

The Journey to the Temple

I saw Joachim, Anne, and their elder daughter busied during the night packing and preparing for a journey. A lamp with several wicks was burning, and I saw Mary Heli busily going about with a light. Some days before, Joachim had sent his servants up to the Temple with offerings of cattle, five of the finest of every kind. They made a nice herd. Now he saddled two of the beasts of burden, and loaded them with all kinds of baggage: clothes for the child and presents for the Temple. A broad package was laid on the back of each beast, and formed a comfortable seat. The baggage was all in bundles. On both sides of one of the beasts platter-shaped baskets with arched covers were fastened. In them were birds as large as partridges. There were also oval baskets containing fruit. A cover with heavy tassels was thrown over the whole load.

Two of the priests were still present. One was very old. He wore a cap pointed on the forehead and with lappets over the ears. His upper garment was shorter than the under one, and over it was a kind of stole. He had much to do with the child. The other priest was younger.

I saw also two boys present. They were not human. They appeared there supernaturally and with a spiritual signification. They carried long standards rolled upon staffs furnished with knobs at both ends. The larger of the two boys came to me with his standard unfurled, read, and explained it to me. The writing appeared entirely strange to me, the single, golden letters all inverted. One letter represented a whole word. The language sounded unfamiliar, but I understood it all the same. He showed me in his roll the passage referring to the burning thornbush of Moses. He explained to me how the thornbush burned, and yet was not consumed; so now was the child Mary inflamed with the fire of the Holy Spirit, but in her humility she knew nothing of it. It signifies also the Divinity and Humanity in Jesus, and how God's fire united with the child Mary. The putting-off of the shoes, he explained thus: "The Law will now be fulfilled. The veil is withdrawn and the essence appears." By the little standard on his staff was signified, as he told me, that Mary now began her course, her career, to become the Mother of the Redeemer. The other boy seemed to be playing with his standard. He



jumped about and ran around with it. By this was signified Mary's innocence. The great Promise is to be fulfilled in her, rests upon her, and yet she plays like a child in this holy destiny. I cannot express the loveliness of those boys. They were different from all others present, and these latter did not appear to see them.

There were besides Anne about six female relatives with their children and some men who accompanied them. Joachim guided the beast, upon which the child Mary sometimes rode. He carried a light, for it was still dark when they set out. A servant led the other. The little procession was also accompanied by the other apparitions of the Prophets. As Mary hastened from the house, they pointed out to me a place in their rolls, wherein it was declared that, although the Temple was indeed magnificent, yet Mary contained in herself still greater magnificence. Mary wore the little yellowish gown and the large veil so fastened around her that her arms could rest in it. When she rode, the Prophet boys followed behind her; but when she walked, they were at her side, singing the 44 and 49. I knew that the same would be sung at her reception in the Temple. The child Mary saw those boys, but she said nothing about it. She was perfectly silent, wholly recollected in self. The journey was difficult, over mountain and valley. In the latter lay chilling mists and dew. Once I saw the travelers resting at a fountain under some balsam trees, and again stopping overnight at an inn at the foot of a mountain.

Twelve leagues from Jerusalem, they came up at an inn with the herd that had been sent on in advance as an offering, and which was just about starting anew. Joachim was well known here, and was quite at home. When taking his offerings up to Jerusalem, he had always stopped at this inn; and when, from his penitential stay among the shepherds he returned to Nazareth, he had also put up here.

I again saw the holy travelers in the city Bethoron, six leagues from Jerusalem. They had crossed a rivulet, had passed Gophna and Ozensara, and were still distant about two leagues from a road whence Jerusalem could be descried. At Bethoron, they put up at a Levitical school. Relatives of Joachim and Anne from Nazareth, Sephoris, Zabulon, and the country around, had come hither with their daughters, and there was quite a little festival in Mary's honor. She was conducted with many other children to a hall in which a special place had been prepared for her on an elevated seat like a throne. She was then crowned. The teachers questioned her, and were struck with all her answers. Mention was made of the wisdom of another maiden who not long since had returned from the Temple to her home at Gophna. She was called Susanna, and I think that it was her place Mary was going to take in

the Temple. Susanna was then fifteen; later, she joined the holy women that followed Jesus.

Mary rejoiced at being now so near to the Temple. Joachim embraced her, weeping and saying, "I shall never see thee again!" During the repast, Mary went here and there. Several times she reclined by Anne's side at table, or stood behind her with her arm around her neck.

On the following day, accompanied by the teacher of the Levitical school and his family, they started very early for Jerusalem. The young girls carried beautiful fruits and garments as presents for the child. It looked to me as if there was going to be a real feast in Jerusalem. The nearer they approached the Holy City, the more eager and desirous became Mary. She generally ran on before her parents.

I saw the arrival of the procession in Jerusalem, and also beheld the roads and paths and buildings more distinctly than I had done for a long time.

Jerusalem was a very singular-looking city. We must not represent it to ourselves with its streets thronged as the great cities of the present day.

Many steep and hilly streets ran around behind the city walls, from which no gates led. The houses lying high behind those walls faced the opposite side, for many parts of the city were built at subsequent periods, new ridges of hills being taken in accordingly. The old city walls, however, were always allowed to remain standing. Many of the deep valleys were spanned by massive stone arches. The courtyards and rooms of the houses all opened toward the back of the building' the entrance only being on the street. The walls were surmounted by terraces or balconies. The houses were kept closed the greater part of the time. When the inhabitants had no affairs to call them to the public places of the city or to the Temple, they remained for the most part in their own houses and courts. It was tolerably quiet on the streets, excepting in the neighborhood of the markets and palaces where there was much going to and fro of soldiers and travelers. On certain days, at the time when all were gathered in the Temple for worship, the city in many localities was entirely deserted. On this account and the seclusion of the people in their houses, Jesus and His disciples were enabled to go undisturbed through the solitary streets and deep valleys. Water was not plentiful in the city; one often sees high buildings to and from which it was conveyed, also towers in which it was pumped. They were very careful of water at the Temple where such quantities were needed for washing and purifying the various vessels, etc. They had great engines for pumping it up. There were numbers of shopkeepers and merchants in the city; they had their booths all together in the markets and open squares. So stood, for instance, not far from the sheep gate, many dealers in all kinds of gold

trinkets and shining stones. Their booths were round and light, and quite brown as if streaked with something, pitch or resin, probably. Though light, they were very strong. There they carried on their business and, under tents stretched from one to another, they exposed their different wares. There were also certain localities, near the palaces for instance, where there was more life in the streets, where it was more brisk. Old Rome was indeed more pleasantly situated. It was not so steep, and its streets were more lively. On one side of the mountain upon which the Temple was situated, the declivity was more gentle. Here there were several streets upon terraces and on top of the thick walls, where some of the priests and servants of the Temple dwelt, as did some laboring people who performed the lowest services, such as purifying the ditches wherein was thrown the offal of the cattle slaughtered for the Temple. On the other side, the mountain was very steep, and the ditch quite black. Around the summit of the mountain was a green ledge whereon the priests had all kinds of little gardens. Even in Christ's time, there was upon certain parts of the Temple work constantly going on. There were quantities of ore in the mountain upon which stood the Temple, and much was dug out and used in the building. Inside the meadow were numbers of smelting vaults and furnaces. I never felt at home in the Temple, for I never could find in it a place well-suited for prayer. It was all so immensely solid, so massive, so high, the numerous courts were so narrow, dark, and obstructed by so many elevated platforms and seats, that, when the people were in it, it presented a somewhat frightful spectacle, and even looked confined with its high, massive walls and lofty pillars. The constant slaughtering going on and the quantities of blood flowing in consequence, I found most repulsive, though words cannot express the wonderful order and cleanliness that reigned in everything connected with it.