

VARIETY.

All pleasure consists in Variety.

From the (London) New Monthly Magazine.

LETTERS FROM THE EAST.
JERUSALEM.

In an apartment a little on the left of the rotunda, and paved with marble, is shown the spot where Christ appeared to Mary in the garden. Near this begins the ascent to Calvary: it consists of eighteen very lofty stone steps; you then find yourself on a floor of beautifully variegated slender marble, in the midst of which are three or four white pillars of the same material, which support the roof, and separate the Greek division of the spot from that appropriated to the Catholics; these pillars are partly shrouded by silk hangings. At the end stand two small and elegant altars; over that of the Catholics is a painting of the crucifixion, and over the Greek is one of the taking down the body from the cross. A number of silver lamps are constantly burning, and throw a rich and softened light over the whole of this striking scene. The street leading to Calvary has a long and gradual ascent; the elevation of the stone steps is above twenty feet, and if it is considered that the summit has been removed to make room for the sacred church, the ancient hill, though low, was sufficiently conspicuous.

The very spot where the cross was fixed is shown; it is a hole in the rock, surrounded by a silver rim; and each pilgrim prostrates himself and kisses it with the greatest devotion. Its identity is probably as strong as that of the cross and crown of thorns found a foot below the surface; but where is the scene around or within the city, however sacred, that is not defaced by the sad inventions of the fathers? Having resolved to pass the night in the church, we took possession for a few hours of a small apartment adjoining the gallery that overlooked the crowded area beneath. As it drew near midnight, we ascended again to the summit of Calvary. The pilgrims, one after another, had dropped off, till at last all had departed. No footstep broke on the deep silence of the scene. At intervals, from the Catholic chapel below, was heard the melody of the organ, mingled with the solemn chanting of the priests, who sung the death and sufferings of the Redeemer. This service, pausing at times, and again rising slowly on the ear, had an effect inexpressibly fine. The hour, the stillness, the softness, the softened light and sound—above all, the belief of being where He, who "so loved us," poured out his life, affected the heart and the imagination in a manner difficult to be described. Hour after hour fled away fast, and we descended to the chamber of the sepulchre. How vivid the midnight lights streamed on every part! the priest had quitted his charge, and the lately crowded scene was now lonely. This was the moment, above all others, to bend over the spot where "the sting of death and the terrors of the grave" were taken away forever.

Soon after daylight, the pilgrims began to return, and continued their visits till the ensuing night.—The fathers lamented deeply the breaking out of the Greek revolution, and the internal war between the two Pachas, which have combined to diminish the number of pilgrims to less than one-fourth part of what it formerly was, as the journey is become too dangerous. Three or four thousand are computed to arrive every year, who afford a productive revenue to the different convents. But this is in a great measure eaten up by the heavy tax which the different orders are obliged to pay the Turks.

One day we were favoured with an audience of the Armenian patriarch. He was seated on a low divan, in an elegant apartment; and his aspect was noble and venerable. This fine old man is second only in rank to the great patriarch who resides in Persia; he said but little, and that through his interpreter; coffee and sweetmeats were handed round.

A grand procession of the three different orders took place one evening in the church of the Holy Sepulchre. It was curious to observe the spirit of vanity and rivalry displayed on this occasion. First marched the Armenians nine times slowly round the tomb, clad in the most splendid dresses; the robe and tiara of the patriarch was literally loaded with jewels. They bore a number of silk flags, of various colours, with scenes from the Scripture represented on them; and they sang as they moved along, with a consciousness that they out-rivalled their brethren in splendour; but the abominable nasal sounds they produced did not add to its effect. The Greeks succeeded, with far less magnificence, and little better singing; but

the noble and intelligent expression of countenance of their dignified ecclesiastics struck us extremely; they carried bunches of sacred flowers in their hands, which the poor pilgrims grasped at most eagerly, to carry, even when withered, to their distant homes. The fine and solemn chanting of the Franciscans, who came last, completely redeemed their dirty habits, coarse robes, and shaven crowns.

One day, as Mr. G. was walking without the city, he perceived my old fellow-traveller in Egypt, Mr. W. who had come to reclaim his countrymen, the Jews, sitting forlorn at the gate of Bethlehem; but he sprang up with rapture as soon as he saw him; for his spirit was sad and desolate, he said, to find himself in his own fallen country, and surrounded by strangers. He was so fortunate, by means of an excellent letter of introduction, as to find a home in the Armenian convent, where he had a luxurious apartment, and the society of some intelligent fathers. He was an excellent linguist, but had been nearly starved by the monks of Antoura, a convent on Mount Lebanon, where he went to perfect himself in the Arabic, and who allowed him only a couple of eggs a day, with bread, to subsist on. He had an audience in a few days of the Turkish governor, who received kindly from him a Persian copy of the New Testament. It will be found, that the Turks in general possess far more tolerance of opinion and practice than we give them credit for. I have heard many of them observe, that good men of all religions will be received into Paradise; and in all the cities of their dominions are to be found churches and convents of every Christian sect, enjoying perfect freedom of worship, and protection from insult in their rites and ceremonies. But the conduct of the Christians of Jerusalem to each other, and the bitter hatred they mutually manifest, are sufficient to give the Moslems a contemptible opinion of Christianity. About five years ago, a furious scuffle took place around the Holy Sepulchre; the time for the Catholic priest's stay in the tomb being expired, the Greek brother came to occupy his place, as they take this duty in turn. The Catholic refused to quit it, when a warm altercation ensued, and the Franciscan struck the other a violent blow on the head with the vase of holy incense. At sight of his blood flowing, the Greek cried out loudly, and the fathers of each church running in, the contest became general, and was only allayed by the superior. Even during the time of Easter, knives have been drawn and wounds given in the church, by the zealous of the different orders. It is said that the Turkish guard at the entrance sometimes beat and abuse the pilgrims; but this can only be on occasion of their noisy and riotous entrance.

I have seen well-dressed Turks looking on at the processions in the church with perfect quietness and serenity. The Armenian patriarch one day sent Mr. W. a present of a large goat and a loaf of sugar, and we found him very much at a loss what to do with the former; but as it was evident his highness, though keeping strict lent himself, and his flock, intended it to be eaten, we advised him to have it killed and dressed for dinner. The next day the goat made its appearance in soup, and in half-a-dozen stews and ragouts besides; and, but that the patriarch had sent some excellent wine, it would have been difficult to get through the banquet. One of the fathers, a middle-aged man, and interpreter to the patriarch, was already on very intimate terms with Mr. W. and high in his estimation, but he would not share in this repast in his own convent. Father Paolo Titungi, having tried one or two paths before, had at last become an Armenian, and was a complete specimen of a clever, worldly, and designing monk. He listened with an appearance of deep interest to the earnest discourses the stranger addressed to him, wept occasionally, saw clearly into the iniquities of his past life, till at last no one, in his own, and his new friend's opinion, could be so proper to be at the head of an Armenian establishment, to be founded in some part of Italy, and for which funds were to be raised in England. We invited him to dine with us at the convent one day with Mr. W.—A late traveller has dwelt with some admiration on the excessive strictness of the Armenian priests in Jerusalem during the time of Lent. If Father P's observations about his brethren are to be believed, there is a good deal of room for scepticism on the subject. It was Lent, however, and we doubted if we had any thing for our guest to eat. But Father Titungi always refusing each offer at first, contrived to eat heartily of every dish on the table; and the wine also

was not spared; and in the cool of the evening, as we walked on the terraced roof, the good father could not refrain from singing a song.

We rode yesterday, accompanied by Antonio, the young Catholic guide, to Bethlehem, a distance of about six miles. The way led over a barren plain, for some distance, till we arrived at the monastery of St. Elias. Bethlehem soon came in view, on the brow of a rocky hill, whose sides and feet are partially covered with olive trees. On the right, about a mile from the village, is shown the tomb of Rachel: it has all the appearance of one of those tombs erected often to the memory of a Turkish santon. After dining very frugally at the Franciscan convent, it being Lent, we visited the Church built by the Empress Helena: it is large, and supported by several rows of marble pillars, but has a very naked appearance. Leaving the Church, and descending thirteen stone steps, you are in the place that was formerly the stable where the Redeemer was born. There is no violation of consistency in this, as the stables in the East are now often formed in the same way, beneath the surface. Its present appearance is that of a grotto, as it is hewn out of the rock, the sides of which, however, are concealed by silk curtains; the roof is as Nature made it, and the floor paved with fine marble. A rich altar, where the lamps are ever burning, is erected over the place where Christ was born, and the very spot is marked by a large silver star. Directly opposite to this is another altar to signify the place where the Virgin Mary and her child received the homage of the Magi; and over it is a painting descriptive of the event. The second visit we paid to Bethlehem was a few days afterwards; and the monks being either absorbed in sleep, or in their devotions, as we could get no entrance to the convent, we found our way again to the grotto alone, and remained there without any intrusion. It is small of size, and not lofty: the glory, formed of marble and jasper, around the silver star, has a Latin inscription,—"In this spot Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary." A narrow passage leads to the study of St. Jerome; and not far off is shown his tomb, near to which are the tombs of St. Paul and another pious lady. Ascending again, you enter the Churches of the Greek and Armenian orders, but there is nothing particular in either. About a mile down the valley towards the wilderness, is the field where the shepherds kept watch by night, when the angels announced the birth of our Lord. Two fine and venerable trees stand in the centre, and the earth around was thickly covered with flowers. It is so sweet and romantic a spot, and so well suited to be the scene of that high event, that it would be painful to admit a doubt of its identity. At Bethlehem are sold the beautiful shells of mother of pearl, brought from the shores of the Red Sea; the surface is carved with various designs of the last supper and the crucifixion, by the inhabitants of the village; and they are purchased by the pilgrims. Small crosses also, cut out of the shells, are carved in the same way. The village contains about seven hundred inhabitants, who appear to live very meanly. At some distance from Bethlehem, and in rather a desolate spot, are the sisters or reservoirs formed by Solomon to supply Jerusalem with water. They are three in number, and rise up the hill over each other, so that the water flows down in a full stream from the highest, and descends from the lower one into the valley, and thence, assisted by a small aqueduct, passes, by a course of seven miles, into the city, which it enters immediately by a subterraneous passage. These cisterns are sustained by strong buttresses, and are of various sizes, the lower one being above six hundred feet in length; they are evidently of the highest antiquity, and stand at present very much in need of repair. The spring that supplies them is not far off, and issues some feet below the ground. From hence to Hebron is a distance of seven hours: it is a large town; and a Turkish mosque is built over the cave where Abraham and Isaac were interred; but it is scarcely possible to obtain admission into the mosque. We repented afterwards not having visited this town, the most ancient in the Land of Promise.

It was easy to perceive, in the condition of the monks, that the habit of residing constantly about the sacred places took away all their novelty; they go over the detail as heartlessly as if attending an exhibition. Father Giuseppe complained bitterly of his having been obliged to sing and pray for three months together in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; for the priests must take this duty in turn; and during the time, soon after dawn, of the celebra-

tion of high mass in the tomb of the Virgin Mary, one of the priests entered into a gay conversation, asserting that every man should be indulged with a couple of wives. The effect on them at last, perhaps, of relics, chants, and holy places, is similar to that produced on the old monk, by the sacred territory of Mount Sinai, who said that for seventy years he had seen little but precipices, sand, and sky.

We returned to Jerusalem in the evening. Having sent to the Governor, for permission to visit the Dead Sea, accompanied by a guard, he refused it very civilly, but decidedly. In the present disturbed state of the country, he said, when the Pacha of Acre's troops were besieging Naplous, only nine hours distant, and the roads were infested by stragglers from the armies, he could not be responsible for our safety; and we must wait for more peaceable days.

The places within the walls of the city, which tradition would render sacred, are innumerable. Beneath the gate of Bethlehem is shown the spot where Bathsheba was bathing when the king beheld her from the roof of his palace, and the present tower of David is built on the side of the ancient edifice.

A small distance within the gate of St. Stephen that fronts Olivet, is the pool of Bethesda: it is deep and dry, the sides and bottom overgrown with grass, and containing two or three trees.

A wretched street leads from this to the Governor's palace, a spacious and rather ruinous building, of Roman architecture; it contains some good apartments, the windows of which command an excellent view of the mosque of Omar, and its large area. In the palace, the monks point out the room where Christ was confined before his trial; and, at a short distance, is a dark and ruinous hall, shown as the judgment-hall of Pilate:—a little further on is the arch where the Redeemer stood, as his judge exclaimed, "Behold the man." You then proceed along the street where Christ bore his cross; in which, and in the street leading up to Calvary, are the three places, where, staggering under the weight, he fell. These are marked by three small pillars, laid flat on the ground. The very house of the rich man, also, is here, and the spot where Lazarus sat at his gate. Our faith had been on the wane long before we had accomplished the tour of all these places; for on what authority, save that of the priesthood, can they possibly rest; since the ancient city was so completely levelled by Titus? We were invited one evening to join a procession of the Franciscans, in a solemn visit to the sacred spots within the church of the Sepulchre. They were clad in white vestments, and carried each a long wax taper, one of which was given into our hands.—The service was very impressive, and the chanting fine. At every place rendered holy by tradition, they knelt for some time, till they entered into the chapel where Helena was interred, and then descended into the vault where the cross was found. The interior of the Church of the Sepulchre is of great extent, as it contains, besides the sacred places, the chapels of the Franciscan, Greek, and Armenian orders. The first are losing ground before the aspiring and intriguing spirit of the two other bodies. The Greek chapel is extremely rich, but has too great a profusion of ornaments. The whole of Mount Calvary, and the lower ground about it, is enclosed within the "sacred church," and surmounted without by a large dome of a dark colour, which, from its conspicuous situation, is visible in almost every view of the city. They performed, in the Catholic chapel, one morning, a disgusting and revolting ceremony.—A young man was brought forth, meanly clad, and of a slender make, and a large cross being laid on his shoulder, he walked slowly round, followed by a number of people. He put on a sad countenance, and seemed to bend and faint beneath the burden of the cross; and at every pause he made, there was a wailing and sobbing among the people; they at times knelt down, a monk prayed or chanted in a mournful tone, in which they all joined; and thus the ceremony lasted for some time.

It is beautiful to turn from such scenes to others, where the faith is confirmed, and the imagination delighted. Such is the fountain of Siloam: it rises about half-way down Mount Zion, and gushes from beneath a little arch, nearly ten feet below the surface, into a small pool, about two feet deep. This is quite open, and the rocky sides of the spot are cut smooth: on the south side a flight of steps leads down to it; the water is clear and cool, and flows down the mount into the valley beneath, to a considerable distance. At this steam the women of the city generally come to wash their linen, and its banks are in

some parts shaded with trees. On a pleasant spot here, a poor Turk had brought his little coffee-shed, his pipes, and bread to refresh the passenger.—Down this romantic valley, watered by the stream from Siloam, was my favorite walk; at the head of it, the valleys of Hinnom and Johosaphat meet, and it winds between rugged and desolate hills towards the wilderness of St. Saba. It was frequented by few.

One evening, I observed two poor Turks, who were returning to their homes: the hour of prayer being come, they quitted the path, and crossing the stream, knelt down side by side on its banks, in deep and silent devotion. It was infinitely striking; and if weighed in the balance with the vain processions and vile ceremonies in the ill-fated city, which would be lightest in the account? To the north of the town, and not very far from the walls, is the magnificent cavern, called that of the prophet Jeremiah. Here, it is said, he retired to pour forth his lamentations. As far as size, gloominess, and grandeur go, it well merits its appellation; it is held in no small regard, as the key of the gate is carefully kept. No spot could have been more suitable to the utterance of the woes against the devoted city, and the mournful and impassioned feelings of the inspired prophet.

The pilgrim, however, who comes to the city, must set no bounds to his faith, as he is shewn the place where the head of Adam was found, the rock on which the martyr Stephen was stoned, and the place of the withered fig-tree; with the milk of the Virgin Mary, and some of the tears that St. Peter wept in his bitter repentance. Beneath a large spreading tree down the valley, where the soil is rather elevated, is the place where the prophet Isaiah was sawed asunder. Among the pilgrims was a Servian and his wife, who had come a great distance from their own country to visit the Sepulchre. This poor man was so enraptured at what he saw, that he gave forty pounds, great part, no doubt, of his property, as a present to the convent. An Armenian, a man of property, died about this time, in the convent: the monks, as is the custom, took possession of all he had with him, and turned his poor servant out, without even paying him the wages due from his master. A curious instance was related to us of the uncertainty of regarding too highly many of the spots pointed out as sacred, by a gentleman whose travels brought him to the city about this time. He had gone to the summit of Calvary; and his mind being deeply affected with the solemnity of the scene, he knelt down where the hole of the true cross was pointed out to him, and though no worshipper of that, yet it served to bring vividly to remembrance all that had passed around. But in the midst of his beautiful reverie and blissful feelings, he was suddenly startled by the guide Antonio clapping him on the shoulder, with "Signor, Signor, this is not the true hole, it is farther on." In an instant every solemn feeling was put to flight, and the charm irreparably broken.

The Chippewas, after the interment of a person, preserve a fire for four nights upon a grave. This is founded on a romantic tale, that a warrior being once, as it was believed, mortally wounded, was placed against a tree. When his party returned victorious, this man followed the party, and though he saw them, could not himself be seen, and though he heard them speak, could not himself be heard. He had an interview with his wife in this predicament, and still not being able to convince her that he was present, resolved to return and see if his body was in reality sitting by the side of a tree. He accordingly went, and was obstructed by fire, which he finally passed through, and on his return awaked from a trance in which he had remained for eight days and returned home with his body.

The fire is preserved by the Chippewas upon the grave for four nights from the intelligence imparted by this man, that the spirit had four days journey to make before he could arrive at the land of souls; and that he visited his grave every night to warm himself while on his passage.

THE PRESS

Is a formidable bridle to arbitrary power, by making public its least encroachments, by suffering nothing to be concealed, and by eternizing the vices, and even the weakness of Kings. One remarkable act of injustice is by this means echoed through all nations of the earth, and rouses every free and sensible mind. The friend of virtue will cherish the art of printing; but the bad man must tremble, when he sees the press ready to publish his iniquities, all ages, and to all nations.