

THE GREEK FIRE IN THE CHURCH OF THE
RESURRECTION, JERUSALEM.

By ARCHDEACON DOWLING, HAIFA.

A GREEK Archbishop within the Patriarchate of Jerusalem asserts that the so-called "Holy Fire" was introduced into the Church of the Resurrection by the Crusaders. Of course this is a mistake.

Whatever its origin, it was considered rather a miracle of *light* than of *fire*, and was at first represented as a communication of the light of the world after temporary absence.

The Reverend George Williams¹ quotes Eusebius² in connection with a curious story of the pious Narcissus, the 30th Bishop of Jerusalem, and the 15th of the Gentile succession from the Apostles, A.D. 180-192, which may possibly throw light upon the subsequent introduction of the Easter Eve ceremony. It is as follows:—

"About the great watch of the Passover, they say, that whilst the deacons were keeping the vigils, the oil failed them; upon which, all the people being very much dejected, Narcissus commanded the men that managed the lights to draw water from a neighbouring well, and to bring it to him. They having done it as soon as said, Narcissus prayed over the water, and then commanded them, in a firm faith in CHRIST, to pour it into the lamps. When they had also done this, contrary to all natural expectation, by an extraordinary and Divine influence, the nature of the water was changed into the quality of oil, and, by most of the brethren, a small quantity was preserved from that time until our own, as a specimen of the wonder then performed."

¹ *The Holy City*, 2nd edition, vol. i, John W. Parker, London, 1849, p. 226.

² *Ecclesiastical History*, Book V, ch. xii.

Robinson¹ states that the Monk Bernhard (A.D. 867)² is the first to mention the Greek Fire in Jerusalem, as follows:—

“However, this should be told, that on Holy Saturday, *i.e.*, Easter Eve, the Office is begun early in this Church, and after the office is done, Kyrie Eleison is chanted, until, by the coming of an Angel, the light is kindled in the lamps that hung above the aforesaid sepulchre. The Patriarch gives this fire to the bishop, and to the rest of the people, that each may with it light up his own home.”

The Librarian of St. Deiniol's Library, Hawarden (Rev. G. C. Joyce, B.D.), informs me that there is a reference to the Holy Fire in the *Histories of Rodolphus Glaber*, A.D., 1048,³ also a long and detailed account in *The Pilgrimage of the Russian Abbot Daniel in the Holy Land*, A.D. 1106-7, annotated by Sir C. W. Wilson.⁴

In A.D. 1332, Sir John Maunderville⁵ states:—

“There is one lamp which hangs before the Sepulchre which burns bright, and on Good Friday it goes out of itself, and lights again by itself at the hour our LORD rose from the dead.”

At what precise period the Latins ceased to take part in this Easter Eve ceremony is, apparently, unknown. However, according to Miss A. Goodrich-Freer,⁶ as early as A.D. 1697, Maundrell writes:—

“The Latins take a great deal of pains to expose this ceremony.”

It is needless to add that the Orthodox Greek Patriarch does not claim to work a miracle. He merely considers the Fire, as “an emblem of the spread of the Evangel through the world.” The Russian ecclesiastical authorities would willingly have it discontinued, and it is only tolerated for the sake of the Eastern Church pilgrims who come from far and near for this sole object.

¹ *Biblical Researches in Palestine*, 2nd edition, Murray, London, 1856, Vol. I, p. 393.

² “The Itinerary of Bernhard the Wise,” *Palestine Pilgrim's Text Society*, London, 1893.

³ *Liber IV*, Cap. vi, Migne, *Patr. Lat.*, Vol. 142, Col. 680.

⁴ *Palestine Pilgrim's Text Society*. London, 1895.

⁵ *The Voyages and Travels of Sir John Maunderville, Kt.*, Cassell and Co., Ltd., 1899, p. 53.

⁶ *Inner Jerusalem*, Archibald Constable and Co., 1904, p. 110.

Can any of the readers of the *Quarterly Statement* throw additional light upon the mysterious origin of this Greek Fire?

In connection with the subject, the late Consul Finn¹ draws attention to the following interesting passage from Lambarde's *Topographical Dictionary*:—

“I, myself, being a child, once was in Paule's Church at London, at a feast at Whitsontide, wheare the comyng down of the Holy Ghost was set forth by a white pigeone that was let to fly out of a hole that is yet to be seen in the midst of the roof of the great ile, and by a long censer, which, descending out to the same place almost to the very ground, was swinged up and down at such a length, that it reached, at one swepe almost to the west gate of the church, and with the other to the queer stairs of the same, breathing out over the whole church and companie a most pleasant perfume of such swete thyngs as burned therein.”

THE PRESENT STATE OF THE JERUSALEM TO NÂBLUS ROAD.

By J. CROPPER, ESQ., M.A., M.D.

THERE are many surmises as to the date at which it will be possible to drive right through by carriage from Jerusalem to Nâblus, but our readers will be able to judge of this for themselves on knowing how the work stands at present.

The road has, of course, been made and in use for some years from Jerusalem to the hill above Khan Lubban, two or three miles beyond Sinjil, and also from Nâblus to beyond Hawâra, a distance of two hours' riding, though, owing to various causes, this latter is in very rough condition, principally from want of use.

The distance of two hours' riding, say eight miles, from beyond Hawâra to Khan Lubban has been thrown up and levelled, the

¹ *Stirring Times, or Records from Jerusalem Consular Chronicles of 1853 to 1856.* London, 1878, Vol. II, p. 462.