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## ART. III.—THE HOME AT NAZARETH.

THE plain of Jezreel intervenes between two low mountain ranges composed of limestone. The mass of hills to the south formed the land of Judæa, that to the north the land of Galilee, which word means "a circle," and was originally applied to the twenty cities which Solomon gave to King Hiram as a return for his having sent timber for the building of the Temple, but which Hiram in disgust termed "Cabul."

This district was early termed "Galilee of the nations." Its population was of a mixed character. There were Phœnicians, Arabs, and Greeks dwelling there, and the Greek language in Christ's time was generally spoken. Although the plain is a very rich tract of land, yet it now lies comparatively idle. It has been for ages the great battlefield of Palestine. Here Philistines, Midianites, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Jews, Crusaders, Turks, and French have fought; here oft has ascended the discordant battle-cry; here warriors have contended in sanguinary conflict; here the clash of weapons and the din of war has been heard for more than 3,000 years, and yet may be heard again.

When the traveller has crossed this historic plain, he arrives at the foot of hills of considerable elevation, then a steep ascent of some 1,000 feet is commenced. The pathway is narrow and rugged; huge boulders cross the road; loose stones of all sizes lie about; sheets of bare, smooth rock are met. Some parts are extremely steep. Grass and flowers of many hues embroider the way. Camels and donkeys with loads toiling slowly upwards are passed. After a while a plateau or tableland is reached, and on the right hand appears a small valley, which opens into an amphitheatre of hills, the appearance presented being that of the crater of an extinct volcano. A little onward to the west appears a pleasant little town, with its white houses clinging to the side of a hill which rises to a height of about 500 feet above it. In spring-time all around looks bright and captivating. The fields about are gay with many-coloured hues. Birds of different species send forth soft notes from amongst the trees, or flit about in constant activity. Above the town the hills are covered with thin pasture, whilst the upper end of the west summit is crowned with the domed tomb-shrine of some Mohammedan saint. In the valley fig-trees appear here and there, and crops of grain are cultivated. The hills encircling are not copiously covered with rich grassy slopes like those in this country. Trees of noble proportions, with umbrageous, outstretching branches, do not present themselves; no dense

forests are seen. There is no colossal scenery or wild romantic beauty. The long, round-topped hills are not indented with deep-cut gorge or impenetrable ravine; but yet all is beautiful, impressive, sobering, picturesque.

And the town, with its flat-roofed, white, straggling houses, which has been likened to "a handful of pearls in a goblet of emerald," is one of the most sacred in the world. Its locality is amongst the most sacred in Palestine. Whilst the sites of other biblical towns and cities are a matter of dispute, whilst some are but conjectural, and others cannot be discovered, concerning this town and its locality there is no doubt whatever. It is Nazareth, where for thirty years of His mortal life lived the Incarnate Deity, the eternal Son of God, whose day the faithful Abraham "saw afar off, and was glad"; "whose goings forth were from of old, even from everlasting"; the Saviour of mankind, who "came to seek and to save that which was lost"; "to give His life a ransom for many." It was His home. THIS town was His native place, where infancy, boyhood, youth, and part of manhood were spent amid the seclusion of the sheltering hills which shut Him out from the busy world beyond. Its name was not held in high esteem: rather ignominy and contempt were associated with it. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" asked Nathanael of old. He could not think it possible. But Philip put the matter to the test. His reply was, "Come and see." Wiser counsel he could not have given. He asked him to prove the matter for himself. He exhibited his own confidence that it was possible that great good could come out of even despised Nazareth. Thus may we act who believe in Christianity, who know the value of Christ's religion, who have experienced the peace-bestowing benefits of saving religion. We may say to those who know not the true value of and the lasting blessings which flow from that religion, "Come and see"; make proof for yourselves. You cannot possibly know its value till you have tried it. Christianity has nothing to conceal; it courts every inquiry. It is spoken against because it is not understood.

Philip showed wisdom in not arguing with Nathanael. Upon this a learned writer has observed: "Little good comes by disputing. Pride is generally at the bottom of it. Let fall a word in season, and wait in patience till the rain drops on it from heaven." Nathanael did not think it possible that He of "whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write" could come from a place so obscure and contemptible as Nazareth; nor did he know of any prophecy that the Messiah should come out of Nazareth. True, St. Matthew tells us that the settlement of the Holy Family in Nazareth was in

order to fulfil what was spoken of by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene." There is no such passage in any prophetic writing. St. Matthew seems to sum up in the expression he employs the teaching of the various prophecies which pointed to the Messiah as "a man of sorrows," as one who would be "despised and rejected." His condescension in living in such a place as Nazareth was clearly revealed when the scornful title was nailed to the cross and the ignominious name of Nazareth appeared, and in contempt the heavenly Sufferer was described as "Jesus of Nazareth." But contemptuous though the title was, He ignored it not; for when in mercy He appeared to the persecuting Saul on the road to Damascus, He described Himself, in answer to the inquiry "Who art Thou, Lord?" as "Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." And it was here in despised Nazareth the Word who "was made flesh" dwelt for the greater portion of His earthly life. Oft did He wander over those very hills which encircle this town which He made His home. Along the narrow mountain-path by which the place to-day is reached must His sacred feet have trod as He journeyed from the south. Here He prepared Himself for the great work He had come to earth to accomplish—a work which will cause heaven to resound during endless æons with triumphant songs of adoring praise to the Lamb "who redeemed us to God by His blood," and endured agony upon the cross to ransom His saints. That work and sacrifice have been accepted by Divine justice. The sin-offering on Calvary has been a "full, perfect, sufficient satisfaction and oblation for the sins of the world." It is impossible that this perfect sacrifice can be continued, or added unto, for this would imply *imperfection*. We may rest securely and peacefully in what has been done for us by our Surety; and He tells us that "where remission of these (sins) is, there is no more sacrifice for sin." To Him who obtained it be all the glory and the praise.

W. PRESTON, D.D.

