

CHAP. XXI.

FROM CHRISTMAS TO EASTER IN JERUSALEM.

WE had thus reached Jerusalem only two days before Christmas, when, through the kind introduction of a Roman Catholic friend, we received an invitation from the Latin Patriarch to attend the Christmas services at Bethlehem, and delighted were we to be thus enabled to spend that night on the real and long-hallowed spot: so we gladly accepted it and mounted our horses on the afternoon of the 24th. We found the whole road from the Jaffa gate gay with crowds of pilgrims, on foot and on horseback, on donkey and muleback, men, women and children, including Franks and dragomans of all countries hastening to the same goal. The wind was piercingly cold on the plain of Rephaim, and as we turned over the brow of the Mar Elyas hill, the rain came up in light, chilly showers: not enough, however, to damp the spirits of the Bethlehemites, who were waiting in two parties, one of about fifty men, and the other of about one hundred, standing beside their horses, to receive the French Consul and conduct him into the town, as he comes here this day in state, in representation of the Imperial Protector of the Holy Places and Christians of Syria. Very picturesque indeed, they looked, with their gaily tasselled horse trappings, the scarlet dresses, and white or yellow kefiyehs, which nearly all the Bethlehem people wear.