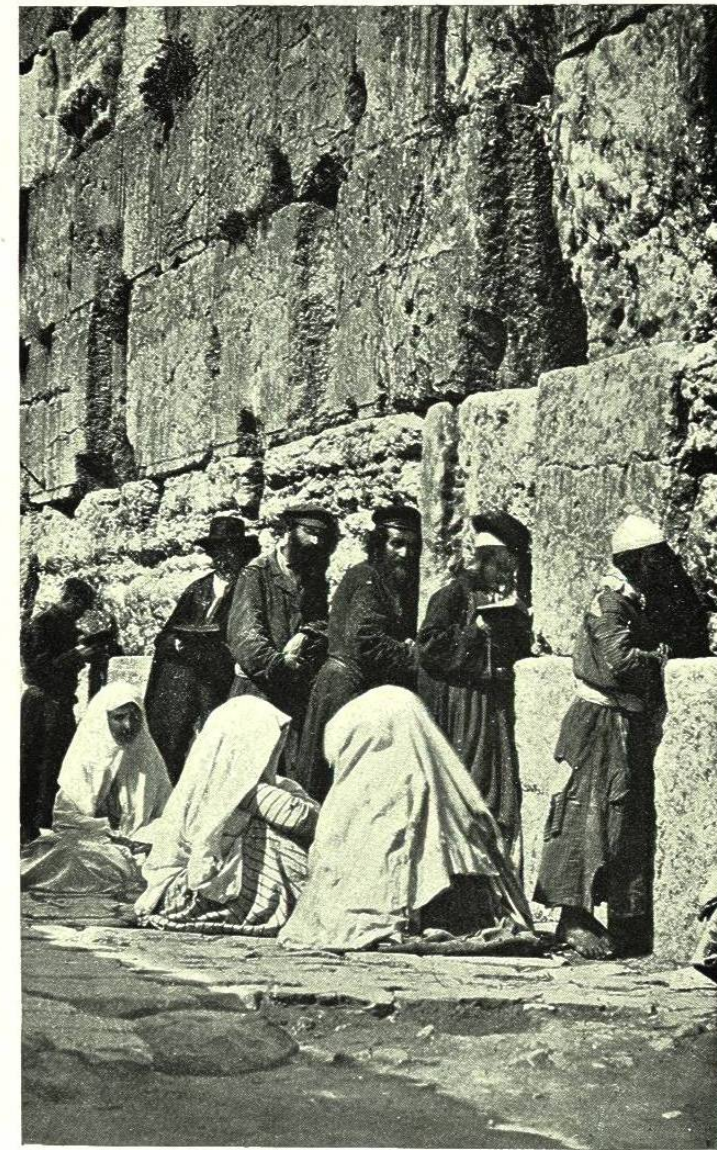
L. For the priests who have stumbled :

R. We sit in solitude and mourn.

L. For our kings who have despised him :

R. We sit in solitude and mourn.

The most profoundly interesting object in Jerusalem is the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. We approached it through the *Via Dolorosa*, "The Way of Grief." Leaving the Garden of Gethsemane, crossing the valley of the Kidron, and ascending the hill, we came to St. Stephen's Gate. The iron doors are open; the guard who stands there is ready to exhibit, for a small fee, a footprint of Christ. Once within the gate we cast a glance at the Church of St. Anne, which was presented to Napoleon III by the Sultan at the close of the Crimean War. It is an old Crusader's church, in good preservation, and under French protection. The Chapel of the Scourging did not de-



Wailing Place of the Jews.

tain us, for the event commemorated has been located in so many different places that we had lost interest in the unimportant question of the site, while more than ever impressed by the fact. Beneath the altar in this chapel is a hole where the "Column of the Scourging" is said to have stood.

At the entrance to the Turkish barracks begins the traditional route over which Christ bore his cross to the place of his crucifixion. It puzzles one to decide how much to say of the myths, legends, conjectures, reasonings, and positive statements of often conflicting authorities, with which this whole region is covered as deep as the original sites must be by the debris of successive destructions.

As our Lord was taken from the Pretorium, the route must depend upon its location; but about the spot there has been endless dispute. In the early Crusades it was placed in the upper part of the town, on the west hill. Afterward it came to be believed that the Turkish barracks, on the site of the Castle of Antonio, are where the Pretorium stood. When that decision was made, the so-called "holy steps," of which much is made in Rome, were taken to the Church of St. John Lateran in that city. Though hundreds of Jews and pilgrims annually walk and weep along this route, from every Catholic and Greek country, it has been established only a few hundred years. We paused at each station, skeptical as to their accuracy, but not destitute of sympathy with the pilgrims, nor without reverence for thoughts awakened by a comparison of the Gospel narrative with the announcements.

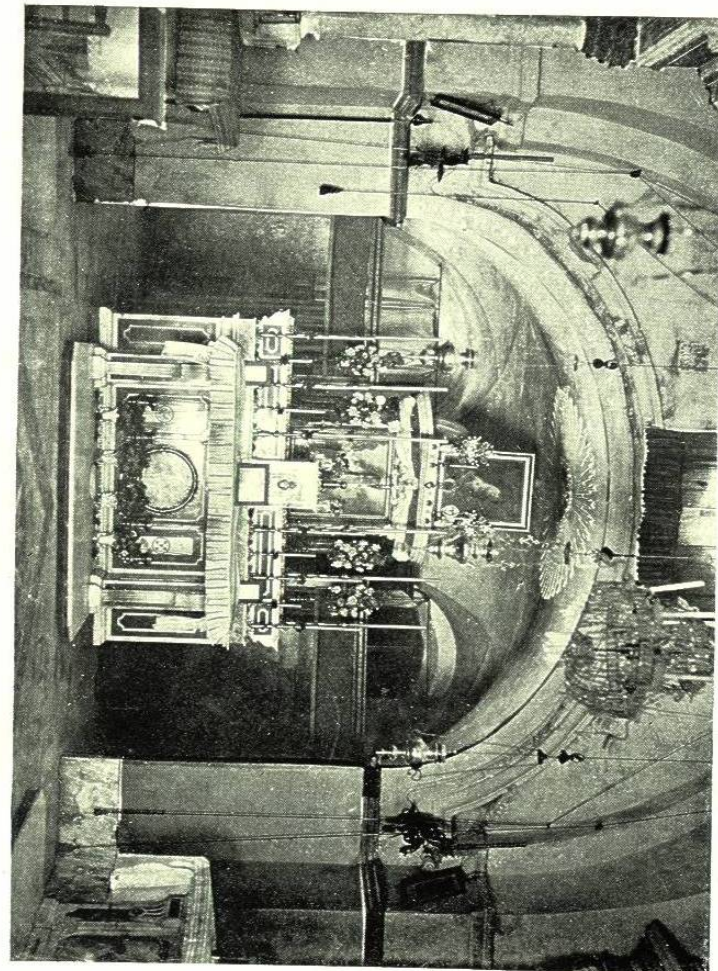
The first regular station is in the chapel of the Turkish barracks, it being claimed that it occupies the site of Pilate's Judgment Hall. The next, a few steps distant, is that of the binding of the cross upon the shoulders of Christ. A little farther is an arch, not one of the regular stations, known by the name of the "Ecce Homo" Arch, and also Arch of Pilate. When Jesus came forth wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robes, Pilate said, "Behold the Man;" this arch, they say, was erected to mark that spot. It is believed that this is a Roman structure of the time of Hadrian. The third station is indicated by a broken column. The preponderance of sentiment connects it with our Lord's sinking

under the weight of the cross. The fourth station is fixed at the place where they teach that Christ met his mother. The fifth is where Simon the Cyrenian is said to have taken the cross from Christ. In the next house there is a stone built into the wall in which is an indentation asserted to have been produced by Christ's shoulder as he leaned against it to rest. The sixth station is near the tomb of St. Veronica. Her bust is carved in stone. This is the spot where she is alleged to have wiped the sweat from the Saviour's brow, and the miracle was wrought whereby his image was indelibly imprinted upon her handkerchief. In the Garden of Gethsemane one of the pictures represents that fanciful scene in a frightfully realistic manner, St. Veronica being shown in the picture holding up her handkerchief with his face upon it. The seventh is known as the Porta Judiciaria. The eighth is placed where Jesus said to the women: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." The ninth station represents Jesus as sinking again under the weight of the cross, notwithstanding Simon was at that time bearing it.

We now reach the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, within which are the five remaining stations. Thomson remarks, in *The Land and the Book*: "That whole street, with all its sacred places, I give up at once, as no plausible evidence can be deduced for the identity of any of its stations." Ancient traditions say that this church covers the site of our Saviour's crucifixion; but powerful considerations seem to prove that it does not. To-day an influential party of explorers, chiefly from the United States, are inclined to locate Golgotha outside the present city walls, near the Tomb of Jeremiah.

We visited the spot and compared it with the Bible narrative. The Scriptures plainly say that Jesus was crucified outside the city. John says: "He . . . went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha." Then follows a description of the title which Pilate put upon the cross, and the gospel says: "This title then read many of the Jews; for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city." The Epistle to the Hebrews says that "He suffered without the gate."

Chapel of the Scourging.



The bulk of evidence shows that the present Church of the Holy Sepulcher is outside the second wall, and therefore outside the city in New Testament times. From the year 326 the uniform tradition of the Christian Church has been that this is the spot. It was based on the history of the Empress Helena, the mother of Constantine, who came to Jerusalem when she was seventy-nine years old, to find the true cross. The legend is that she had definite instructions where to dig. The place was covered with rubbish by the heathen, but after long digging three similar crosses were found at the bottom of a cave. Macarius, the Bishop of Jerusalem, laid two crosses on the sick, which did not make them a whit the better; but when the third was applied to a woman supposed to be at the point of death she was immediately healed. That settled the identity of the cross, and at the same time the Holy Sepulcher was discovered. This is certain, that from 326 till now there has been a continuous chain of belief that in this vicinity the holy events occurred, though the place of the finding of the crosses is not held to be identical with Golgotha.

Dr. Robinson says: "In every view which I have been able to take, both topographical and historical, I am led irresistibly to the conclusion that Golgotha and the tomb now shown in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher are not upon the real places of the crucifixion and the resurrection of our Lord." The arguments in favor of the site near the Tomb of Jeremiah are stated in a pamphlet by Fisher Howe. It is claimed that the isolated skull-shaped hill near the Tomb of Jeremiah, not far from the Damascus Gate, meets all the conditions. It was "without the gate of Jerusalem, nigh unto the city, noticeably skull-shaped, near to one of the leading thoroughfares of the city, eminently conspicuous, nigh unto the gardens and sepulchers." There are other points in the vicinity of Jerusalem which, with the exception of the resemblance of this point to a skull, answer these descriptions. Nor is it certain that the spot where the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the tomb now are is precisely what it was at the time the events commemorated took place.

Visitors to Jerusalem will find the advocates of the respective theories of the location enthusiastic and positive; but the

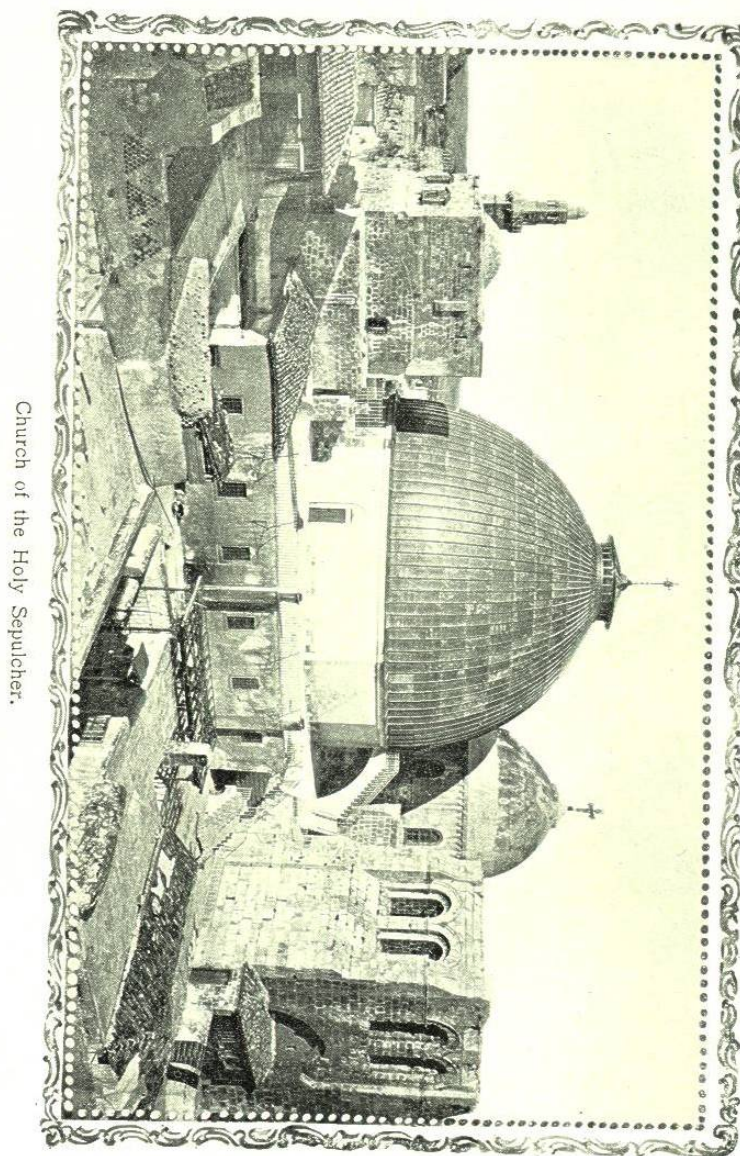
present site has nearly one thousand six hundred years priority of possession, and it is difficult to see how individual opinion, though strong or well-sustained by reasoning, will ever make a change in the general belief of the Christian world concerning the location.

I entered the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in a calm frame, determined to allow the scriptural narratives to have due weight and to observe what the monks had to say, as one might read a work of fiction founded on fact. Several visits are necessary to survey the situation intelligently.

Services are progressing the greater part of the time, and the sound of solemn music falls upon the ear almost continuously, now loud and near, then soft and distant, and again reverberating, in tones of thunder, among the corridors, columns, and chapels.

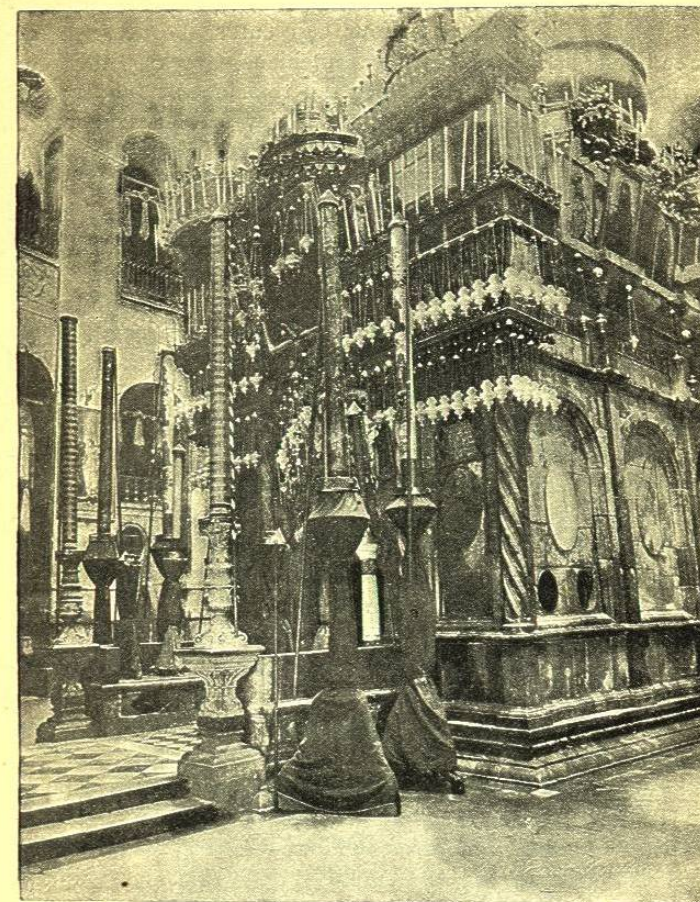
We entered through that part of the church under the control of the Greeks. In the center is a hollow which shows the spot where Abraham attempted to sacrifice Isaac. This has been the tradition for about one thousand three hundred years, before which it was located elsewhere. Not far from this spot is an Armenian Chapel, and next to that a Coptic Chapel of the Archangel Michael; gloomy places. The Greeks have built a chapel, which they call The Chapel of the Egyptian Mary, to commemorate the alleged fact that Mary, an Egyptian, endeavored to enter the church in 374, and some mysterious invisible power drove her away, but she prayed to the Virgin Mary, and was able to resist it. Mary Magdalene is honored by a chapel built upon the place where Christ appeared to her for the third time.

The church and sepulcher extend from east to west; and the first object before which we paused was the Stone of Anointment. This, it is alleged, is the stone on which the body of Jesus lay when it was anointed by Nicodemus, according to the gospel of John. The stone has been moved several times; and the Copts, the Georgians, the Latins, and the Greeks respectively have owned it. The present is a comparatively new stone. For ages the pilgrims measured the stone in order that they might have their winding sheets made of the same length!



Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

For a few centuries the Chapel of the Syrians has been represented to be above the tombs of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Chapels are built to commemorate almost every event in the Gospel history.



Interior of the Holy Sepulcher.

The Holy Sepulcher is in the center of the rotunda beneath the dome. We approached through the Angel's Chapel, a vestibule five or six paces long. In the center is the stone (?)

which the angel rolled away from the mouth of the sepulcher, and on which he sat; it is set in marble. Fifteen lamps constantly burn in this chapel, five belonging to the Greeks, five to the Latins, four to the Armenians, and one to the Copts. The Chapel of the Sepulcher, to which this vestibule leads, is so small that only three or four can enter at once. Forty-three lamps hang there. The Armenians, Greeks, and Latins having thirteen each, the Copts the remainder. The roof is supported by marble columns; every day mass is celebrated, and the marble tombstone used as an altar. Since for a thousand years the natural surface has been covered with marble, no opportunity has been given for the critical examination of modern scholars as to whether there is any probability that a tomb exists. The chief chapel of the Roman Catholics, everywhere in the East called the Latins, is that of the Apparition. There is a chapel in honor of Saint Longinus, erected by the Greeks; but the Latins will not pause before it in their solemn processions. Longinus is claimed to be the soldier who pierced Jesus' side, the myth saying that he had been blind in one eye, but when the blood and water reached that eye he recovered sight, whereupon he repented and became a Christian. The Chapel of the Finding of the Cross is recent. In one of the chapels is an altar dedicated to the memory of the penitent thief, and it was believed, down to within eighty years, that the columns of this chapel shed tears. The Chapel of Adam is supposed to be over his burial place, but an old tradition runneth to the effect that when the Saviour's blood trickled through the cleft in the rock it restored Adam to life.

Previous to the time of the Crusaders there was a chapel over Calvary, but since it has been included within the church. The site of our Lord's crucifixion is covered by the Chapel of the Raising of the Cross. The sites of the crosses of the thieves are in the corners of the outer space, only five feet from the cross of Christ. A cleft in the rock is exhibited, six inches deep, covered with a brass slide. Matthew (xxvii, 51) says: "The earth did quake; and the rocks were rent." All kind of extravagant stories have been told about this cleft; one that it reaches to the center of the earth.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Bethlehem and the Convent of Mar Saba.

An Ancient Guide—"A Vain Thing for Safety"—Tomb of Rachel—Situation and History of Bethlehem—Birthplace of Christ—Church of the Nativity—Tomb of St. Jerome—The Weird Convent of Mar Saba—History—Rules of the Order of Monks.

IN Jerusalem arrangements had been made to secure an excellent guide, and a fine outfit of horses and accouterments for a journey to the principal objects accessible in a few days' ride from the city. At the last moment we were disappointed. The demand for horses for more extensive tours, and for our guide, who had had a previous engagement contingent upon the arrival of a party, which had lost its connections by being carried unexpectedly from Jaffa to Beyroot, compelled us to take what was left. Our guide, therefore, was an ancient man, Moses, a Jew of long—altogether too long—experience in Palestine, Turkey, Armenia, and other parts of the oriental world. He had a good reputation as a man, but was too nearly wornout for the work.

With one exception the horses were such as in America would be employed in carting ashes. Of these the guide had the least bad, Dr. Bancroft the next, and the animal upon which I was placed would by contrast have made the reputation of Don Quixote's "Rozinante" as a noble specimen of the genus *equus*. He was an incomprehensible beast—not fat, yet so broad across the back that my legs were much nearer being at right angles with the trunk than parallel with each other. The saddle thus projected the flaps in such a way that they cut like knives into the calves. But this was not the worst. The animal's motion was neither trot, canter, walk, pace, nor "single foot;" the St. Vitus's dance alone can give an adequate conception of it. Moreover, he stopped at intervals of about two hundred yards. If whipped, he threw back his ears, and pawed the ground. If not whipped, he looked