

of the world, thinking that thereby they will please God, and entitle themselves to his peculiar favour. An intelligent Protestant worshipper may visit Jerusalem or Bethlehem from a very natural and even sacred curiosity. But he will never go to these "holy places" as if there was any religion in the pilgrimage. But Greeks, Papists, and Armenians are constantly crowding to the Convent of the Nativity at Bethlehem, and to the church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. The following account of the church of the Nativity, by Dr. Kitto, who visited these holy places, is one of the most distinct you can find within a narrow compass:—

"The church contained in this fortress-convent was built by the mother of Constantine, the empress Helena—so many monuments of whose zeal are still extant in the Holy Land. It is a magnificent structure, though now in a neglected and semi-ruinous state. It is thirty-four paces long, and forty broad, ornamented with forty-eight monolith columns of the Corinthian order, arranged in four rows of twelve columns each. The columns are about two and a half feet in diameter, by more than twenty in height. The church was once richly adorned with paintings and mosaics, of which only a few mutilated fragments remain. The pavement is out of repair. The roof is of timber, (said to be cedar of Lebanon, but doubted), and the naked, rough pavement which it supports has an effect so bad and so incongruous, as to suggest that it must be a restoration rendered necessary by some casualty, and made in adverse days. In fact, the church is now little other than an outer court or thoroughfare, through which entrance is gained to the smaller churches and the apartments of the convent. Formerly, the sects which claimed interest in the place, had the use of the church by turns, and then it was kept in good order; but as this bred interminable quarrels among them, it was concluded to enclose certain parts as chapels for the separate and exclusive use of each:

thus, the church being built in the form of a Latin cross, the nave is deserted, but the Greeks have appropriated the choir to their separate use; and the Latins and Armenians have each a wing of the transept. They still, however, have the use of the cave of the nativity, and other consecrated spots, according to an established order; and although one might suppose the difference between the old and the new style, by giving to them different terms for the celebrations of Christmas, would prevent occasion of collision, the feuds of petty rivalries which are maintained among them are most disgraceful to the Christian name which they bear, and distressful to the European travellers who visit the place. The Latin, or Roman Catholic, portion is the smallest, but is the most richly adorned, and it possesses the only organ to be found in Palestine.

"The most holy place—the sanctuary—the final object of all these arrangements, is a small cavern, in which it is asserted that the Saviour of the world was born. This lies under the Greek chapel; but the entrance to which is through a door on the southern side of that of the Armenians; whence, by a flight of marble steps, one descends into an irregular apartment, which we are taught to regard as the stable in which the Virgin gave birth to "her first-born son." Its character as a stable, and even as a grotto, is quite concealed by the ornaments and decorations with which, in awfully bad taste, it has been overlaid, to the entire disguise of its real character. It is a long, narrow, and rather low room, fitted up and much occupied for religious worship. Its original features are quite concealed by the marbles, embroidered hangings, gold lamps, and other adornments, which shock and discourage the belief they were designed to foster. The grotto is about twelve paces in length by four broad, and contains three principal altars. Under the first, upon the marble floor,