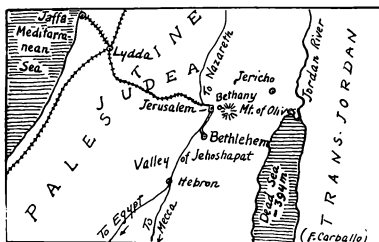


WHERE CHRIST WAS BORN

By FRANCISCO CARBALLO *



BETHLEHEM
And Its Surroundings

A CHRISTMAS DAY approaches, the minds and hearts of Christians all over the world are turned to that mysterious town of Bethlehem in Palestine where Jesus Christ was born about one thousand nine hundred and thirty-five years ago. During that time, Palestine was a Roman province when Augustus Caesar was emperor and the local king was Herod.

Bethlehem is from the Hebrew *Beit Lahm* which means 'house of bread.' This name has been appropriately given to the place for Bethlehem was and still is the wheat granary of the surrounding country due to the fertility of its soil.

There are about six thousand inhabitants in Bethlehem, consisting of Christians, Moslems, and Jews. In the town proper some men are engaged in carving pearl shells for various decorative purposes and the women produce beautiful embroideries. In the suburbs, most of the people are occupied in wheat and barley raising, sheep herding, and tending vineyards olive and pomegranate orchards.

Most of the houses are built of rough-hewn stones and are plastered to give the walls an appearance of solidity. The roofs are flat and these serve as roof gardens where members of the family gather to enjoy the cool Judean air during the summer evenings. The one-storeyed houses, in general appearance resemble those found in the Batanes Islands with the difference that the roofs of the latter are covered with grass thatching.

Most streets are narrow and winding, and people go about on foot or ride on the backs of donkeys or camels. Products for local consumption are still brought in by camel caravans.

Water for domestic use is secured from wells, cisterns, and tanks which collect water during the rainy season. The community well, however, is an important social center for here the townspeople meet to get water, and while waiting for their turns, they exchange the latest news of the day. Travelers water their animals here also.

Everything, however, is not antiquated in Judea, for with the com-

ing of the British, under whose mandate the Holy Land is governed, institutions and implements of western civilization, such as improved roads, schools, hospitals, automobiles, sewing machines, electricity, and the like, have been introduced in the country. Pilgrims may now visit Bethlehem leisurely in automobiles and autobuses which run the ten-kilometer distance from Jerusalem in short time. With these innovations however, most of the Bethlehemites still cling to the modes of dress and traditions of their forefathers.

The chief center of interest in Bethlehem is, of course, the Church of the Nativity which is built on the spot claimed to be the place of the stable where Jesus was born in a manger. Here thousands of pilgrims from all parts of the world gather to worship, visit the places connected with the Nativity and the life of Christ, and take home with them souvenirs of the Holy Land.

Bethlehem is sometimes called the City of David for it was also the birthplace of that shepherd king who killed the boastful giant Goliath of the Philistines and wrote the beautiful psalms found in the Old Testament. Christ descended from David's line, and the prophets foretold his birth and his acclamation by the world as The King of Kings and the Saviour of Mankind. The light of His teachings have affected the lives of all Christendom, and we of the first Commonwealth of the Far East are now sharing that light which first shone on the first Christmas Day in Bethlehem.

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THE SPIRIT OF GIVING

(Continued from page 308)

they have become so poor, but they must be remembered and aided.

On Christmas morning a beggar may knock at your door. He is

cold, tired, and hungry. Perhaps he has not had a good meal for many a day. A piece of bread may satisfy hunger, but it can hardly be enough for one meal. Then, for our dear Lord's sake, don't turn

him out into the streets. He comes to you because you have something to give away, and he has nothing. He would not come to you begging unless he is in great need.

(Please turn to page 328)