

our masses. Some of the priests preferred to celebrate in the church rather than await their turn in the "holy stable," but I gladly tarried; and, being the fourth in number, drawn by lot, of those who, like myself wished to offer the holy sacrifice where Jesus was born, I soon had the ineffable consolation of celebrating the divine mysteries in the "Grotto of the Crib." After all the private masses had been said, our party assisted at the solemn high mass of the pilgrimage, sung by our Rev. Director, Monsieur l'abbé Potard. Then the good children of the Seraph of Assisi entertained us at a modest dejeuner, after which we devoted all the time at our disposal to visiting, under the conduct of our experienced guide, all that is of interest in Bethlehem. I feel that I cannot do better than condense his interesting and instructive "talks" in this connection, so I shall invite you once again to give ear to Père Paul.—"The origin of the famous city we are now visiting," he said, "is lost in antiquity. Its existence can be traced back 1740 years before the Christian era, though it undoubtedly flourished long before that period, being known also by the name Ephrata, a title which seems to have been divinely chosen, since its signification, to wit, *fruitful*, is most apropos of the sublime event which has distinguished Bethlehem for all time. Here, what we may call without irreverence, 'the sacred romance of Ruth, the Moabitess,' was enacted. Here, too, her illustrious descendant the shepherd-boy David, was anointed King of Israel by Samuel the prophet at God's command; from which incident, Bethlehem came to be called the 'City of David.' Mathan and his son Jacob—the latter, father of the glorious St. Joseph—were Bethlehemites; and a tradition informs us that St. Ann, the mother of our Blessed Lady, was born here. But the crowning glory of this favored little city will ever be the fact that the Son of God, made man, was brought forth within its precincts. *'And thou, Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come forth the ruler, who shall rule my people Israel.'*—St. Matthew, II. 6. (The prophet Micheas has it thus: 'And thou Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one

among the thousands of Juda: out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel: and his going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity.'—Micheas, V. 2.)"

Bethlehem, as you notice, is shaped in the form of a crescent, rising upon terrace after terrace on the hillside. On one of these terraces, (here, Père Paul directed our gaze to eastern extremity of the city,) are grouped the massive buildings of the Latin and Greek convents, between which stands the basilica of the Nativity, charming the eye by the peculiar grace of its lines. All the houses are distinctly Jewish in appearance, with flat roofs capped by cupolas, and many of them have pointed archways which offer pleasant places for repose in hours of sun or shade.

This creeping of the houses down into the very gardens of the valley, heightens wonderfully the beauty of the landscape; while in the background toward the Dead Sea, the mountains of Moab tower majestically above the gentle undulations of hill and vale.

You will observe that every feature of this never-to-be-forgotten scene is full of sacred significance. In front of the city lies the field where Ruth and Boaz met, and near by is the spot where the shepherds were told of our Saviour's birth. At a point still nearer the city is the well from which David so desired to drink after giving battle.

(I will interrupt our Rev. guide at this point, to cite the Scripture of the last mentioned occurrence, as it is found in the eleventh chapter of "First Paralipomenon:" "And three of the thirty captains went down to the rock, wherein David was, to the cave of Odallam, when the Philistines encamped in the valley of Raphaim. And David was in a hold (fortress?), and the garrison of the Philistines in Bethlehem. And David longed, and said: O that some man would give me water of the cistern of Bethlehem, which is at the gate. And these three (Abisai, Sibbachai and Jonathan) broke through the midst of the camp of the Philistines, and drew water out of the cistern of Bethlehem, which was in the gate, and brought it to David to drink: and he would not drink of it, but rather offered it to the