

others, has given undying celebrity to Bethlehem. Every part of the journey teemed with associations of ancient times. "Look," said our dragoman, as we crossed the Valley of Hinnom, immediately south of Jerusalem, "this is the Plain of Rephaim, once a strong-hold of the formidable giants of whom we frequently read in the Old Testament Scriptures." And after glancing for a moment at the situation we entered into conversation with him about the gigantic stature and terrific appearance of those old time heroes who have now entirely disappeared from the face of the earth. A little further on we came to a well by the wayside, with the suggestive title, "The Well of the Magi," so called from the wise men who were led from their home in the east by the guiding star to visit the newborn Saviour. The tradition respecting this well is that the wise men, at this stage in their journey, lost sight of the star, and that, not knowing which way to go, they stooped to draw water, when, lo! to their joy, they saw it reflected in the well, and looking up with glad hearts they were led by it into the presence of the young child whom they had come to worship. We, too, looked down into this historic well, not expecting to see a star, but we saw the blue heavens reflected in its calm depths, and proceeded on our way again with deep thoughts in our mind rather about ancient than modern days. The next interesting object that met our eye was the so-called Convent of Elijah. The Greek monks in charge of it gravely affirm that this was the meeting place of Elijah in his flight south from the rage of Jezebel. In proof of their statement they show, near the gate of the convent, the mark left in the solid rock by his body in the place where he slept! For my own part I was much more deeply interested in noticing that from this position I could, with one sweep of the eye, see Bethlehem, where our Redeemer was born, and Jerusalem, where he was crucified, and the Mount of Olives, from which He ascended to the throne of glory. A quarter of an hour after passing the Convent of Elijah we reached the Tomb of Rachel, one of the most interesting souvenirs of the old patriarchal times. The present monument, a small, square, stone structure, surmounted by the ordinary Mohammedan dome, is evidently modern. But it unmis-

takably marks the spot where Jacob buried his beloved Rachel. (See Genesis 48 : 70.)

And here, at length, is the veritable Bethlehem of sacred story perched on a long, lofty limestone ridge and commanding a varied prospect of the fertile fields and rugged hills around. I entered it, not without emotion, at the west end of the town, and drove along the main street to its eastern extremity, which is universally believed to be the scene of the Nativity. Over and around the sacred spot where the Divine Child was born devoted hands have built up four stately, but somewhat sombre, ecclesiastical edifices, the Basilica, originally erected by the Empress Helena in the early part of the fourth century, and the three adjoining convents belonging to the Greeks, Latins and Armenians. Instead of being particularly attracted by the workmanship and furnishings of these far-famed buildings, I found myself rather disposed to study the type of Christianity which they respectively exhibit. And I was very sorry to observe in all of them very notable divergences from the Scriptural simplicity that is in Christ. Descending by a winding stair to a distance of some twenty feet beneath the floor of the Basilica, I was ushered into the grotto of the Nativity, in all probability the actual birthplace of the Saviour. The grotto is now elaborately ornamented with Italian marble and figures of canonized saints. It is about forty feet in length and sixteen feet in breadth, considerably larger, I presume, than the original stable of the old-time caravanserai. A silver star on the marble pavement marks the place of the birth. Over it are sixteen dimly, but perpetually, burning silver lamps, and around it the inscription, "Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est;" "Here, of the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ was born." While I was there I saw several pilgrims come in and kneel down and kiss the marble pavement and then besmear their faces with the oil that was in the ever-burning silver lamps. But my mind seemed to be so much pre-occupied with the past that I took very little notice of them. Passing from this memorable scene, we visited the adjacent altar of the Magi, where the wise men from the east are said to have presented their gifts to the infant Redeemer, and the altar of the Innocents, which marks the burial-place, as the monks