

JERUSALEM TO-DAY.*

THIS is a book of remarkable interest. The first edition was the first English illustrated book printed in Jerusalem. It is the result of several years' residence in that city, and tells so frankly of Turkish mismanagement and incompetency that all discoverable copies were confiscated by the Government, and the author banished from Palestine.

Mr. Lees describes the Jerusalem of to-day and reconstructs the Jerusalem of the remote past. The Holy City is a strange mingling of the modern and the ancient. The scream of the iron horse is heard at the Jaffa Gate, where still sits the tax-collector at the receipt of customs, like Matthew of old. The permanent population of Jerusalem, our author states, is 57,000, of whom 4,000 are Greeks, nearly as many Roman Catholics, 600 Armenians, 400 Protestants, 400 Syrians, Abyssinians and Copts, 40,000 Jews and 8,000 Moslems.

Although Jerusalem has three Sabbaths—Friday for Moslems, Saturday for Jews, and the day following for Christians—yet there is no day of rest for man or beast. The city is governed, or mis-governed, by a Turkish Pasha and a sort of council of nine Moslems, one Christian and one Jew. Tradesmen generally employ their own watchmen, sturdy Soudanese, to guard their dwellings. The army varies from about eight to fifteen hundred, entirely conscripts, "the Sultan's Children," so-called. They are recruited by force, brought into the city, tied together by a rope, "and serve the Commander of the Faithful with commendable zeal, worth at any rate more than two medgidiehs (six-and-eightpence) a year unpaid."

The Moslems look upon the Christians with disdain, and the Jews with undisguised contempt. The Jews

have sunk to a degrading depth of superstition. Their sacrifice on the Day of Atonement is known among the people as "The Feast of the Chickens," when they twist the necks of young fowls for the sin offering and the cleansing of the people as set forth in Leviticus xvi. On the feast of Purim, according to the Talmud, every man must drink so much wine that he cannot distinguish between a Jew and a Persian. In the synagogue, when "the Book of Esther" is read and the name of Haman occurs, the congregation stamp their feet and shout, "Let his name be blotted out." The children shake rattles, provided by their parents, and knock against the walls with wooden hammers.

In the daily life of the people superstition runs riot. The very day on which their nails should be cut is detailed in one of their rabbinical books, and Thursday and Friday are entirely forbidden, in order that the nails may not break the law by beginning to grow on the Sabbath, such are the puerilities observed by the modern Jews in the city of their ancient devotion.

Under certain circumstances a Jew may have two wives, and the present chief Rabbi of Jerusalem sets the example. At the time the marriage contract is signed it is possible to take out a paper of divorcement, and for the two together a discount is allowed. If a man is so minded, a badly-cooked dinner is a fit and proper excuse for getting rid of his wife. He gives her the paper bought from the Rabbi and tells her to go. Our author speaks, let us hope with exaggeration, of the "inevitable divorce." It surely cannot be so bad as that!

Of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, to rescue which untold thousands of lives have been sacrificed,

* *Jerusalem Illustrated*. By G. ROBINSON LEES, F.R.G.S. With a preface by BISHOP BLYTH. Newcastle-on-Tyne: Mawson, Swan & Morgan. Toronto: William Briggs. 70 Illustrations. Price, \$2.10.