

paving stones are those which formed part of the way through which the Son of God passed on His way to Calvary.

It was our privilege to follow the "Way of the Cross" which is covered every Friday by the Christian members of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and it was on this occasion that we first realised how steep the way was—the gravel beneath our feet as we wended our way down, only intensified the picture of what the Son of Man suffered on His way to Calvary, carrying that Cross which weighed so heavily.

On entering the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, to the right exists a little uneven winding stairway leading to the Greek church which has, on its floor, a star in silver, denoting the highest point of Calvary; another altar running parallel belongs to the Latin Church. The atmosphere was not altered by the ostentatious decoration. One could think beyond that and appreciate the full meaning for which the Church of the Sepulchre and everything within, stood. Reaching the ground floor one sees within the building many other altars representing various churches. A very lavish adornment is to be seen everywhere including oil paintings and richly clustered lamps. One must bend in order to enter the "Tomb" which is guarded night and day and visited by pilgrims from all over the world. The walls—and sepulchre couch which guards the tomb—are covered with marble, and forty-three lamps of gold and silver burn night and day. The Franciscan Fathers are chosen at three monthly intervals to act as guards. Again one is only conscious of being in a very sacred spot and prayer comes easily. The outside world for a few sacred moments is completely forgotten. There are many who are disappointed by the appearance of the tomb and who are entirely put off by the lavishness throughout, but we should be grateful to those who guard forever this sacred spot, so internationally loved and recognised, the history of which no outward cloak can hide or alter.

The Church of Nativity in Bethlehem is built over the Manger. One must bend in order to enter the lowly entrance. Descending from the church one passes along a deep passage to finally emerge into the large space wherein lies the Manger. A silver star surrounded by marble has also the words "HIC DE VIRGINE MARIA JESUS CHRISTUS NATUS EST"—Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary.

Another small chapel marks the place where the crib was laid and again this place is guarded by the Greek Orthodox and Armenian Priests. There is a stillness within and one repeats the words "And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." Each Christmas, countless children have their little "mangers" and the story of Bethlehem has been repeated most frequently of all stories throughout the ages. It is old yet ever new.

Later from Bethlehem, one passes the "Field of the Shepherds," which is represented as an olive garden. It is situated in a valley and it is known to be the custom, that by night the shepherds would come down from the hills and when they had settled their sheep, only two or three would remain to watch their flocks by night. From this very field one can visualise the whole scene of the Shepherds and how they "saw the star shining over Bethlehem," and the appearance of the angel who visited them and said "Fear not, for behold! I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." At this time our thoughts go back to the story of old which once again, by the spirit it brings with it, stimulates and sustains us, renewing our belief in Mankind and making easier our endeavour for the future—a future filled with hope, faith and courage.

"O Little town of Bethlehem,  
How still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent stars go by:  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting Light—  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee to-night".

(Phillips Brooks, 1835-93).

**"And there were in the same country  
Shepherds abiding in fields, keeping  
watch over their flock by night."**



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