

seen a silver star, with an inscription which has thrilled the hearts of millions of Christian people, *Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est* ("Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary"). We feel we are indeed upon holy ground, a feeling which is shared by Christians of every Church, and throughout the day the cave is seldom without its kneeling figures. That here the Lord began His earthly life we have no doubt. We have already referred to the testimony of Justin Martyr, which is confirmed by Origen, in the early part of the third century, while St. Jerome for thirty-four years lived in an adjoining cave, in order that he might be near the birthplace of his Master; from that cave issued the great work of his life, the Vulgate or Latin translation of the Scriptures, and here he died in A.D. 420. It is hardly necessary to say that the Christmas services at Bethlehem are of the most interesting character. Crowds of pilgrims arrive on Christmas Eve, at midnight a mighty burst of praise ascends from all hearts, and the *Gloria in Excelsis* is sung to the accompaniment of the organ and the pipes of the shepherds.

The well of Bethlehem next claims our attention, situated at the north end of the little town. It recalls to our minds an event in David's chequered life, bringing out the nobility of his character. As a boy he must often have slaked his thirst at this well, and knew how sweet and refreshing were its waters. When he and his men were secreted in the cave of Adullam, and Bethlehem was in the hands of the Philistines, a longing came over him for a draught of the water. "Oh, that one would give me drink of the well of Bethlehem that is at the gate." No sooner was the wish expressed, than three brave followers broke through the ranks of the enemy, and procured for their king what he so longed for. He, however, would not drink, but poured it out unto the Lord. (II. Sam. xxiii. 16.) To this day the well exists, hewn out of the rock, but now partly filled up with stones.

The traditional "Field of the Shepherds" is situated but a short distance from the town, for it must be remembered that Bethlehem has no suburbs. A very old tradition tells us that this is the field where "shepherds watched their flocks by night all seated on the ground," and it is quite possible that the tradition may be a correct one. Shepherds are often to be met with in this neighborhood, not *driving* their sheep, but going before them, illustrating the Saviour's words: "The sheep follow him, for they know his voice." While wandering round the town, the history of Ruth is forcibly brought to our minds. The blue hills of Moab are not far off, while the field is still pointed out by the natives of Bethlehem where she gleaned. The words of salutation are still to be heard as of old, "The Lord be with you," followed by the response, "The Lord bless thee." Indeed, the

life in every detail is as in the olden time, the reapers sleeping on the ground at night, together with the gleaners who follow them. Coming from Jerusalem by Rachel's Tomb, we return by another way, passing the "Gardens of Solomon." It is springtime, and the trees are looking their best, clad in their early green vesture, the branches heavy with blossoms of every kind. Apricots, mulberries, peaches, and almonds abound. Here it was that "Solomon made him a garden and orchards, and planted in them all kinds of fruits, and pools of water, to water therewith the wood that brought forth." Doubtless the water was conveyed from "the pools" at the head of the valley, for the aqueducts can be distinctly traced. The gardens were long left uncultivated, but now, thanks to European enterprise, they have been taken in hand, and large quantities of fruit and vegetables are grown annually, and find a ready sale in Jerusalem.—*The Church Monthly*.

TWO CHRISTMASTIDES.

BY VIRGINIA CASTLEMAN.

IN the village of Hertford, in Northern Virginia, lived the Bucher family, who were spending their first Christmas in the New World; but they were not lonely, these merry German children and their hard-working father and mother. Yet the Mutterchen's face looked a little more serious than was its wont as she talked with her good man, Franz, about the coming fete.

With five small people to clothe and feed there was little left for Santa Claus.

"Moritz, thou art big, and I must tell thee there will be few presents this year," she said, as her oldest son came into the room, followed by his little sister Louise.

"And will there be no more beautiful tree with the shining candles on it, Mutterchen?" asked Louise.

"Not such as we had in the fatherland, *mein Kind*, in the dear home in Dresden." Then all began talking together about that last Christmas in Germany, and while Moritz was trying to show Bruno, the two-year-old baby, what they meant a knock was heard at the outer door.

"Father, it is the Englisher," cried Louise; "you should go to see him in the shop."

Franz Bucher went into the shop where he kept his tools (for he was a tinner by trade) and greeted the stranger kindly in broken English, speaking slowly, for at home they used always the German speech.

Edward Laramoor had come on an errand from the country; he, too, was a stranger in America.

"Could Franz Bucher come on the morrow to put up a stove for him?"