

THE BLESSED VIRGIN'S TOMB

An Interesting Argument Regarding Its Whorabouts.

(New York Herald.)

When the Kaiser paid his famous visit to Palestine a little more than a year ago the religious world was stirred by the announcement that the Sultan had presented to him the site of the Dormito, or place where the Virgin lived after the crucifixion, and where she died. This announcement was chiefly due to the fact that the tomb and residence of the Virgin had long supposed to be at Ephesus. Since this memorable gift and its transfer by the Kaiser to the Catholic authorities a special investigation into the traditions gathered around this bare site has been conducted by Dr. Carl Monneret, a scholar who has made many visits to Palestine and devoted special attention to a study of the several sites and their traditions. The result of his study has just appeared in a pamphlet, from which the arguments in the matter are extracted for presentation here.

BASIS OF TRADITION.

In that closing scene of the crucifixion described by John, the only one of the Apostles present, lies the basis of the tradition of the association between John and the Virgin. In chapter xv, 26-27, we read: "Now, therefore, when the cross of Jesus, His Mother and His Mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His Mother and the disciple whom He loved, He said unto His Mother: Woman, behold thy son. Then said she to the disciple, Behold thy mother. And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."

It was on October 31, 1898, that the Kaiser and his entourage, with their escort, gathered to accept the famous site amid special ceremonies. But was there a substantial reason for believing that here was the actual site of the house in which the Mother of Jesus lived at the death and when her time came? The tradition that John and Mary left Jerusalem and went to Ephesus is no older than the fifth century, while the more trustworthy tradition applying the name of "Dormito" to a site in Jerusalem, and maps that have been discovered. It seems to have been established that John did not come to Ephesus until after the death of Paul (A. D. 67), and only then settled in that famous city.

This is supported by the fact that shortly before his death Paul appointed Timothy Bishop of Ephesus, something that he certainly would not have done had he been in Ephesus besides, there is no reference in any of Paul's numerous Epistles to the activity of John in Asia Minor.

THE AGE OF MARY.

If, then, the year 70 is assumed as the year in which John had reached Ephesus, this would make the Virgin nearly eighty years old at the time she was fifteen years old at the birth of Jesus, but no tradition assigns such an advanced age as eighty-five or ninety to Mary. The accepted tradition is that she survived her Son but twelve or fifteen years at most, living that time in John's house at Jerusalem, dying at the age of sixty or sixty-three.

Returning to the Biblical passage quoted above, it is evident how the affection of Jesus in His last agony went out to His Mother, commending her to John and it is more than probable that after the end of the tragic scene John accepted the wrapping of the Mother to his house in Jerusalem. Clement of Alexandria (100-202) ascribes the statement to Peter that for twelve years John and the Virgin lived in Jerusalem, for the Apostles were commended to him by the Lord but twelve years had elapsed in order that they might bear witness to what they had seen.

Eusebius cites the same tradition, and the statements in Acts agree with what we have returned to John from Jerusalem from the Mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey. And when they were come in they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the woman, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."

APOSTLES GO FORTH.

At this time the Apostles left Jerusalem only upon short missionary journeys, returning thither after a few days at most. When Peter was released from prison during the persecutions of 43 he directed his steps toward the house of Mary, the mother of John, where many were assembled in prayer (Acts xii, 12). This house can be no other than that referred to in the fifth verse of this same chapter. "But prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." This was the same building in which the Lord held His Last Supper with the Apostles, where the disciples retired after the Ascension to pray behind closed doors, and in which the Holy Ghost appeared on Pentecost. It served as the first place in which the faithful assembled for prayer and worship. It is known under the name of the Cenaculum, and according to Acts xii, 13, was a rocky building with a court in front, like the modern building called by that name which now occupies the site.

Zion, too, is of the opinion that the Dormito must have been in Jerusalem, for he holds that all the accounts point to the residence of John and the Virgin at Jerusalem until the year 43.

EVIDENCE SUMMED UP.

Summing up the evidence, it seems certain that John and the Virgin lived in Jerusalem until 43 or 45, and this will account for the postponement of his activity for so many years, and his succeeding Timothy as Bishop of Ephesus after the death of Paul. It was due to the care of the Virgin that he waited until after her death to begin his missionary labors. And, besides, human nature supports the tradition that Mary did not leave Jerusalem at her advanced age to go to distant Ephesus, for it was natural that she should wish to remain in and around the scenes dear to her.

ST. JOHN'S HOUSE.

According to generally received tradition, the house of the Apostle John was on Mount Zion, near the house in which the Last Supper was held. There was the first Christian church, and the tradition of this first Zion Church is of a running stream which goes back to the first century. The confusion between the Cenaculum and Dormito is no earlier than the year 1523 when it was stated that the place in which the Virgin died is not to be sought in the Cenaculum, but that this is an error, for the Cenaculum and Dormito are not identical, as can be shown from numerous ancient maps, where they are set down as separate and distinct.

THE ZION CHURCH.

The Zion Church to which the pilgrim ascends from Siloa in none other than the ancient Church of the Apostles, the site of the Cenaculum. The absolute identity of the site of the ancient Church of the Apostles with that of Zion, the "mother of all churches" of the fourth century, as well as of all later ones, is certainly beyond any doubt. But the Zion Church and Cenaculum are two different places.

There is no early tradition of the Virgin having died anywhere else than in Jerusalem, and this is as well as tradition point to her having lived with John and died in his house in Jerusalem at about sixty years of age. This being accepted as true, it ought not to be difficult to decide the exact location of this sacred spot.

Judging from the fact that Peter sought her after his release from prison and found her when going to the Cenaculum, it seems clear that John's house was near that famous building. The confusion between the Zion Church and that of the Cenaculum, and that was the Zion Church, on the site of the Cenaculum, so it is impossible to find any trace of John's house having been consecrated to a church until a later date.

ATTEMPTS TO IDENTIFY.

In the seventh century, however, when Bede, a student of Beverley, tried to identify the sacred sites he found that there was a distinct tradition as to the separate places of the Last Supper and the Dormito. This is the evidence of his time.

The Venerable Bede, who gathered the traditions concerning the holy places in 720, has left a plan of the Zion Church showing the place at which the Virgin died in most realistic fashion. In the 12th century we have open plans and pictures of the different churches of the Cenaculum and the St. Mary's, showing the distinction that existed between the two. A quaint plan, drawn in question drawn by Marino Sanuto (1310) shows the houses of Caliphah, the Cenaculum and the home of Mary, and in another map of 1850 the two sites are distinctly shown. It seems evident from this investigation that the site of the house in which the Virgin lived was near the Cenaculum, and possibly was the very site which has been transferred to the Zion Church by the Sultan. It is interesting to know that the Sultan has so much reverence for Christian traditions as to place the sacred sites in the hands of the faithful.

THE ISLANDS OF IRELAND.

I have just heard a little story which could not be told of anyone but a son or daughter of Erin. When we learn that a young man, born out of the Celtic country, has such a longing desire to behold the sites of his forefathers that, when it is actually his eyes, they can not see it for tears, we may feel quite sure that the young man is an Irishman, and that he longs to see the holy hills of Ireland. From day to day the Irish have so longed and so wept. More than any others did our sages so years and weep when cut off from the hills, hills and holy islands to which they had fled to sanctify themselves, seeking beds on the crags and "deserts in the sea" where the world could not trouble them with its follies and wars. When St. Columba was exiled to Iona in punishment for the sin of striking a careful copy of a manuscript, the Gospel, committed to his care by St. Finn, he was obliged to move on from his first Scottish site because from a certain place of the rocks he could distinctly discern the towers of Erin lying like "a funeral sea" in the ring of the sea. He was glad to go, because the dreary outline of that far shore awoke such longing in him that he could not preserve his salutary peace of mind.

THE MEMORY OF SAINTS.

The islands of Ireland are even more closely linked with the memory of her saints and their names than the mountains. In the west, where the islands lie in their gray and green and purple, the lights of strange birds floating in the broad ocean, the footprints of old servants of old are thickset. The rocks and waves and gulls make marks have been their oracles;

the clusters of bleached and blacked of ruins, when interiors are gardens of nettles and docks, and whose gables are draped with wild bramble, were their colleges, and schools and churches. There is one island of a western group where many sailors are said to be buried that the place is looked on as especially holy, and boatmen slip their oars and take off their hats as they float past it with lowered heads.

THE INHABITANTS.

These western isles are spots of beauty and romance as well as religious associations. Their people are a bold, hardy race who live by fishing and as many crops as the weather permits the rocks soil to bring forth from year to year. They have their little "villages," clusters of stone cabins with chimneys that rise from the masses of rock except for the blue curl of smoke that is caught by the wind and whirled away with the sea spray. Their lives are not worth a day's purchase, for their needs and fishing boats are so small that they must struggle with the storms of the Atlantic. Like all people who pass their existence in perpetual combat with the elements, they have many religious superstitions, and it is hard to spend some time among them without being affected by their legends regarding the spirits and elfin population that fill the air around them.

THE DALS GONE BY.

Other strong men trod our islands long before the sails broke and brought within these broken walls. None but the winds could raise the wild bramble swains, in the Aran Isles alone there are seven great forts of pagan origin. Dun Engus is perched on the perpendicular cliff more than three hundred feet above a sea that never ceases to surge and roar. Its triple walls, eight feet thick, and its marvellous defence work of cut stones, through which nothing living can walk without hurt, bear startling testimony to the fierce warfare which once raged there. These towers, built with blood, and darkened the splendors of the western sky with flying clouds of arrows. Fit to build and command such strongholds were the warriors of the North, mighty men who loved to boast to live like an eagle on the crag between heaven and sea than to tend sheep in the green and sweet-watered valleys, or to labor making arrow heads and spears in the clearings of the forest.

THE MEN OF ARAN.

The Aran men of the present day are of the best type of Islanders. They are tall and handsome, bold and gentle and as supple and alert as the warriors of old. They are not only brave and hardworking, fishing the sea, and doing all that toil can do to bring "honey out of the rock, oil from the flinty stones" of the island, giving their hands to the work of the world, but a larger island in the sea of space. The crops play hide and seek with them and laugh at their toil, being themselves the sport of extraordinary winds and rain, and the sea but too treacherous friend. They are often half-starved but their courage and endurance are wonderful, and they have cheerful hearts in spite of the hard conditions of their lives, spent amid the roar of the sea, the storms, and the melancholy moaning of breakers round their isolated shores.—H.L.

MORE SEMINARIES.

Within the coming year, it is the purpose of Archbishop Corrigan to establish in New York an institution for the education of boys who wish to prepare themselves for the priesthood. The college will be conducted upon the same lines as what are known as the "pottis seminaries" in France, and will be in reality, a preparatory school for a higher seminary, St. Joseph's, at Duquesne.

The petty seminary has long been an established institution in connection with the administration of the Church in France, and it is an attachment of great importance in other countries. The only institution of the same kind in the vicinity of New York is St. Charles' College, near Ellicott City, Md. which is the preparatory seminary for the Theological Seminary of St. Sulpice, N. Y. In the new seminary the course will extend through a period of six years and special attention will be paid to the classics and Latin will be a part of the curriculum of the preparatory. It will be the privilege of the pupils of the Doland Hayes School, on Madison Avenue, between East Fifty-first and East Fifty-second streets, a portion of the property occupied formerly by the Catholic Orphan Asylum.

THIS CURIO REMAINS.

Although Durham, in England, has been in the possession of the Protestants for three centuries, a "Pagan" ceremony is kept up, and the institution of which dates back to A. D. 1420, was the right of Corporal Christ, and the monks were at mid-

night prayer. Suddenly a storm arose and the bell tower was struck by a bolt of lightning, but, though the flames raged about the tower and its contents were set on fire, the monks were not undisturbed. The tower was attributed to St. Christopher, whose body was in the tower, and whose presence on the anniversary of that saint the chorales have ascended the old belfry and banded the "To Dawn."

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IRISH MORAL SUPERIORITY.

One of the last, mayhap the very last of the products of the busy and creative pen of the late Father Edward J. Conboy, S. J., of Clonmel, Co. Wick, Oxford, is "The Moral Superiority of the Catholic Church in its Relation to the Material Progress of the American People," October 1900, January, 1901, just issued. It is in refutation of the claim in "Catholicism, Roman and Anglican," by Dr. W. G. Sumner, of Mansfield College, O. R. C.

Dr. Fairbairn emphasizes the old assertion that the Catholic Church is everywhere the enemy of material civilization and material progress. But he is not satisfied with the claim that there is something greater and nobler than material or even intellectual progress in which the Catholic countries are totally deficient.

THE MORAL SIDE.

Take any country town (to say nothing of the modern Babylon), in England or in the United States, and compare it with one of the same size in Catholic Ireland, or Belgium, or Westphalia, or the Tyrol. In the one you will find good order, and great external respectability, at least in the upper and middle classes. But beneath the surface you will find a seething mass of degradation and pauperism, of degradation and gloominess among the old and of corruption and immorality especially among the young, an utter indifference to all that is noble and good of all the virtues that are distinctive of Christianity, no faith, scarcely any realization of the world unseen, a sad neglect of prayer, very little humanity, very little charity, a state of things altogether repulsive to the Christian, the world and worldly, success and worldly riches and worldly comforts the end and object of human life; paganism instead of Christianity, indeed. Dr. Fairbairn handles the subject in the case in the early pages of his book. After speaking of the various benevolent agencies at work in England, he continues:

"Grant the facts and the inference to be drawn from them is that the Christian conscience, or ought not that conscience in the face of the degradation, a gravity, utter and shameless profligacy which exist in spite of all the expenditure of material wealth on the churches, and the maintenance of the churchmen? For what do these objects mean? That our society is to the degree that they exist not only imperfectly Christian, but really un-Christian."

IRISH LIFE.

Now what will you find in a similar town—in Ireland? You will find a first faith, a first honesty and sincerity which seems almost incredible to those who are only acquainted with corrupt England. You will find prayers said regularly every night and morning, regular and devout frequentation of the sacraments, a most fervent and bitant of the town present at Mass every Sunday morning. You will find a sweet simplicity, and innocence among the young, an honesty and uprightness, based upon entire confidence in their religion that can scarcely be overstated. "Why, I could leave my portmanteau in the middle of the street, and no one would touch it," was the testimony of an English gentleman who had been stationed in a town in the west of Ireland to the honesty of the inhabitants. Frodo uld have a testimony like this. (See Young's "Protestant and Catholic countries compared.") Still more striking are the virtues to the morality of the people was that of a priest who had just been given a mission in some Irish country town, who assured me that a large majority of those who live there never committed mortal sin in one year's end to another. I do not say that the same high standard prevails everywhere over in Ireland, but I am quite certain, both from my own experience, and from the testimony of others, that the standard of piety, obedience to the laws of God and of the Church, of honesty, mutual charity, and, above all, of purity, is a thousand times higher in Catholic Ireland than in Protestant England.

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OLD CISTERCIAN ABBEY.

It is now nearly a year since the public were made aware of the discovery, near Castleman, England, of the site of the old Cistercian Abbey of Hayles. The work has since been carried steadily on under the supervision of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society. Private and country antiquaries have enabled the exploration to be continued, and considering the nature and extent of the discoveries made, none would deny that in this case at least the antiquaries have had good value for their money.

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One of the most interesting illustrations is the old chronicle of the abbey, written about 1365. An early entry shows that the church and monastic buildings were commenced in 1240, and were consecrated in the presence of Henry II. the Queen Elizabeth of Provence, Richard Earl of Cornwall (the king's brother, and founder of the abbey) his wife Sanchia of Provence, and a large gathering of knights and nobles. The church and monastic buildings were commenced in 1240, and were consecrated in the presence of Henry II. the Queen Elizabeth of Provence, Richard Earl of Cornwall (the king's brother, and founder of the abbey) his wife Sanchia of Provence, and a large gathering of knights and nobles. The church and monastic buildings were commenced in 1240, and were consecrated in the presence of Henry II. the Queen Elizabeth of Provence, Richard Earl of Cornwall (the king's brother, and founder of the abbey) his wife Sanchia of Provence, and a large gathering of knights and nobles.

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