

rite, or to act inconsistently with it, is an aggravation of guilt; it is returning to the idolatry of a sinful life, after we have solemnly engaged before God and his church to forsake and renounce it. Oh! let us ponder on the momentous consequences resulting from such criminal conduct. Let us remember that our solemn dedication to God may prove a curse instead of a blessing. For if after receiving the outward sign and seal of Christian discipleship, we linger amidst the beggarly elements of the world; if we cling with idolatrous fondness to what God has forbidden; if while we bear the christian name, we aspire to nothing of the christian sanctity; if by a profane, ungodly and infidel life, we dishonor the holy name wherewith we are called; and if we thus continue to evince a mind wholly depraved and unregenerate—oh! what can our baptism avail? What can it avail but to envenom the stings of an awakened conscience, because when admitted into the church, we desecrated it; when admitted to its privileges, we trod them under foot; when stamped with the sign of the Christian disciple, we betrayed our Master's cause, crucified him afresh, and put him to an open shame.

OMEGA.

CHRISTMAS DAY—BETHLEHEM

I set out for this village, six miles to the east of Jerusalem, signifying "the house of bread," from the fertility of its soil; and which is distinguished from another Bethlehem in the tribe of Zebulun, and the scene of events which, to Christians must ever invest it with the deepest interest.

"Bethlehem, thou sacred spot,
Henceforth be thou my paradise! O God,
Eternal, infinite! Thou, who thy Son—
Thy only Son—hast given, to save the race
Of Adam's long-bewail'd posterity,
Holy art Thou."

I entered this most sacred village with feelings which quite overpowered me; the birth-place of our adorable Redeemer, and the very cradle, I may add, of the Christian world. Truly was the prediction fulfilled—"In this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts." One circumstance struck me most forcibly on entering by an archway or gate. On the left were wells of antique structure, each three feet in circumference, which unquestionably must have been the same that David longed to drink from, when he waged war with the Philistines, who had occupied the

place, and which was well adapted for a garrison. These are just "by the gate," and being so much filled with earth, I was reminded, to stop them up was construed into an act of hostility. 2 Sam. xxiii. 14-16.

But, ah! how impossible is it to find language sufficiently strong to describe my emotions on setting my feet on this chosen spot of earth, where the "Holy Child" was born, in all the helplessness of sinful and suffering humanity, reposing in the arms of his mother in a mean stable. I can only say that, at this deeply interesting moment, my heart was filled with the most profound and awful reverence, accompanied with heartfelt gratitude, when calling to recollection those ever memorable words, "Unto you a child is born, to you a son is given, the Saviour who is Christ the Lord;" and who, on passing by the nature of angels, took upon him that of man, leaving the bosom of the Father, for an heritage of the very greatest poverty. Here was produced that inscrutable mystery of godliness—God manifested in the flesh, to whom things most opposite, which never met before, existed in harmonious union—the divine and human nature, mercy and truth, peace and righteousness. There reigned around at the moment, a truly glorious solemnity, amidst the serenity and stillness of the day, and in unison with that train of reflection which the inspection of such scenes raised to a high degree of excitement. The sun shone most brilliantly, and in its beams I beheld a piece of glass or metal on the roof of the convent, sparkling with a beauty altogether indescribable, similar to a star; and by a singular coincidence, this was exactly over the very spot of the Nativity. The evening again was calm, as if the general pulse of life stood still; and as the host of heaven, one by one, appeared in the fine, deep blue sky, like the Patriarch of old, I yielded to the pensive influence of the hour in such a place, and walked forth at eventide, to meditate in the valley beneath, where the heavenly host appeared to the humble shepherds watching their flocks.

After a description of the Franciscan convent, where the author was accommodated, he proceeds thus:—"I was conducted to a small staircase of about twenty steps, leading to the chapel of the Nativity, underground. This is thirty-eight feet in length by twelve in breadth, and ten in height, lined and floored with marble, and contains five oratories on each side. Before the altar about forty massy silver lamps, the gifts of Catholic sovereigns and princes, are kept constantly burning. On the east side of it is the identical spot where the Son of God came forth, and was cradled in obscurity.

'Glory, to God on high, who gives
Love, grace, and peace on earth;
Let every sex and age adore,
And sing the Saviour's birth.'

This is marked out by a star formed of white mar-