



AN
EXCURSION
INTO
BETHLEHEM & NAZARETH,
IN
PENNSYLVANIA,
IN THE YEAR 1799;
WITH A SUCCINCT HISTORY OF THE
SOCIETY
OF
UNITED BRETHREN,
COMMONLY CALLED
MORAVIANS.

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1805.

AN EXCURSION
INTO
BETHLEHEM, NAZARETH, &c.

ADVANCED as our country is, in its settlements and improvements, our curiosity often tempts us to make excursions among those who have progressed farthest towards the establishment of order and prosperity.

In the middle States, the towns and plantations, formed by the Christian Society, called the United Brethren, in the State of Pennsylvania, have obtained great celebrity.

The principal of these, and a specimen of the whole, are in Bethlehem and Nazareth, about fifty-two miles from Philadelphia, and eighty from New-York.

In summer, these places are visited, by the inhabitants of these two last cities, and from the other States, for the healthiness of their air and the agreeable and novel scenes which are exhibited.

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The writer of this embraced an opportunity, in the month of September 1799, to indulge wishes of long continuance, to see what has been the subject of much conversation, within his hearing, for many years. He passed to those settlements from New-York, through the flourishing and beautiful town of Newark, and the fertile country along the road through Springfield, in the county of Essex, Millstone in the county of Somerset, and Newtown and Frankford, west of the river Delaware in Pennsylvania.

The road on that route, from New-York to Philadelphia, is now travelled by a stage, with great ease and despatch. The soil, and champaign form of the country, are peculiarly calculated for agreeable excursions, at all seasons of the year. It is about fifteen miles north-west of the former road to Philadelphia, from New-York, by the way of Elizabeth-Town, Brunswick, Princeton and Trenton.

Avoiding the heavy and sometimes dusty roads on that route, this afforded also a journey, free from the confusion of large towns, and presented an opportunity to obtain a more varied scene, to and from Bethlehem and Nazareth.

Except the large, elegant and flourishing country town of Newark, the settlements where the inhabitants dwell more compactly together, were only small villages, with whimsical names.

Newark, is upon the grounds which border upon the extensive salt-marshes or meadows,
between

between that place and Powles Hook, through which the rivers Passaic and Hackensack have their course.

Over these are two bridges, which give facility and dispatch to travelling. A large street about two miles long, and two narrower, which are parallel, and a few which cross both, are lined with handsome well built houses, shaded and decorated with trees. Court-yards in front, and the gardens and orchards in the rear, united with the public buildings, give a romantic picture. Wealth and industry are here combined, to form one of the largest towns in New-Jersey, and one of the most elegant in the United States.

At the end of the broad street, or plain, in a very conspicuous place, stands the Episcopal Church. It is well built, of stone, and adorned with an handsome spire, which has been lately erected in lieu of one of an antique appearance, which had decayed and was taken down to give place to one of a more modern style. When a repair takes place within also, this will be an edifice, worthy of its design and becoming its situation. A row of trees are in front, which form a walk, and give variety to the ornaments about this plain.

In the rear, is the residence of the Bishop-Elect—an old fashioned frame house, with large trees in front, which conspire to give greater venerableness to the dwelling of the worthy possessor. The Presbyterian meeting-house is a new stone building, on the street, contiguous to one erected and improved for the
purpose

purpose formerly, which is converted into a court-house. The academy is a large brick building, and contains school rooms and a number of students, who board in the neighbouring families. In the third story is the masons' hall, constructed in a new and admired form. That ancient and honourable fraternity fostered the institution, and obtained the privilege of forming a lodge-room, under the same roof. Masonry has thus united its institutions, with those of learning, according to the principles and noble design of the order.

This town is on the roads which lead north, towards Aquackanack and the settlements and falls on the Second River—west, to the counties of Morris and Sussex, and south, towards Philadelphia. Great attention is paid to the raising of fruit in this neighbourhood. It excels in the quantity, quality and flavor of its cider and apples. Other fruits grow in abundance, of several kinds in great perfection. The hills, of a moderate height, west of the town, give varied prospects in every direction.

The farms and settlements from thence, are in good repair, and under high cultivation. Newtown, on the west side of the Delaware, is built of stone, and is not unpleasant in its appearance—several large and valuable buildings are here.

The prevalence of the epidemic, called the yellow fever, prevented the spending of any considerable time in Philadelphia. It was proper to exchange it, at that season, for a more healthy region. This was obtained in
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the county of Northampton, as well as on the road thither.

Germantown is the most considerable settlement. It begins about six miles from Philadelphia, and forms one continued, and very compact street of stone houses, for several miles. The road is muddy and dusty, when rains or droughts prevail.

The houses in Germantown, are very universally shaded with weeping willows, the Lombardy poplar, and other ornamental trees. The gardens are under excellent cultivation, with valuable fields in their rear. Their churches are strong—plain structures of stone, in good repair, as are the houses universally.

No obscure cottages, the retreats of poverty and misfortune, or the haunts of vice and indolence, are exhibited. The inhabitants are industrious, rich and happy. That elegant mansion, called Chew's house, a noble stone building, at a small distance, in the rear of a large area in its front, and decorated with trees, cannot be passed without notice. It is more remarkable, as it was a place, during the last war, where a very serious conflict took place, between the British and Americans. Chesnut-Hill, and White Marsh also, brought to recollection the events of part of the war, when the American army possessed those places, while they surrounded the enemy within the city. Some of the breastworks appear, which were cast up at that time.

As the German husbandmen seek the conveniences of meadows and water, before they erect

their houses, and then build in the most commodious places, where these can be obtained; the houses of the inhabitants do not appear so frequently on the road side, as in the northern states. These are skirted with woods and orchards, as soil and heights present for the preservation of the first and planting of the second.

The town of Bethlehem is approached through a large wood, and we beheld it, with agreeable surprise, at some distance, upon the summit and slope of high grounds, which are formed parallel to two neighbouring rivers or streams.

The bridge across the Lehigh, being out of repair, it was needful to pass the ford, which is safe and easy.

The flat grounds open a way to the hill, which is ascended by two principal streets, the road being adorned by trees.

A large and acceptable inn was reached before the setting of the sun, and an interesting chain of objects presented to call forth curiosity and inquiry, on our part.

A venerable man, one of the fathers of this town, is devoted chiefly to attendance upon strangers, that the hours of business among the inhabitants, may not be unnecessarily disturbed by visitants, or the stranger be under undue restraint and embarrassments, for want of a guide, who would give full indulgence to a prudent curiosity.

He afforded us an opportunity to deliver letters in our possession, for the minister and others

others, and attended us, to the evening devotions, in the chapel.

The views of this place, which are exhibited by the pencil, in every part of the states, afford too correct ideas of Bethlehem, for a stranger to be long ignorant, of the design of the different public buildings, and to whose uses they are devoted.

This inn is a stone building, with four large rooms on the first, second and third floors. Those on the second and third floors, are in part subdivided into two small, and one large room. In this way, parties or gentlemen with servants, are accommodated, almost as separate families. Fifty persons may be quartered here conveniently.

The orchards, gardens and stables, are well adapted for the accommodation of visitors. A traveller was here with a singular animal, for exhibition. He said it came from Moscow in Russia, and he had passed with it, through most parts of the Northern Provinces and States. He had but lately returned from Canada, having visited Quebec, Montreal and Kingston. The weight of this quadruped was eleven hundred pounds. Its proprietor supposed it to be the same species, which is described in the fourteenth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, as the Pygarg. It partakes of part of the likeness of the ox, bear, mule, and goat, is black like the bear, and possesses such strength, as to be able to lift and overturn a horse, with his head. The horns are short. One of these with the jaw, eye, and shoulder-bones

bones of one side, are lower than the other. Her face, belly and legs, are covered with long hair. The hoof is parted. The beard is like that of the goat. It feeds upon hay and grass, is fattened by oats, and chews the cud. It is a perfect resemblance, to the representations, which naturalists present of the Bison, in prints. A similar animal is to be seen in the museum of Mr. Peale in Philadelphia, which he supposes to be the female Buffalo of North America, and as naturalists declare that the wild animals of Europe and America bear a great similarity to each other, it is not improbable, that this may be a native of Russia.

Mr. Thomas indulged us with his company, around the village. This benevolent attendant upon visitors, is possessed of a large share of that primeval simplicity which becomes an Israelite indeed. He is saluted with the smile, and soft word of affection, under the parental title of Daddy. The morning after our arrival, he introduced me to the Bishop, an aged grave personage of great suavity of manners—such as embellish a father in the church, and become that primitive, sincere christianity, which is professed by this society. Assuming no pomp, he appears to live only to do good, and make others happy. His residence is in the congregational house, devoted to the clergy and united to the chapel. Being a widower, his daughter is mistress of his family. His answers, to enquiries, were made with frankness and very acceptably. These related to the foundation, principles and

and economy of the brethren, and the general state of their affairs throughout America. The history of the original of their society,—its renewal or restoration, under the patronage of Count Zinzendorf, and their former connection with Mr. Whitefield, he particularly enumerated.

It appears, that this is a branch of the Greek Church, which has preserved the Episcopal succession with care and circumspection, holding an union with their synods abroad. Three Bishops reside in the United States. This person's name is Ettwine. He attended a synod in Europe, his wife dying in his absence.

Obtaining permission to visit him, whenever his time would permit, we parted. Not however, before he had favored us with a view of the chapel, and a contiguous hall. The first, is a plain arched room, furnished with paintings upon canvas, between the windows. These present the most distinguished events in the history of our Lord—beginning, with the visitation of the Angel to Mary, and the nativity, and ending with the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. In these representations, the order of the paintings are in unison with the arrangements of the portions of the gospels, selected by the churches of England, Rome and the Lutherans, for sundays.

The seats for the attendants are moveable and divided into two parcels—one, for the men, and another for the women. No pomp, no display of pride, ostentation or wealth are attempted.

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