

## The Bethlehem of Today

LIFE IN THE TOWN WHERE CHRIST WAS BORN

By EVANGELINE BEN OLIEL

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BETHLEHEM, which in the days of the prophet Micah was "little among the thousands in Judah," is now one of the largest villages in Palestine. The inhabitants number about 3,000. It is very appropriate that this village, in which the Saviour was born, should be superior to all others in Palestine. This it is generally acknowledged to be. The natives of Bethlehem are the most intelligent and the most industrious of all the village dwellers around Jerusalem. They are also renowned for their high moral character. The entire population holds the Christian faith, either that of the Latins or of the Greeks. Ibrahim Pasha on laying Bethlehem in ruins, strangely enough, drove out the Turks and allowed the Christians to stay and dwell in the birthplace of their faith, and they have held sway there ever since.

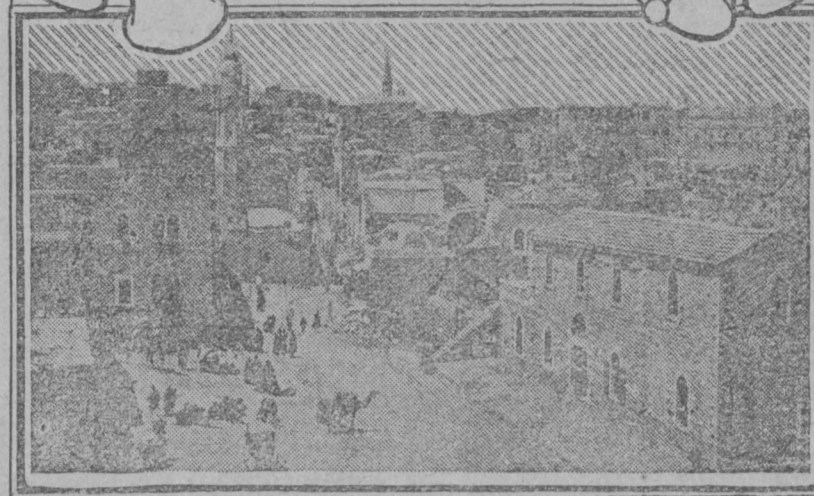
The inhabitants of Bethlehem cultivate the land with a diligence unknown to the Mohammedan neighbors. The women are quite as industrious as the men, both in the work of the fields and in their homes. Many a maiden with flowing veil and tin-

forming streets. There is but one street in the whole town, and that is the country road leading up into the market place. On arriving here all vehicles must of necessity stop and the visitor must alight and visit the city on foot, ascending and descending its stony, intricate lanes, or, rather, passages between the houses. Many of these paths up into the village are composed of wide stone steps. The houses are mostly built of white limestone and have but one story, with flat roofs, which serve as streets, so closely are they connected to each other. In the greater number of the houses there is only one room, the sole door of which is the street entrance. This is always left wide open, and visitors are ever welcome, for hospitality is a strong characteristic of all the varied inhabitants of Palestine. Thus all the events occurring in one home are known and discussed by the dwellers in all the surrounding houses, and there are no secrets kept from the eyes or ears of neighbors. All the dwellers in one village are "neighbors" to each other.

There are no street lamps in Bethlehem, and therefore the people with-

## Bells of Christmas

By C. E. Garbange



View of Modern Bethlehem.

I catch the sounds of Christmas bells across the fleecy snow,  
And again I hear the story of the orient's long ago,  
When softly blew the breezes through old Lebanon's cedar trees  
And Kedron o'er its pebbly bed ran laughing to the sea;  
When over Bethlehem the stars shone with a quiet light  
And mystic voices prophesied the end of Judah's night,  
For in beauty and glory soon would burst another morn,  
And earth would hail its Prince of Peace, the infant newly-born.

How softly ring the bells tonight, the bells of love and peace!  
And with their holy music wars and sins and sorrows cease.  
While I listen at my casement to the chiming merriness I see  
The lilies and the roses by the shores of Galilee,  
Oh! the music in the valleys and the music on the hills!  
How at the ringing of the bells the heart enraptured thrills,  
And the thoughts of man fly backward o'er the soft and fleecy snow  
Where dawned the world's first Christmas tide in Judah long ago!

I look adown the chancels, in the holy aisles and dim  
I hear the bells commingle with the gently uttered hymn,  
But far beyond the singing, awe, and far beyond the chimes,  
I see a wondrous vision of the early Christmas times;  
I see the lowly manger with the Book upon his knee;  
I see the pilgrims worship 'neath the snow-crowned tree;  
Low heads are bowed in palaces, and in the people's halls  
I see the millions listen to the holy Christmas bells.

They wait for all the story sweet which angel tongues have told,  
A story which is ever new, though time hath made it old;  
They bring the scent of lilies from the sun-kissed Orient sea  
And music sweet from Hebron's brook beneath the Lebanon tree;  
They seem to stir the blossoms on Jerusalem's ruined wall,  
They whisper of Gethsemane, without its cup of gall,  
They fill the world with gladness as the holy anthem swells,  
And far and wide beneath the night ring out the Christmas bells.

Ring out, O bells of sweetest! O soft and holy chimes!  
A listening world would hear again the song of orient climes!  
Thy music floats among the stars, and gently dies away  
Where far Aurora in the east unlocks the gates of day,  
The earth is filled with gladness, for again the season tells  
Of peace and love, good will to men, beneath the Christmas bells,  
As o'er the snow is wafted from across the earth's expanse  
The odors of the lily on the shores of Galilee.



Bethlehem Square on Market Days.

different sects Turkish sentries are stationed to keep the peace within all the churches in Palestine which are owned by several sects in common. The grove of the manger, the site of all sacred sites in the whole world, is reached by a descent of marble stairs, which lead down below the chancel. Here is a small grove, where, in the place of the stable of history, is a magnificent little chapel resplendent with gold and silver decorations. Many rows of golden lamps hanging from the rocky ceiling shed a gorgeous though subdued light into the otherwise dark and gloomy inclosure. The cradle in which the Holy Infant lay is, according to tradition, in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. An altar stands on the spot of the manger, and above it is a large painting of the stable in which the great Nativity took place. An altar lighted up by many gilded lamps, which burn day and night, records the visit of the magi and the offering of their rare gifts of frankincense and myrrh. This incident is also depicted in a large painting. A golden star in the marble floor is inscribed: "Hic Natus Est Jesus Christus de Virgine Maria." The whole chapel containing these two altars is only thirty-seven feet long and eleven wide. The walls are covered with rich though somewhat faded tapestries and paintings. As one gazes around and meditates on the associations of the place, looking on the cave, which in all probability is the very one which stood below the inn, and as one's eye rests upon the devoted pilgrims prostrating themselves before these altars in gratitude of soul, one is greatly impressed with the realization of one's surroundings and their marvelous history. Under the building are caves. Beneath one of the altars down in these grottoes is a dark recess behind an iron grating. By the light of torches in the hands of the monks, who act as guides, one peers down into the grewsome depths below. The monks tell us that this is the pit where the massacred infants were cast. Here also is a large painting depicting the details of this tragic event. The most interesting of all these caves is that in which the noble St. Jerome lived and died and from whence he gave to the world his great life work of translation. As the church and the convents are built on the very highest point of the hill the view from their towers is that of a magnificent landscape spreading out for miles before one. Beyond the undulating plains just below the hill of Bethlehem is the wilderness of Judaea leading from Jerusalem down to the valley of the Jordan.

## His Christmas Present

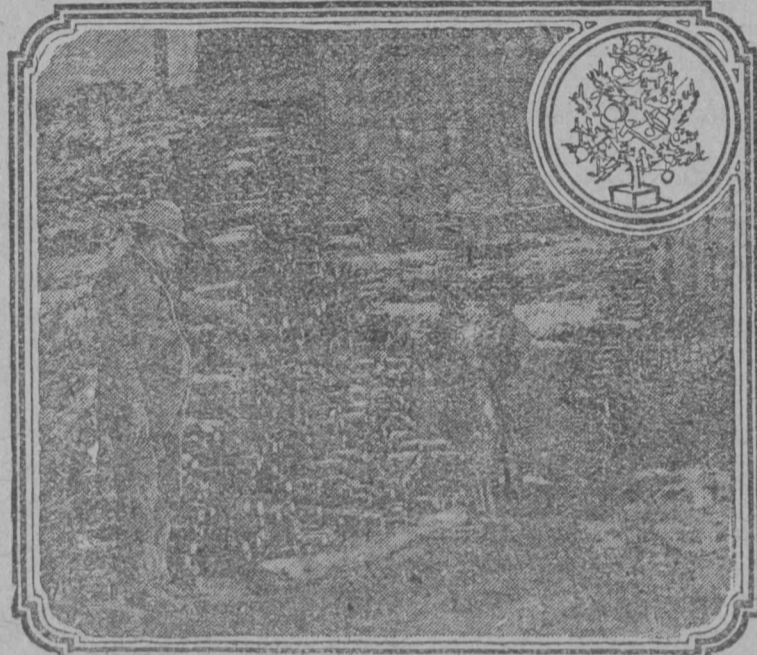
TALE OF A FAMILY QUARREL AND A MYSTERIOUS F

By H. E. REALE

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IT was Christmas day, and instead of being at home I was obliged to ride through sleet and snow. About 12 o'clock I rode up to a farmhouse and asked the farmer if he could give me something to eat. "Y' bet," he replied. "Y' kin have the best in the house, and no pay." He stood in the doorway, and at his side was a little boy about four years old, on whose curly locks his hand rested affectionately. Within I could see a young woman setting a table, while before a fireplace sat a young man. All seemed naturally interested in me, a stranger, but the little boy's eyes were full of childish wonder. I alighted, my horse was put up and I dined with the family. After dinner I lighted a cigar, offered the men a smoke and said to the farmer: "Now I want you to tell me what makes you so happy today." "Well, stranger, they say a man that's suddenly got somepin' fust rate wants to talk about it, so here goes." He took the little boy in his lap and began: "When my ole woman died—Sary's mother there—Sary was 'bout fourteen

be Sary. I jumps up, prayin' that it was Sary, and went to the door. There stood a bent ole man with a long white beard. If he'd been fat, I'd thought he might be Santa Claus. A box was a-settin' by him. He looked at me and axed was I Judkins Brough, and I said that was my name. "I got a Christmas box for y', he said. "Who from? I axed. "I was forbid to tell, and I was forbid to leave it unless y' promise not to open it before 9 o'clock." "What?" I says. "I hain't had no Christmas gift fur five year, but I reckon I kin wait, specially since it's only a few minutes." "Y' must be keorful of it," he said, settin' it down softy, and when y' open the box take the nails out easy like, so's not to injure what's inside. It's perishable." "I'm not likely to harm the first present I've got since my darter went away. D' y' think it's from her?" "I'm only a-bringin' it to y'," he says. "Have y' got a darter?" "I had onct." Then it struck me that maybe Sary had jined her moth-



CHRISTMAS TREES FOR THE CITY CHILDREN.

THE Christmas trees are assorted according to size and quality. Tall ones are the favorites for churches and homes with ample spaces between floors and short ones for the city rooms and flats. A tree with long lower branches is generally preferred. When laden with presents the branches spread and give a graceful outline.

year old. She was a likely little gal and stepped right into her mother's place in takin' keer of the house, and every year I got more dependent on her. Five year ago, when she was 'bout eighteen, that galoot over there—the young man referred to as the galoot coming—come a-sprakin' of her. What was to become of me if he married her he didn't seem to care himself. I didn't keer to give her up without a fight, and give him fair warnin' that if he come nosin' round the farm I'd empty the load in that shotgun hangin' agin the wall up there. This had the effect to keep him away; but, Lord, what's the use keepin' a feller from a gal when the gal—they're all slick as greased cats—kin go to the feller? Sary lit out one day and let her ole dad in the lurch. Didn't y', Sary?" "Yes, pop."

"She had Ben there, and they was married. They didn't dare come prowlin' round here, but they sent a letter fipplin' forgiveness. I didn't send 'em no answer, so they just never tuk no more notice of me. That's 'bout it, ain't it, Sary?" "Y' struck it jist right, pop." "Y' knowed I'd riddle y' if I got sight of y', didn't y', Ben?" The young man grinned again, but made no reply.

"I passed the ornariest five years," continued the farmer, "I ever spent in my life. Lonesome Ben and Sary jist let me alone and didn't show up no where. The fust three years I spent cussin' 'em, but the fourth year I thought if they'd come back I'd forgive 'em. The fifth year I went a-buntin' fur 'em, but didn't get no track of 'em."

"The wust times I had was the hollidays. When Christmas come along, I allus went to town. Meetin' the crowds was better 'n sittin' here all alone, but the crowds was bad enough, fur everybody was a-buyn' somethin' fur somebody and I minded me that I didn't have nobody to buy anything fur. I allus got to thinkin' of the days when Sary was a little gal and we hung up her stockin' and it bulged on Christmas mornin', and how them black eyes of her'd dawned when we drewed the things out, makin' b'lieve they'd got stuck, so's to take 'em out slow." "Last night was the fifth Christmas eve I'd spent alone, and it didn't seem 's if I could git through it. I was a-sittin' here before the fire a-lookin' over the backlog, picturin' in my mind the faces of them as had gone, a-hopin' I'd jine some on 'em before another Christmas, when there was a rap at the door. I give y' my word, stranger. It was the fust rap on that door any Christmas since Sary lit out. Seemed 's if some on 'em was a-comin' back sure. It couldn't be Sary's mother, fur she'd gone to where they don't come back from. It might

er. No, Sary wouldn't send me no Christmas gift anyway. It must be some on who tuk pity on me fur bein' alone on the holliday. "What'd y' do with her?" axed the ole man. "She married a feller and lit out!" "Did y' expect her to be a ole maid fur your sake?" "I wait, that's 'bout it!" "Then it served y' right! And, turnin' his back, with a grunt he made off. "I sot down in a chair facin' the box. Purty soon I heard somepin' movin' round inside of it. Reckon it's a fox or a cub bear," I says. Then I looked at the clock, and it was five minutes to 9. I couldn't wait no longer, so I went to the clock and turned on the hands. I heard somepin' ag'in in the win-



WHAT MAKES YOU SO HAPPY TODAY?

der, but when I looked there was nothin' there. I gets the hatchet and goes to work at the cover of the box, but there was nothin' but tacks into it, and after loosenin' 'em a bit I pulled the hull thing right off. As I did so I heard—what did I hear, Jud?" he asked of the child in his lap. "Merry Christmas, grandpop!" laughed the boy. "You kin guess the rest. And that's the reason why y' kin have the best in the house, and no pay neither."

Then He Took Another. Comfort Brown—Don't you think it nonsensical, all this kissing under the mistletoe? Thomas Tubbs—Sure thing! But a little nonsense now and then is relished by the best of men—and women!

## MARINE ART.

Virtues and Defects of the Ships That Sailors Paint.

It is an axiom with sailors that there never was a man who put in three years before the mast who did not think he could paint a ship better than the most skillful landlubber that ever wielded a brush. In the homes of retired sea captains specimens of this kind of marine art are often displayed on the walls to admiring friends and are handed down as family heirlooms. A good place for the man who has no seagoing relatives or friends to see such pictures is in some of the windows of ship supply stores on South street in New York. Sailors buy them occasionally.

Ships that sailors paint are absolutely correct in every detail. From a brig to a full rigged three master there is not a block or tackle missing from stem to stern or from masthead to water line. No marine painter could get in half so much detail if he tried. But the ships painted by sailors look as if they were caught fast in frost tipped waves. There is absolutely no life or any suggestion of motion about them even when represented as going under full sail. When a sailor tries to get in a bit of landscape as a background, as he usually does, he makes matters hopelessly worse. As a general thing it is a lighthouse or a fort looking for all the world like little images that children take out of their toy arks.—New York Press.

## The Lone Star State.

Down in Texas at Yoakum is a big dry goods firm of which J. M. Haller is the head. Mr. Haller on one of his trips East to buy goods said to a friend who was with him in the palace car, "Here, take one of these Little Early Risers upon retiring and you will be up early in the morning feeling good." For the "dark brown" taste, headache and that logy feeling DeWitt's Little Early Risers are the best pills to use. Sold by T. E. Zimmerman, Druggist.

## Englishwomen of Rank.

"If you come across a very shabby looking Englishwoman on the continent," said a traveled American, "in nine cases out of ten she will turn out to be somebody of rank. When I was in Florence, I was a great frequenter of the Uffizi galleries, and there I met a number of times an oldish Englishwoman with a young girl, whom I took to be governess and pupil, as the former was evidently educating the latter's taste for art and would analyze the styles of the different artists and make the girl pick out their pictures through her knowledge of technique. It was cleverly done, and as the older woman saw that I was interested in her art lectures she kindly included me in the curriculum. The girl was shy and stiff, like most of her young countrywomen, and I never heard her call her companion by any name, so I still retained my first impression until one day when a smart young person, who was evidently a lady's maid, brought in some wraps and addressed the older woman as 'your grace' and the younger one as 'your ladyship,' the two proving to be the Duchess of and Lady Emily, her granddaughter."—Philadelphia Ledger.

To improve the appetite and strengthen the digestion, try a few doses of Chamberlain's Stomach and Liver Tablets. Mr. J. H. Seitz, of Detroit, Mich., says, "They restored my appetite when impaired, relieved me of a bloated feeling and caused a pleasant and satisfactory movement of the bowels." There are people in this community who need just such a medicine. For sale by T. E. Zimmerman, Druggist.

## Music the Kernel of Welsh Nature.

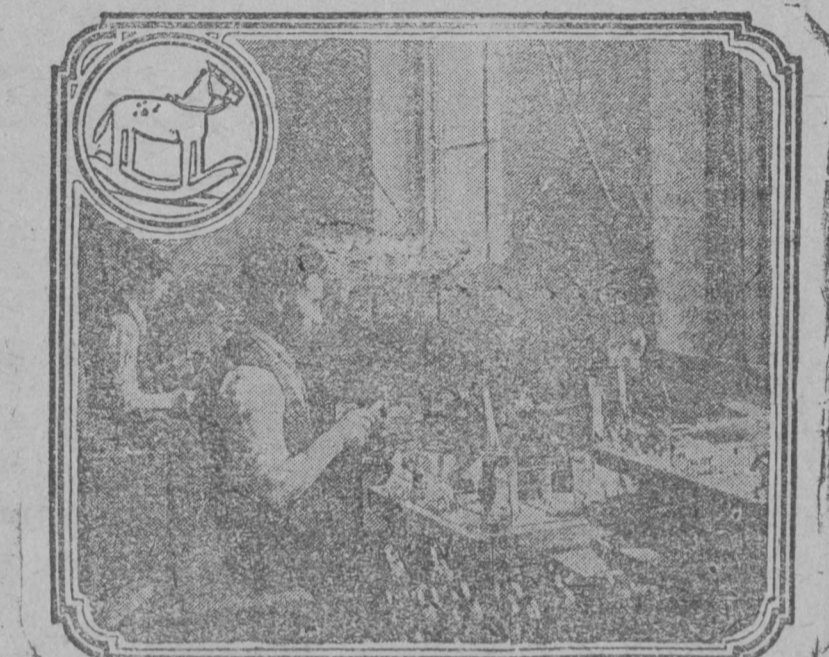
Music is the very soul and kernel of the Welsh nature. A musical ear is the national birthright. Every Welsh preacher who migrates to an English church finds the greatest difficulty in abstaining from that weird, peculiar intonation of his sermon which is known as the hwyf and which is often strange and objectionable to English ears.

A remarkable and subtle fact which will be interesting to English readers and at the same time significant of the sensitiveness of the Welsh musical ear is that it is positive discord to many among the Welsh congregations if the minister, in giving out the first verse of the hymn, does not so pitch his voice that it shall be in harmony with the key in which the tune has preliminarily been played by the instrumentalist.—Westminster Review.

## She Settled It.

"Sir," began the youth, "I have come to ask for your daughter's hand in marriage." "No, sir!" snorted her father. "You can't have her! What could possibly have prompted you to ask?" "Why—er—she did, sir!" "Oh, that's different! Also, that settles it!"—Philadelphia Press.

A glass or two of water taken half an hour before breakfast will usually keep the bowels regular. Harsh cathartics should be avoided. When a purgative is needed, take Chamberlain's Stomach and Liver Tablets. They are mild and gentle in their action. For sale by T. E. Zimmerman, Druggist.



CHRISTMAS TOY MAKERS HARD AT WORK.

THERE are 150 manufacturers of Christmas toys in the United States. They turn out in a year about \$5,000,000 worth of toys and yet do not supply more than one-half the demand created by the 12,000,000 little ones whose wants are imperative at Christmastide. The toys imported are chiefly manufactured in France and Germany.

bling coins on her cap can be seen gleaming in harvest time. The women of Bethlehem are noted for their beauty and their graceful and dainty carriage. The latter may be caused by the habit they have of carrying heavy pitchers and baskets laden with fruit on their heads above their already heavy head gear. They are also renowned for their nobility and uprightness of character. They claim to have descended from the crusaders, and still wear the costume that was in style in those days. It is the prettiest of all the brightly colored gowns worn in Palestine and is elaborately trimmed with embroidery worked by themselves. At the door of their homes and in the courtyard which is the common property of the surrounding houses women

draw to their homes and close their doors soon after sunset. Most of the business of the town is carried on in the market place during the morning, and housekeepers purchase their provisions daily from the men and women squatting on the ground of this central square, where they spend hours bargaining over the price of each article.

The homes of the natives are very simply furnished. The comfortable beds which serve for beds at night are all put away on a shelf on one side of the room by day. In one corner stands a large stone pitcher of water. This the women fill twice a day from the village well, which is the general meeting place of friends and strangers, and this is the starting place of all the news and gossip of the town. The small hand mill is an important article in every home. Their cooking stove is a little earthenware hearth. On this the coffeepot can be found at almost any hour of the day, or the large pan which contains the rice or beans, which constitute the most important meal of the day. On the walls of the Latin homes are small crucifixes and in the Greek gilded pictures of saints. The Bethlehemites are very proud of the fact that they dwell in the very town where the Saviour was born.

The center of interest in Bethlehem, both to the inhabitants and to the visitor, is the large cluster of buildings consisting of the Church of the Nativity surrounded by the Latin and Greek convents. This most interesting edifice in all Palestine is the oldest Christian church in existence. It was built over a site the authenticity of which is little disputed. St. Helena founded the church in 335 A. D., at the time when she erected so many beautiful edifices upon sacred sites in Palestine. If this church in Bethlehem had been built entirely according to her plan it would have been simply magnificent, but for some unknown reason her details were never carried out. Still the church has standing remains which show something of its former grandeur. The beautiful Corinthian pillars of marble and the cedar beams from the Lebanon, which upheld the roof, and the faded remains of the beautiful frescoes on the walls all give one an idea of the magnificence of her plan.

The present church built over the site and adjoining this basilica of St. Helena is owned in common by the Latins, the Greeks and the Armenians, who each have their own separate share in it and their own small chapels within the one building. The Turk holds control of it and sells the privilege of possession of the various sacred spots to the highest bidder. The Greeks, being the wealthiest of the oriental Christians, own the largest chapel. This is a source of great sorrow to the Latins, and because of the unsatisfactory feeling between all these



A BETHLEHEM FAMILY GROUP.

and maidens can be seen sitting on mats grinding the grain at their small hand mills, singing cheerily as they work. Inside the houses others are busily helping the men carving articles of worship out of the oryster shells found in the Persian gulf. These relics, which they offer for sale, are truly things of beauty, though carved by the hands of these simple, illiterate workers. Large entire shells have bas-relief pictures of the Nativity exquisitely carved on them. The Bethlehemites carry on quite an extensive trade both in the orient and in other lands in curls made from this pearl, as also in the olive wood of the land and in the olive wood of the Dead sea.