

THE LORD'S LAND.

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The Church of the Ascension.

ON Friday morning, April 17, we mounted for a ride around the environs of Jerusalem. Starting from the Jaffa Gate, we rode southward down the Valley of Hinnom, with the Lower Pool of Gihon, which was entirely dry, on our right. Thence we turned eastward between Mount Zion and the hill of Evil Counsel through what was once the dark and gloomy depths of the Valley of Moloch, till we reached Ea-rogel, or Joab's Well, which is at the intersection of the Valleys of Hinnom and Kedron. This is a deep well, from which the water is drawn by rotary buckets. It was in the mouth of this well that the two young men, Jonathan and Ahimaaz, sent by Hushai and Zadok to warn king David of the subtle and wicked counsel of Ahithophel, are supposed to have been concealed. The position answers fitly to the narrative contained in 2 Sam. xvii. 17, 18, 19, etc.

Turning up the Valley of the Kedron we came to the Pool of Siloam, where the Tyropæon Valley enters the Kedron. A short distance below the pool, immediately on the roadside, is the traditional tree under which the prophet Isaiah was slain. Twenty-six steps, cut in the rock lead down to the water, which bubbles up from under the lowest step. As we went down, men and women from the village opposite were bathing. The water is clear and cold, with the sweetish taste peculiar to it and to that of Siloam, and also the waters found about the Mosque. Recrossing the valley from the Fountain of the Virgin, we stopped a moment before the Tombs of Abraham, St. James, and Zechariah, and then hurried on to the Garden of Gethsemane, situated at the foot of the Mount of Olives. The feature of the place is the eight olive trees. Notwithstanding the great age to which the olive lives, we are sure these trees could not have existed in Christ's day. The whole north and east side of the city was a scene of utter desolation, wrought by the siege of Titus. It is not unlikely, however, that trees subsequently sprang up from the seeds of the original trees, or that shoots sprouted from the old stumps. The eight trees now standing in the garden seem to be very old; one especially so, gnarled, scraggy, and hollow. It stands just to the right of the gate in the picket fence, and is designated as that under which the agony of Jesus took place. As I stood under it the whole scene of Christ's suffering came vividly before me. Admit that the goodly old tree, a few of whose leaves I was allowed to pluck, is not the identical tree where the Saviour's agony took place, still it is a successor of that tree, and grows near

the spot where he drank the cup of sorrow. I could not resist the impulse to get furtively behind it and breathe a silent prayer through that Divine Mediator who was here crushed in spirit for my sin.

The best time for visiting Gethsemane is either in the early morning or early evening hours, when the stillness is greatest, and the subdued light lends impressiveness to the place. Of all the holy shrines in and around Jerusalem it is the favourite resort of Protestants, as being the most natural, and tending, in its freedom from factitious abuses, to bring the heart nearest to Christ. Ah, what a pleasure it was to climb the side of Olivet, and to feel here is God's work—no mistake, no humbug here—this is the earth, the natural ground; though swept by many a storm of rain and battle, it remains ground still! We went up the very pathway (following a slight depression, which rises almost at a right angle with the valley) which David trod when he fled from Absalom, and which Christ must have frequently trod when he went out to Bethany. At the brow of the hill the road forks, the left leading to Scopus, and the right to the summit of Olives, called by the Arabs *Jebel el Tur*. The mountain itself—dotted with olives, figs, and carobs, with here and there a bit of a ruin, a broken tower or fence, and a green garden—looks well, and the city lies out in all its fullness and grace. The panorama is perfect. The greater eminence of Olivet—two thousand four hundred feet above the Mediterranean—enabled us to look down into the Haram Area, the broad expanse of which, with the *Dome of the Rock*, the *Mosque el As Ka*, the several smaller structures, the slender minarets and tapering cypresses, shows to the highest advantage.

The Church of the Ascension, a small, octagonal-shaped building, possesses nothing of interest apart from its name. Its possible occupancy of the site whence our Lord ascended to heaven led us to look into it. The Scriptures merely indicate the ascension to have been from some part of the Mount, without positively settling the exact location. Some spot on this mountain was the last on earth which was pressed by the Redeemer's feet, and from which he ascended into heaven. It matters little that we cannot definitely determine where it is. Our effort to do so is as fruitless as was the gaze of the disciples when their eyes followed the Master as He was taken up into a cloud and received out of their sight. The event itself crowns the Mount of Olives with a glory which belongs to no other mountain.

From the Church of the Ascension we rode southward to the "Church of Pater Noster," standing on the traditional site where Jesus taught his disciples the Lord's Prayer. We could not gain admission. On another day I visited this church and was well repaid. On the walls of a colonnade which surrounds the interior court the Lord's Prayer is painted in thirty-two different languages.

At high noon we arrived at our tents, gratified with the circuit we had made, and with our dragoon and horses.

It was hard to continue sight-seeing this same afternoon; but it was Friday, the opportune time for visiting the Jews' Wailing Place. Accordingly, putting ourselves under the escort of Dr. De Haas we penetrated through the street of David to the Jewish quarter. Very soon a straggling Jew, with his long locks, long-tail coat, and fur cap; or a stray Jewess draped in her newest, whitest izar, falling gracefully over the back of the head and form, indicated our proximity to the sacred spot. It is an exposed part of the exterior western wall of the Haram between the Gates of the Chain and of the Strangers, and, from its large bevel-edged stones, is supposed to have belonged to the ancient temple. Pictures may assist the imagination in conceiving the scene, but the actual seeing can alone enable one to feel it. In a little open space, about twenty feet wide and seventy feet long, we found three or four dozen Jews grouped—reading, listening, praying, and weeping. Some grave old men read out of greasy old books (the Bible or the Talmud), while others listened. Some of the women, too—apart, of course—read to other women. A few put their faces as close to the wall as possible, seeming intent upon thrusting their noses into the very crevices of the stones. Here these people gather from week to week to sigh and mourn for all the evils which have happened to Israel, especially that the site of their great and beautiful Temple has become the possession of infidels. It is said, also, that individuals bring hither their private griefs—griefs for the dead and the living, of disappointment and jealousy. Pretty young maidens have been known here to bewail their unrequited loves. Why should not the heart take its greatest sorrow, the world over, to the holiest place? I confess that