

CHAPTER LIII.

Shechem, Samaria, Jenin.

Events of Sacred History Connected with Nabulus—The Modern Town—Samaritans—Samaritan Codex of the Pentateuch—Across the Valley of Samaria—Street of Columns—The Plain of Esdraelon—Jenin.

FROM Gerizim we had seen the beautiful valley of Nabulus, and our road now led through it. This is ancient Shechem, also called Sichar, Sicheim, and Sychem. Abraham was the first biblical visitor to the place, and the land was then owned by the Canaanites. Jacob found it in the possession of the Hivites, and governed by Hamor, the father of Shechem. Simeon and Levi took it and murdered every male, for which they were cursed by Jacob on his deathbed. It must have been near here that Joseph was seized by his brethren. Rehoboam and Jeroboam met there and divided the kingdom, and then Shechem became the seat of Jeroboam's government. To Christians it is peculiarly interesting because, after the captivity, the Samaritans made this their sacred place. The woman who drew from Jacob's Well the water for Jesus lived here.

The place has about a thousand Christians, a few Protestant and the others either Latin or Greek; a larger number are Jews, but the majority of the people are Mohammedans. Down to a recent period the town was bitterly intolerant toward Christian visitors, whom they pelted with stones, at the same time crying "*Nozrani!*"

The buildings are solidly built of stone, and some are ornamented; but the streets are dirty and narrow. An extraordinary traffic in soap, the principal ingredient of which is olive oil, is carried on, there being more than twenty manufactories.

In Nabulus dwell all the Samaritans in the world, less than one hundred and fifty. They are of "noble physiognomy" and of magnificent physique. The men would attract attention anywhere by their proportions; and have so little of the Jewish cast that they would not be taken as belonging to that

race. On being introduced to the teacher of the school, a man fully six feet in height, we asked to see the ancient Samaritan Codex of the Pentateuch, one of the oldest manuscripts in the world. The teacher solemnly assured us that he brought it forth, but, having been warned that an attempt is made to palm off a more recent copy upon travelers, we sent for the high priest and tried to ascertain whether we saw the original. In a few moments he acknowledged to Selim that the real original manuscript had not been shown. It was then brought forth and reverently kissed by the Samaritans. They say that it was written by a grandson or great-grandson of Aaron, which must be classed with the instances, so common in the Eastern world, of drawing the long bow. Nevertheless those competent to judge regard it as being nearly two thousand years old.

The high priest is handsome; and, paying him a compliment, we learned that he had his photographs, and was not above selling them. George Eliot, in *Middlemarch*, declares that none are so proud of their photographs, or give artists more trouble, than doctors of divinity who have renounced the world. When it is considered that a stock trade is done by photographers in Great Britain and the United States in pictures of ministers and of bishops in their prelatical robes; that peddlers of photographs of the successful revivalist follow him in his spiritual labors, and that a snug sum is derived from their sale, I will say nothing against this man, who, so far as personal beauty is concerned, had a better reason for putting his photographs upon the market than a majority of those who find so much pleasure in it.

A peculiarity of the Samaritans is scrupulous cleanliness. We were curious to see Jacob, a Samaritan who visited England a few years ago, and was suspected of dealing in false antiquities. He came forth, and was ingratiating in manner and of splendid physique. His countenance was indicative of high intellectuality; he spoke English, and is said to be learned in other modern languages.

A pleasant incident was the glimpse we had of the Samaritan children, for it is seldom that one can see the entire rising generation of an historic people.

The Samaritans fought against the Jews, Christians, and the Roman emperors. In the sixth century they were numerous and dangerous, and Justinian dispatched a great army against them. Some fled to Persia and others became Christians. For a long time after that they are not mentioned in history. There were a thousand of them in the twelfth century, but since then they have diminished to about one hundred and fifty, averaging three to a family. They believe in the Pentateuch, reject the rest of the Scriptures, worship one God, and hate idols. Three times a year they make a pilgrimage to the top of Mount Gerizim. At the Feast of the Passover they offer sacrifices. A Samaritan, when performing any service in the synagogue at Nablus, looks in an oblique direction toward Mount Gerizim; and from that point the feet of successive generations of Samaritans, from the time of Nehemiah until now, have worn a path to the summit of the mountain.

They are as antagonistic to the Jews as were their fathers. Some day they will be reduced to one or two, who will have a fortune in that ancient manuscript of the Pentateuch, and probably in future ages it will repose in the British Museum, or some other endowed repository of antiquities.

I bought in Nablus some sesame, grain much cultivated in the East, resembling oats, and often spoken of in oriental legends. In the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, in the story of "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," when Cassim was in the cave, he forgot the magic words which alone would open the door. Vainly he tried "Open, wheat," "Open, barley." "Sesame" he could not recall, and so died for his curiosity and cupidity.

Nablus stands on the great divide, and we saw brooks running eastward toward the Jordan, and westward toward the Great Sea. It took us nearly three hours to cross the charming valley which had been so long in sight. Then we began to ascend the hill of Samaria. The First and Second Books of Kings give an account of the history of this place, until the prophet Hosea declares that Samaria shall become desolate. The New Testament contains its apostolic history. Philip preached there. There was long a rivalry between Nazareth and Samaria; as the former increased the latter declined, and

is now a miserable place, but retains indications of its former grandeur. Tradition represents that John the Baptist, Obadiah, and Elisha were buried there. We went down into the Tomb of John the Baptist, and saw a stone door less than four feet high, said to be the door of St. John's prison. Josephus, however, says that John was not imprisoned there, but in a castle on the Dead Sea. St. Jerome is the first author whose works have come down to modern times who speaks of John the Baptist being buried there. On a point like this, I should be inclined to believe Josephus rather than any later writer, unless the latter could prove by contemporary evidence that the former had fallen into error.

A street of columns, of which a hundred whole or broken remain, with the ruins of others, was interesting. The original colonnade was about three fifths of a mile long. Some of the columns are buried beneath the soil. As Thomson says: "The entire hill is covered with rubbish, indicating existence and repeated destruction of a large city."

We rode rapidly across the plain to the place of encampment; but what a view burst upon us when we ascended a hill from which stretched away the plain of Esdraelon! About us were the gardens of Samaria, the place to which we descended to camp being on the boundary between those mountains and the plain. The path passed near the ruins of Dothan, where Joseph came seeking his brethren, and they sold him to the Ishmaelites. Elisha the prophet lived here, and Benhadad surrounded him with horses and chariots in order to capture him.

Before reaching Jenin we went through another of those glens famous as a stronghold of robbers. The traditions of many resemble wonderfully the tales of the robber castles and bands on the Rhine.

Jenin was one of the ancient boundaries between Samaria and Galilee. Beautiful gardens and clear springs abound there, but "we could tarry but a night."

CHAPTER LIV.

Jezreel, Nain, and the Cave of the Witch of Endor.

Figs and Palms—Jezreel—A Bedouin Camp—Dogs in Palestine—Fountain of Gideon—The Beautiful Village of Shunem—Caravan Route—Nain—An Elderly Appearing Boy—Endor and its Tragic History—Cave of the Witch.

It was at the time of young figs, and we saw them in the groves of Samaria as plentiful as peaches in a fine season in the orchards of Delaware. No one who sees only the fig of commerce, packed and pressed, can form a correct idea of the appearance of the young fruit. Its greenness is a shade peculiar to itself; its shape somewhat like that of a small gourd. The stunted palms at Jenin reminded us of the scenes of Egypt; but the palm tree generally in Palestine is inferior to those found where the climate is more uniform.

From Jenin we went across the great plain of Esdraelon to Jezreel, now known as Zerin. This plain has several names: Jezreel (Hebrew), Esdraelon (Greek), the valley of Armageddon, spoken of in the Revelation of St. John, where Gog and Magog, figuratively used, are to fight a battle. It begins at the Mediterranean, between the head of Carmel on the south and Acre on the north, extending across Palestine to the river Jordan. On the north are the mountains of Lebanon, on the south those of Samaria.

It is equal to the smoothest lawns of the finest parks of the world, and has an average breadth of twelve miles. Over it wander marauding Arabs, so that there is little cultivation. This plain was a battlefield from the time of Barak to Napoleon. In 1868 the Bedouins were expelled, but within fifteen years they have once or twice overrun the plain. It will soon be extensively cultivated, and we saw the beginnings of several improvements. Storks and cranes were sailing majestically over our heads, or settling on projections, but scarcely a house was to be seen in the whole plain, except in the villages.

At Zerin we had a fine view. Near there is the field which Ahab wrested from Naboth, and there Jezebel lived. In the distance, through a romantic cleft in the hills, Mount Carmel and Nazareth appeared. Here Saul fought for the last time against the Philistines, and committed suicide.

Seeing a Bedouin camp near Jezreel, I went with Selim to look into it. They had several dogs, and one with an appearance of ferocity quite terrifying came out to attack us. As he approached and became irritating, our dragoman stooped and picked up a stone. Such a transition I never saw. Fancy a panther about to spring, each muscle stretched to its utmost tension, the mouth wide open, every tooth visible, the eyes red and almost leaping from their sockets; in a second the same animal cowed, its tail between its legs, its ears drooping, every muscle relaxed, moving away, and in another instant in a half-shamefaced way snuffing the ground as if nothing had happened. Selim said that all dogs in Palestine are afraid of a man, unless the man is afraid of the dog.

The Bedouin tents are protected on the stormy, but open on the pleasant side. The women were scantily clad. In one tent lay several children and dogs asleep side by side. The whole aspect was that of indolence, stupidity, animalism. They were the lowest sort of wandering Bedouins, and, had I been alone, would have fallen upon me, stripped me, and left me more than half dead.

From Zerin it is a short distance to the Fountain of Gideon, where the three hundred picked men lapped the water with their tongues as a dog lappeth; and we were within twenty minutes' walk of the spot where the cry was raised, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

We made our way to Sulem, the Shunem of the Bible. It is the prettiest small village in Palestine, is surrounded by a hedge of prickly pears, and near beautiful groves of lemon, orange, and citron trees. The traveler may tell of groves, but no proper impression of their beauty can be obtained till seen. This was the home of the Shunammite woman, and here Elisha raised her child from the dead. Sulem is full of beehives, and never did honey gatherers

have finer pasturage than the flowery plain of Esdraelon affords.

We saw the caravan route from Jerusalem to Egypt, traversed from long before David's time until now by an almost ceaseless procession. From our elevated view point upon the slope of the hill Moreh, near which the Midianites encamped the day before they were overthrown by Gideon, we could see several caravans winding slowly along; no better illustration of the old English phrase, "wending their way," could be imagined.

We traveled for two or three miles after passing Shunem in a northeasterly direction, leaving the hills on the left. The plain is well watered, and from time to time the road crossed small streams, conducting us finally to Nain, the scene of one of the most pathetic incidents in the New Testament.

This sacred site is on the slope of Little Hermon, around which we had traveled to reach it, and from its position commands a charming and instructive view. The place is insignificant and dirty, disfigured by heaps of rubbish and unromantic ruins, and has but a small population. On the west are ancient rock sepulchers. "Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her." To the Christian world this circumstance makes the otherwise obscure and worthless village a place of pilgrimage, a scene of interest, and a suggestion of divinity and immortality.

As we entered, a boy, gayly dressed, ran along by the side of our horses, singing in a clear voice and in excellent English: "Jesus loves me, this I know." He did not beg, but accosted us with familiarity, yet without presumption. His complexion was dark, and his face covered with the incipient down that we connect with eighteen or twenty years of masculine age in this country. I asked him his age, and he said "eleven years." Dr. Bancroft declined to believe that he was telling the truth, whereupon up sprang an argument between us concerning the probability of it, the doctor declaring that in his opinion no boy eleven years old ever lived as large and apparently as mature as this boy. I maintained

that I had seen some fully his equal. Not long afterward we had an opportunity to ask a woman who knew him his age. She hesitated, the boy addressed her in Arabic, and she said in that tongue to the dragoman: "He is eleven years of age." As I was about to rejoice, Dr. Bancroft asked the dragoman what the boy had said in Arabic. The answer came: "He told her to say that he was eleven." So the case remained unsettled. He told us, what we had no reason to doubt, that he learned English in a school in Jerusalem. This elderly boy adhered to us until we left, singing from time to time, "Jesus loves me;" whatever his age may have been, he was as peculiar a specimen of human nature as we met.

Nain has this advantage over many other sites of Scripture events: there is no doubt about its identity; and it is so situated that the very spot where the miracle was wrought is certain. There is a Greek church, commemorating the raising of the young man, which we found some difficulty in entering. It was at that time kept closed on account of trouble between the Greek patriarch in Jerusalem and the priest in charge, the latter having been removed.

From this scene of New Testament history, a ride of less than an hour down into the plain, across it, and over some rocky elevations, conducted us to the location of several tragic incidents of the Old Testament.

The authenticity of the site of Endor is practically undisputed. The consecutive history of the place identifies it, references to it being so frequent that tradition has never divided.

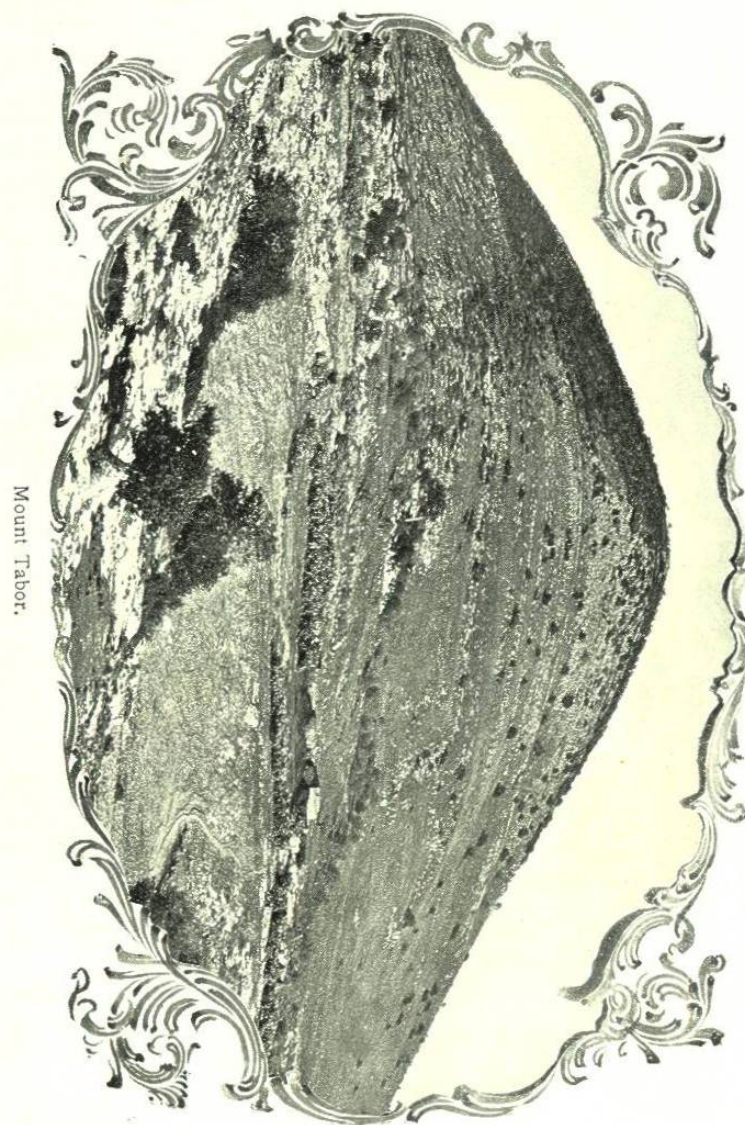
This is the probable site of the battle between Barak, Deborah, Sisera, and his host. Barak was encamped opposite on Mount Tabor. As Sisera and his host approached, a fearful storm raged. Barak swept down upon them and drove them back into the river Kishon, full of marshes and swamps. We had seen enough in Palestine to show us how this small brook in a few hours might become a river, "forming marshes and quicksands, into which one's horses sink knee-deep." As Barak's force pushed them, their nine hundred chariots of iron fled before him and his ten thousand men, and the next day Deborah sang the song of victory: "They fought from

heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength." Sisera leaped from his chariot, and wandered across the country in search of his tents, and Jael slew him.

It was to this spot that Saul came years afterward to consult the woman forever to be known as "The Witch of Endor." The mountain of Gilboa, at whose base Saul was encamped, was not such a situation as to encourage him with the hope of success against the mighty armies which the Philistines had gathered; for they were above him. God had refused to answer Saul, and, led by his men, he resorted to the most celebrated witch of the time, who had maintained herself against his order that all such professed dealers in spirits should be destroyed out of the land. To reach her he had to travel about ten miles, for the Philistine camp was between his camp and Endor, and to reach the village he had to go around to the eastward of the hill Moreh, upon which we had been traveling.

I have seen attempts in prose and poetry to paraphrase the Bible narrative of this visit, but in simplicity and vividness, as a mere work of art, it immeasurably surpasses the best of them.

Endor is named from Dor, a spring. It is the dirtiest place that we saw in all Palestine, and the children are among the filthiest, and as much inclined to make nuisances of themselves as those in Egypt, crowding upon us like wild animals. In the hillsides are caverns, but only one seemed at all suited for the abode of a human being. It has an opening out of which smoke could pass, and is a cow stable; tradition points it out as the home of the witch, and subsequently inhabited for ages by human beings. We stood in the cave and recalled the narrative of the scene, and only needed a "secret, black, and midnight hag" brewing a charm within, and a giant, feeble, trembling, starving, worn with anxiety, with two men, climbing up the hill, and distant encampments, to typify the unavailing efforts of desperation.



Mount Tabor.

CHAPTER LV.

Tabor and Nazareth.

Views Ascending—From the Summit—Ruins—Vesper Music in the Russian Convent Chapel—Strange Flowerpots—Lost in a Forest—Nazareth—Population—Buildings—Mary's Well—Mounts of Precipitation—*Reliques of the Christ.*

RIDING for an hour and a half across the plain from the cave of the Witch of Endor brought us to the foot of Mount Tabor. It was nearly sundown, and a council was held to determine whether we could ascend, descend, and reach the place of encampment before overtaken by darkness; but, the sky being clear, it was decided to make the attempt. Tabor is the most symmetrical of the mountains of Palestine, and the zigzag path gives a succession of fine views. The summit is only two thousand and eighteen feet above the Mediterranean, and it is but a little over a thousand above the plain.

From it we caught the first glimpse of the Sea of Tiberias; and saw the battlefield of Barak and Sisera, Mount Carmel, the far-off mountains of the Hauran covered by tall oaks of Bashan, and towering above all, as Mont Blanc above the other Alps, was imperial Hermon, the one snow-clad mountain.

Tabor is covered with ruins, and there are several monasteries upon it. For some time after reaching the top we did not see a human being, but as we drew near the Russian convent the sweetest strains of music fell upon our ears, and hastening in we found three sisters engaged in the evening worship. No one was in the chapel except the janitor and these women. Apart from the surroundings, and without reference to the spell which they would naturally throw over everything, we agreed that we had seldom heard sweeter music. The soprano was birdlike; the contralto almost as deep as a basso. The Russians do not allow instrumental music; the large chapel nearly empty gave an apparent strength to their voices which,

had the doors been closed, might have produced unpleasant echoes; but these being open, the music in that pure air was entrancing. So excellent was the discipline of the nuns, or so absorbed were they in their devotions, that they did not, so much as cast a glance at us, though we tarried until the long service was finished.

Upon the roof of one of the monasteries were long rows of flowerpots. There is not a conjuror, who had not an opportunity of ascertaining the facts from some human being, who could conjecture from what those pots were made. Great is America! They were Pratt's Astral Oil cans, which illuminating fluid is used in various parts of the oriental world.

It is possible that Tabor was selected for beauty and Carmel for majesty, as well as for the points of the compass. "As I live, saith the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts, Surely as Tabor is among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea, so shall he come."

It was believed for ages that Tabor was the scene of the transfiguration, and as early as the sixth century the pilgrims erected three churches here. The scene of the transfiguration is now generally placed at a long distance from this point, though within a short time a strong tendency has appeared to return to the ancient tradition.

It was now nearly dark, and the descent was made as rapidly as possible. Soon after reaching the base, and passing through an olive orchard, we plunged into a dense forest, which the few lingering rays of the sun could not penetrate. Absolute darkness encompassed us. We continually lost our way and had difficulty and conflicts of judgment in finding it. An eccentric individual, named Hobib, who joined us at Jenin, had been over the route several times, but became confused and was so terrified as to be of little assistance. Meanwhile the whimperings and finally the howls of jackals made the night hideous. These whimperings are so peculiar that, on hearing them from the elevated height far above us, I said: "We are not far from a house; listen to those children." But in less than five minutes we knew that they were not human voices. At last Hobib became so terrified and so certain that we were lost, that Selim essayed to obtain informa-

tion from a house, the light of which we saw in the distance. A dialogue was carried on in Arabic, and we obtained sufficient directions to put us in the right road, and about ten o'clock entered the sacred city of Nazareth.

A new difficulty then presented itself. The camp was not where Selim expected to find it, nor were there any people about the streets to direct us. But after much wandering and several inquiries at houses, some of which owing to the lateness of the hour were not answered pleasantly, and our movements being watched and howled at by a number of dogs, we reached the camp.

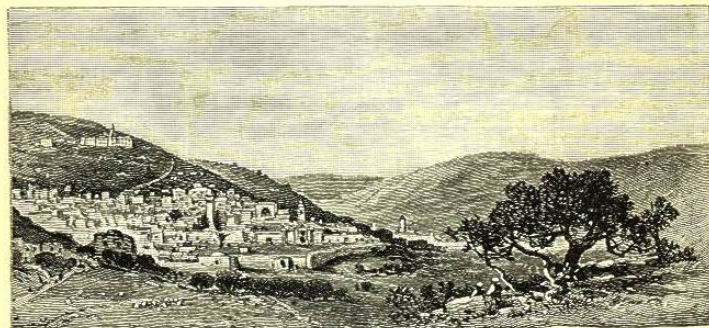
Hobib, before leaving, presented us with a letter, which is here printed exactly as spelled in the document. It is a mixture of oriental shrewdness and simplicity. The frankness with which the signers state their desire to connect preaching with living in this world and "rest in their minds;" their invocations of the divine blessing; and their Uriah Heap-like humility are as remarkable as the orthography:

"To our Dear Brethern & Sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ. As we have the liberty to write you this petation to your mercy ful that we both are brethern from the Holy City Jerusalem and we are brought up in the English School of Pishop Gobat and after lefting the school we dwelt in Nablous which is called Schkem and one of us is born from his mothers womp in one hand and his wife from 3 months ago she left this world and now he has no pusnes enorder to get his daly food and he has 3 sons in the Latan School and the other Brother his handwark Shewmaker and in this Contry his work is not enough for mantaning us we two and therefore we thaught in our minds to explain to you our own history to be plained to your mercyfully hoping from your great kindness and from the Lord Jesus to put his strong feeling in your harts enorder to take us in any part of Europe by putting us in any wark or in a College to learn that by and by may we be able to preach the world of God amongst the peoble and be rest in our minds and in our living in this wark and the last of our peseeging you if our desire will not be fullfild we hope from your great mercy as to help us in any kind of favour by giving us some money help

to our food because we are nedy and who do mercy with us
God may keep in his going and comming and be with him from
all any harm and give him at last the enharitans of the King-
dom of heaven your most opedent humble servent

“John and Hobib the
“Sons of Micheel Doorsy.”

Nazareth rivals Bethlehem in the devotion of pilgrims, and
surpasses it in connection with the life of Christ. It was to a



Nazareth.

city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man
whose name was Joseph, that the angel Gabriel was sent from
God. From Nazareth Joseph went up to Bethlehem to be
taxed with Mary, his espoused wife. Thence, being warned
of God in a dream, they fled to Egypt, and after the return
resumed their former abode in Nazareth. There Jesus dwelt
until he entered upon his ministry, and so it was fulfilled which
was spoken by the prophet: “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

It was from Nazareth that he went to be baptized of John
in the Jordan when he was beginning his public ministry. He
then returned “to Nazareth, where he had been brought up;”
but, though he returned unto his own, his own received him
not. So he left that city and went to Capernaum and other
places, going back to Nazareth once more, nearly a year later.
But the people with whom he had lived twenty-eight years be-
came enraged as he expounded the Scriptures in their syna-

gogue, 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.”

Never afterward, as far as can be learned from the New
Testament, did he visit the place.

From most points of view Nazareth seems far up upon the
summit of a mountain, but it is really on the side and sur-
rounded by hills, which “seem as if they had met to form an
inclosure.” Stanley counted fifteen, which he describes as
gently rounded. When we were there they were covered with
rich grass, and nothing more charming can be found in Ver-
mont or in the lake districts of England than these green hills.

The views from the streets of Nazareth are beautiful.
Glimpses are to be obtained of every part of the ground over
which we had traveled, and of expanses which we were yet to
explore. From the hills above the city we saw Tabor, Her-
mon, and Carmel, and enjoyed a fine view of the Mediterra-
nean Sea. In ancient times its population was rough and a
terror to surrounding villages. The proverb which fell from
the lips of Nathanael, “Can any good thing come out of Naz-
areth?” finds its explanation in its wild mountain situation
and the corresponding strength and ferocity of its inhabitants.

We were here in the town in which Jesus lived for more than
a quarter of a century, amid that half-savage population, iso-
lated, obscure, quiet. So little is told of him that a single
page might contain it all.

We had arrived at the time to behold nature in its brightest
hue. The fig and olive trees, the cactus hedges, and all the
flowers of spring wore their most beautiful garments. Fine
opportunities for studying the different classes of population
were afforded by the fact that the town is divided into three
quarters—one devoted to the Latins, another to the Greeks,
and the other to the Mohammedans. The Turkish officials
put the population at ten or twelve thousand; others declare
that there are not more than six thousand, and divide them
thus: 2,000 Mohammedans, 2,500 Orthodox Greeks, 800 Lat-
ins, 100 Protestants, and two or three hundred of other sects.
The Jews are so few in number as not to receive enumeration.
We did not see more than five or six.

The largest buildings are the Latin monastery and hospital. The Church of the Annunciation is within the monastery. Between the altars are steps leading to the Chapel of the Annunciation, where is this Latin inscription: "*Hic Verbum Caro Factum Est*" (Here the Word was made flesh). The places are indicated thus: There is a round column called the column of Gabriel. This is supposed to mark the spot where the angel stood. Eighteen inches distant, hanging from the ceiling, is a fragment of a column which is said to be miraculously supported, and to distinguish the spot where the Virgin sat when she received the communication of the angel. Here also is the spot where the house of the Virgin is said to have stood. According to the claim of the Roman Catholics, the house is in Loretto, Italy. The tradition is that on May 10, 1291, angels carried off the building to prevent the Mohammedans, who had captured the city, from profaning it. They took it first to Tersato, in Dalmatia; there it remained some years, and was then taken to Loretto. In 1471 the Church accepted the miracle and officially confirmed it. As the Latins cannot pretend to possess the house, they show the rock on which it rested. Stanley makes a dispassionate examination of the question, and shows that no pilgrim who visited Nazareth from the fourth to the sixteenth century alludes to any house of Joseph as standing or having been there within human memory, that the records in Italy contain no mention of it till the fifteenth century. He then confronts it, as it stands at Loretto, with the place as it appears at Nazareth, showing that the house in Italy, being 36 x 17, could not possibly have stood there, and that if it did stand where they say it did, it "would have closed up with blank walls the very passages by which alone the communication could be effected." He concludes that it is the most incredible of all ecclesiastical legends, and apologizes for attempting any detailed refutation of it because of the pathetic devotion of the Italian people.

The Roman Catholics also show us the workshop of Joseph; it has only been about two hundred years since the story arose. They claim to have the table on which Christ dined with his apostles both before and after the resurrection; it is a block of chalk eleven and a half feet long and nine and a half feet broad.

At the other end of the town is the Church of the Annunciation of the Greeks, and this in all probability, is in the right place, for the most ancient tradition is that the angel accosted Mary as she was drawing water.

There is but one spring of importance in Nazareth, and that from the earliest times has been called Mary's Well. It is near the Greek Church of the Annunciation. We came upon that well unexpectedly, and saw pilgrims bathing their eyes and heads, and many Nazarene women drawing water. Nothing in all Palestine is more certain than that the mother of Jesus, with her infant son, went to and from that spring. Nor is anything much more probable than that the scene which we witnessed was in all essential particulars similar to that which daily took place at the same abundant spring in all the years of Christ's life there.

The gardens of Nazareth are beautiful and kept constantly green by the use of water from the spring. Mary's Well, take it all in all, is the most beautiful and touching relic of Christ which the city affords. It is more than likely that our Lord's daily experience with that ever-flowing stream suggested the frequent references to wells of water springing up into everlasting life; for it was his custom to draw symbols of spiritual truth from the natural scenery with which he had been familiar.

The most darkly tragical of the reminiscences is the determination of the mob of his fellow-townsmen (who could not bear either his spiritual claims or his elevation) to cast him headlong over the cliff. We made no journeys to the different sites of supposed Mounts of Precipitation. We could see several from the city: though some one must have been meant, and at the time was preeminently appropriate and accessible, there are so many, any of which might have served the purpose, that no idea resting upon any probable basis can be formed. The Maronites have built a church near a hill which, in the opinion of some critics, is a much more likely place than the one generally pointed out, near which we passed when riding around the mountain of Endor.

I approached Nazareth with a spirit of hunger for something unmistakably connected with the life of Christ, a desire

beautifully described in a poem to be found in a little book, called *Reliques of the Christ*, written by Dr. Denis Wortman:

"I wonder if in Nazareth,
By heedless feet o'errun,
There lingers still some dear relique
Of work by Joseph's Son;
Some carved thought, some tool of toil,
Some house with stones grown gray,
A home he built who had not where
His weary head to lay.

"I visit Nazareth, ask each man,
Each mound, each stone, each wind;
'I pray ye, help some precious trace
Of your great Builder find;'
Alas! ye listeners to my plaint,
The startled silence saith:
'What once was false, is now too true—
No Christ in Nazareth!'"

While it is true, so far as any work of his hands there is concerned, there is nothing to satisfy the longing of the Christian, still one does not carry a dissatisfied feeling away, for he finds what he desires in the place itself. Nazareth never was a large place; the situation rendered it impossible. Walking, as we did, through all the streets and around the suburbs, over every point, our feet must have pressed the very spots over which he walked; but even that needs spiritualizing to make it preeminently strengthening to faith. It is not that the Bible relates so faithfully the facts of nature in Palestine that makes it a book for the soul, but that it describes man and supplies his deepest needs. As we take leave of Nazareth, where memories crowd so thickly upon us, and where, because much has been expected, there may be a feeling of vague disappointment that more is not found, we cannot do better than to quote another stanza of the poem above referred to, which has in it the exultant triumph of faith over sight:

"But, O my soul, why thus cast down?
A truer Nazareth scan;
What if thou find no time-spoiled work
Of Christ, the Son of man?"

Joy yet to thee! lift up thy head!
Cast raptured gaze abroad,—
See in this vast Christ-built world
Signs of the Son of God."

As we began to strike tents in the morning a motley crowd assembled, watching until we departed. The arrival, movements, and departure of travelers furnished the chief amusement of the idlers and urchins of Nazareth. Several tribes were represented in the crowd, and some of the children were bright, pleasing in appearance, less boisterous than European children, and more graceful and winning in manner than most who have an eye to reward. They could beg without seeming to do so, and the lowest were content to get the food which the cook would otherwise have thrown away. Nowhere did we receive so much attention from spectators.