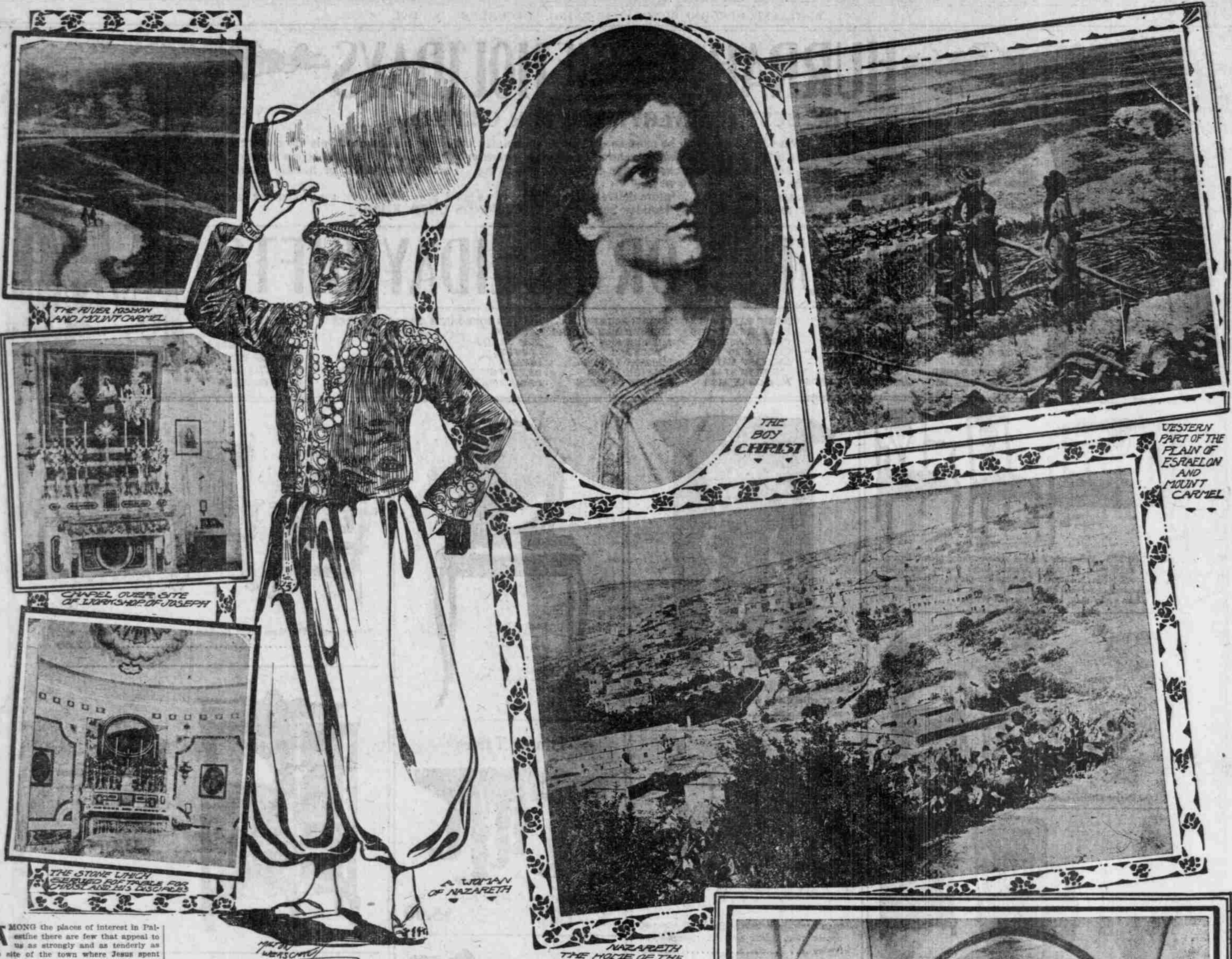


The Town Where Jesus Spent His Boyhood

Nazareth, Its Environment, History and Traditions; the Goal of All Christian Pilgrims



AMONG the places of interest in Palestine there are few that appeal to us as strongly and as tenderly as the site of the town where Jesus spent his boyhood.

Wrapped in silence and mystery as are the years of his childhood and early manhood, we yet cherish the memory of the home at Nazareth, which sheltered that sacred life, and of the environment and scenery which must have had some share in shaping the character of this wonderful child, who guided by the devotion of a gentle mother.

Especially are we filled with tender reverence when we are privileged to look upon the very village where he dwelt, and to stand upon the threshold of his home and think of the boy who spent a quiet, uneventful life, doubtless doing many kind deeds of kindness and ever dutiful and obedient in a land where the tie between parent and child is most sacred.

As we enter the "workshop of Joseph," whether we accept the site or not, we at once picture to ourselves the gentle lad standing by the carpenter's bench lending a helping hand.

The story which first endears this village to us is that of the annunciation. It was to a maiden of this town that the angel gave his wondrous message. It is a strange fact that we do not hear any mention of Nazareth until this great event. Since then it has become a household word, covered with glory and surrounded by traditional sites reverently guarded.

Through its history and these sites, over which magnificent edifices have been built, Nazareth has become the goal of all Christian pilgrims and visitors to the Holy Land.

Next in interest to Bethlehem—the site of Christ's birth—is Nazareth, the home of his mother, Mary, and the town of his boyhood and scene of his early labors.

It is a peculiar fact that until the time of the great Constantinian there were no Christians living in Nazareth, nor pilgrims to visit it until the sixth century. In 520 two churches were built here—one over Mary's house and the other over the site of the annunciation.

After the capture of Jerusalem, Tamerlane the Crusader destroyed it in 1288 A. D. It lay in ruins till 1620, when the great Fakhr-ed-Din gave the Franciscans leave to rebuild it. So that now the groto of the annunciation is in the hands of the Latins.

Serulih, the site of the birthplace of the Virgin, is five miles away from Nazareth. There are ruins of a Crusader's castle on a hill above a village.

Valley of Nazareth.

The plain of Esdraelon, above which is situated the village of Nazareth, is 30 miles wide and 40 long. This is a delightful spot in a delightful land. It is a remarkable plain, having been the battlefield of nations, and one of the most beautiful in the world for extent and fertility, as well as for its great historical interest. It takes four hours to cross it. Above the plain rise three great mountains as though guarding the plain.

From the hills above the village one sees the most magnificent view in all

Palestine. Twenty hills are visible. Here are the four majestic mounts of historic interest: Carmel, Hermon, Tabor and Gilboa. Tall and stately, they stand guarding the plain of the Esdraelon—each glorious in its history of the past. In the plain are villages over sites of great interest—Nain, Cana, Endor and Jerzeel.

At the foot of the mountains of Galilee in a basin of 80 feet above the sea level, and 400 above the plain, carefully secluded from the outer world, lies the town of Nazareth, nestling in a green hollow on the hill.

It is significant that he who lived a life of seclusion for 30 years should have dwelt in this most sheltered of villages in all Palestine. Perhaps the retiring situation of the town accounts for the proverb: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Some one has well said that "he who made all things out of nothing came from a place that had no history."

Where Jesus Meditated.

On the lovely hills around this little town Jesus probably spent many an hour of repose far above the din and bustle of the crowd below, away from all the misery and wickedness of the town. He could gaze peacefully on the wonderful landscape before him and meditate on his great mission to mankind.

The most prominent building in Nazareth is the Latin convent rising above the other buildings, appearing like some great medieval castle. Towering above it is a Turkish minaret, giving the town a touch of Oriental grace. Even here the star and crescent glitters beside the cross of Christ. Tall palms wave their green branches above the white buildings and stately cypresses stand like dark pillars, forming an effective background.

It is with a feeling of reverence that one approaches Nazareth and one is filled with a sense of love for these ever-living hills which saw his presence, and these valleys where his voice so often resounded.

The position of the town is very remarkable. Unlike Bethlehem and Hebron, the village of Nazareth does not stand out prominently on the hills, but lies in the basin and on the steep slope of the hill, to which it clings like an amphitheater.

The hill on which it stands is conspicuous for its height in the line of rocky hills toppling the valley of Esdraelon. Some of the buildings on the hill seem to hang over the precipice, others are half hidden among the verdure in the ravine below.

The hill rises 500 feet above the valley. We can imagine the boy Jesus often climbing up the hill to view the distant mountains and the blue sea, and to look on the vast scenery which had so much historical interest for him, for the bold cliff overhanging Esdraelon commands a grand view.

Nazareth is the chief commercial town of Galilee. It is the market of exchange between Acra and Halls and the Bedouens.

Renan expressed his feelings about Nazareth by saying that "no plaza in the

world was so well adapted to dreams of absolute happiness."

The most interesting site in Nazareth is situated on the outskirts of the village. It is the "Fountain of the Virgin." This pretty spot brings the tenderest thoughts to our minds. It is here that the boy Jesus must have come daily with his mother bearing the pitcher to be filled with water for the little home.

We can picture him helping her and doing deeds of kindness and offering his youthful strength to the aged or blind to fill their water pots.

The Latin convent stands on the site believed by the Franciscans to be that of the Annunciation. It is surrounded by high walls. The gateway leads to a large courtyard, where pilgrims in blue serge gowns fastened by a leather girdle pace up and down telling their beads.

The church is somber and solemn looking. The sound of chanting and the odor of incense issues forth at the hours of vespers and matins. The church is about 70 feet square, divided into aisles by massive piers supporting a vaulted roof.

The great shrine below is reached by 15 steps. Here is a vestibule of 25 feet in width and 10 deep. In the sanctum is a marble slab, where a cross marks the spot of the angel's appearance to the Virgin. A broken column hangs suspended from the roof. This is the work of the infidel. Miraculous stories are told about the strange position of this column.

The whole sanctum and vestibule are paved in marble. The light of many silver lamps sheds a dim radiance over the faces of pious monks on bended knee, offering fervent paternosters to the Virgin Mary. All around are pilgrims, some before the altar, kissing the floor, others returning from the Cave of Our Lady carrying stones they have broken off the rocks as precious relics. Above the altar is a painting depicting the tradition of the site. It was donated by the Empress of Austria.

Behind the Grotto of the Annunciation are several chambers hewn in the rock. One of these is "Mary's Kitchen." Further on is a room, the door of which is walled up now. The monks tell us it was through this door that the Virgin passed out to the village well.

Buildings With Traditions.

There is a story told about this "Holy House" having been carried by angels from Nazareth to Loreto, in Italy, where it stands today for the benefit of devout worshippers who cannot go to Nazareth!

Another site which is reverently guarded is the traditional workshop of Joseph. Above it is a Latin church, in which a large painting represents the child Jesus helping Joseph at the bench.

Another chapel near by is a vaulted

cave exhibits the "Table of Christ," where he often had supper with his disciples. The table is a solid rock projecting three feet from the floor.

A large church stands over the site of the synagogue where Christ taught, and a high cliff overhanging the valley is pointed out as the "Mount of Precipitation," from whence the people wished to cast him when angered by his doctrine.

Though Josephus wrote of Galilee as being covered by towns with not less than 1500 inhabitants each, yet today there are not more than 700 or 800 inhabitants in Nazareth. The greater number are Christians belonging to the Greek and Latin churches.

Being a Christian town, the women go unveiled. The Nazarenes are remarkable for their beauty. They are a noble, upright people, and are proud of the fact that they are trading on soil made sacred by the feet of Jesus.

At the Virgin's fountain these lovely maidens come gracefully bearing their pitchers on their heads. Here they meet and hear the news of the day. This fountain is really the only certain relic of the days of Jesus. The Greeks, in opposition to the Latins, have built a church over it, stating that it was here that the angel brought the great news to the Virgin while she was filling her pitcher at the well.

A "Fountain of the Annunciation" is certainly mentioned in the apocryphal Gospel of St. James.

The fountain receives water from the hill, and never runs dry. It overflows and sends rivulets to the gardens. Doubtless this spring flowed here 1500 years ago. Here are olive groves, vineyards, fig trees and pomegranates, with their scarlet blossoms, and thousands of wild flowers adorning the spot where the boy Jesus drank from the stream and rested by the shade of the trees.

Filled With Memories of Christ.

One cannot walk through the streets of Nazareth or linger at the fountain or wander among the olive groves without thinking of him who as a child trod these very paths, and whose name is forever linked to the little village, giving it a glory for Christian pilgrims and visitors throughout the ages to come. The whole locality is filled with memories of him.

There this wondrous child grew up in the obscurity of his simple home, working in Joseph's shop, with no further means of education than the Hebrew Scriptures and the grand book of nature around him in the plains and hills of Galilee.

What historical memories must have filled his mind as he gazed on these hills! Here took place the touching incidents in the lives of David and Jonathan. Here Elijah and Elisha had their wondrous experiences, and here were fought many battles by Israel.

He would learn many important truths by meditating on the past history of his race, and here in this quiet



LATIN CHURCH BUILT OVER THE SITE OF THE HOUSE OF JESUS AND MARY IN NAZARETH.

solitude and meditation he grew and waxed strong in spirit and increased in wisdom and stature.

Though he was only taught from the Jewish Law and did not mix with the multitudes of a city, yet he emerged from this quiet village life knowing all things, and being the truth and light itself. Thus Jesus of Nazareth has been and always will be the greatest miracle of history.

EVANGELINE BEN-OLIEL.

When the Cowboy Speaks in Epigrams

STEWART EDWARD WHITE, writing in the Outlook, says that the cowboy has two kinds of vivid speech, one dependent on the apt use of a single word, the other consisting of elaborate phrase with humorous intention.

A cowboy once told of the arrival of a tramp by saying, "He 'sifted into camp.' Could any verb be more expressive? Does it not convey exactly the lazy, careless, out-at-heels shuffling gait of the 'hobo'?"

Again a range cook, objecting to pur-

poseless idling about his fire, shouted, "If you fellows come moping around here any more, I'll sure make you hard to catch!"

"Fish in that pond, son? Why, there's some fish in there big enough to rope," another advised.

"I quit shoveling," one explained the story of his life, "because I couldn't see nothing ahead of shoveling but dirt." The same man described playing as "looking at a mule's tail all day."

One of the most succinct epitomes of the motifs of fiction was offered by an old fellow who looked over my shoulder as I was reading a novel. "Well, son," said he, "what they doing now, kissing or killing?"

Speaking of a companion who was "putting on too much swagger," a cowboy said, "He walks like a man with a new suit of wooden underwear." And in answer to an inquiry as to a mutual acquaintance, "Jim? Oh, poor old Jim! For the last week or so he's been nothing but an insignificant atom of humanity hatched to a bull."

Occasionally a straight sentence in idiomatic English comes out in the midst of cowboy lingo. "If your brains were all made of dynamite, you couldn't blow the top of your head off," said

one. "That little horse'll throw you so high the blackbirds will build nests in your hair before you come down," said another.

In Arizona a group of men gathered about a camp fire, all silent except a youth who talked a good deal about himself. Finally one of the cow-punchers grew tired of his bragging, and drawled:

"Say, son, if you want to say something big, why don't you say 'elephant'?"

"In this country," said an old "sk-kait," "that is more cows and less water, and you kin see farther and see less than in any other country in the world."

Something New in Manufactures.

"You say Charley Spender is a manufacturer?" I thought he was just a plain loafer. What line is he in?"

"He makes trouble for his father," Cincinnati Commercial-Tribune.

The Mocking-Bird Woman.

An old woman who owned a small mocking-bird, said, "Goodness me, this is shocking! Here it is Christmas Eve, and I really believe the poor creature has not got a stocking."