

MODERN JERUSALEM, FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

JERUSALEM.

Letter from W. E. H. Massey, Esq., to the Massey Memorial Hall Sabbath School.

MEDITERRANEAN HOTEL, JERUSALEM,
PALESTINE, April 19, 1888.

MY FELLOW BIBLE STUDENTS:

THERE is no spot on the face of the earth around which are clustered such sacred memories, which has been the scene of such brilliant military exploits, and about which centres so much historic interest, as Jerusalem. And, knowing the interest everyone who reads the Bible has in this wonderful old city, whose name "is used eight hundred and eighteen times in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments," I venture a letter to you during my brief sojourn within its walls, hoping it may not be unacceptable.

How strange to be staying in Jerusalem—the Holy City! But in reality it is not the Holy City, for the streets which our Saviour trod are underneath the present city, which is smaller in every way than the noble city of New Testament time. Only very, very little remains of the ancient city, so effectually have the prophecies regarding its destruction been fulfilled.

The Jerusalem of to-day is built on a heap of buried cities and much of Mount Zion—once adorned with magnificent structures—is at present a "ploughed field." (Micah, iii. 12.) To find traces of the gorgeous "City of Solomon" it is necessary to dig thirty to one hundred feet through the accumulation of the rubbish of ages—at the north-east corner of the Temple the debris was 125 feet deep. In digging for the foundations of new buildings the workmen sometimes dig through a series of buildings—one above another—showing that one city has been built on the ruins of another (Jer. ix. 11). "The present Jerusalem may be considered the eighth." "One city lies heaped upon another, for Jerusalem stood no fewer than twenty-seven sieges from Jebusites and Israelites, Egyptians and Assyrians, Greeks and Romans, Mahomedans and Crusaders." "There is not one house standing on which we can feel certain that our Lord ever gazed, unless it be the old tower by the Jaffa Gate," (McLeod)—the Tower of David, now called the Tower of Hippicus, which most interesting old structure my bed-room window faces.

Such being the case you will naturally ask, "What great interest, then, can there be in visiting Jerusalem?" I answer, much; for, though in such an awful pile of ruins there has been great difficulty in definitely establishing localities, very

many important sites have been positively determined and the general lay of the Jerusalem of old established. Many sacred places have been disclosed—foundations of walls and buildings—ruins of towers and arches—which are mentioned in Scripture and which locate the important scenes in Bible history. More discoveries are continually being made and the work would proceed faster but the Turkish Government has put a stop to all excavating, and Mahomedan rule throws every possible obstacle in the way, and does all in its power to hinder the work which would in any way throw more light upon and corroborate Bible records, and blast the foundationless fabrications of its own creed.

Besides these ancient sites about which there is no doubt, there are a second class of "sacred places" in and about the city established almost solely by tradition, but which are possibly, and even probably, correct; and again, others not yet fully determined but which are quite certain. A third class of so-called sacred objects and localities I would merely mention—localities which are most improbable and which are pointed out to travellers, and more especially to the thousands of ignorant and superstitious pilgrims, by the cunning priests and monks of Greek, Armenian, Latin, and other churches, who have made them up to give color to their impostures and nefarious means of extorting gain. It is to be hoped that some day a nobler type of Christianity—the seeds of which are now being sown—may banish all such follies.

But, aside from these things, the hills and valleys remain the same—"the mountains round about Jerusalem"—the Mount of Olives and the Valley of Kedron. The city still stands on Mount Zion and Mount Moriah. The kings and prophets of Israel looked upon these scenes and the Son of God walked through the valleys and on the very mountain slopes where we may walk. "Somewhere in the buried city under our feet He did bear His cross; and these hills we tread trembled by the earthquake's power when he expired."

Modern Jerusalem is an exceedingly interesting study in itself, and it is pretty certain that the Jerusalem of Christ's time, though a much larger and infinitely grander city, was like it in general appearance and characteristics. The customs of the people, too, their dress and primitive ways, must closely resemble those of the people of that early date.

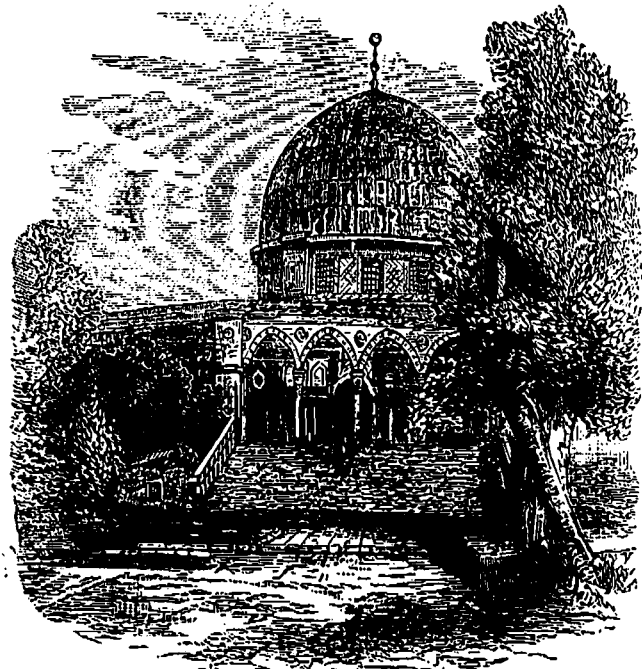
The city now stands on four hills, the valleys which once separated them being now partially filled with debris. The site is surrounded by deep valleys and high hills, which have always made it such a great stronghold. It is enclosed by an irregular wall, averaging over thirty feet in height, and on it are thirty-four towers. There are seven gates,

five only being in use. At first sight the city is disappointingly small and it only takes about an hour to walk around the walls, which, though massive in appearance, are by no means substantial, and are in strong contrast to the few remains of the old wall. The streets are very narrow—not much wider than the sidewalks in the business portion of Toronto—are crooked, and to the stranger seem intricate. They are, for the most part, very poorly paved with cobble stones, and are filthy and dirty. In places the houses are actually built right over the streets on stone archways, making them dark and dingy. Some streets are built over almost entirely, and are more like cellar passages than streets. Owing to the hilly situation streets on a steep incline are built in terraces, so to speak—a step of six or seven inches every six feet or at more frequent intervals, according to the steepness.

No wheeled vehicle ever goes through the streets of Jerusalem. All transportation is by means of donkeys, camels, and sometimes horses and mules, and the backs of men and women are also extensively used. The ponderous weights the men will carry on their backs and the ease with which women will balance heavy burdens on their heads is most astonishing. Only to-day I saw a man struggling up David Street with an *iron safe*, quite two feet square, on his back! It must have been enormously heavy. When a heavily laden camel—the load projecting well over either side—or a string of them, one tied behind the other, as they generally go—comes down through the narrow, and almost always very crowded streets, the uninitiated pedestrian will become alarmed and wonder if there is going to be room. A well-loaded donkey is bad enough to meet and it is really wonderful what loads these useful and very numerous little animals can carry. It would seem the Syrians couldn't do without them.

All buildings in Jerusalem are of stone even to the stairs and roof. The houses of two or more stories are really a series of vaults, one above another. They are generally built square, with very thick walls and comparatively flat roofs, having a low dome in the centre—characteristically Oriental. The population at the present time is estimated to be about 50,000, while at the time of our Lord it was said to be over a million. The walls of the city of that time, of course, enclosed a larger area. Of the 50,000 nearly one half are Jews, principally of Spanish, German, and Polish origin. The Mahomedans are mostly natives. The Greek Church has a very strong hold and pilgrims from the furthest borders of Russia come here in immense numbers to worship at its shrines. Then there are the Armenians, the Copts, the Latins (Roman Catholics), and the Protestants; the last being a very small but most useful community in Jerusalem.

"The town itself covers an area of more than 200 acres, of which thirty-five are occupied by the Haram-esh Sherif (site of the Temple area); the remaining space is divided into different quarters, the Christian quarter—including the part occupied by the Armenians—taking up the western half; the



THE MOSQUE OF OMAR.