

THE HOLY LAND EXCURSION.

[CORRESPONDENCE OF THE ALTA.]

TIBERIAS, September, 1867.

PIOUS ENTHUSIASM OF THE PILGRIMS.

At noon we took a swim in the Sea of Galilee—a blessed privilege in this scorching climate—and then lunched under a neglected old fig tree at the fountain they call Ain-et-Tin. As I have remarked before, every trifling rivulet that gurgles out of the rocks and sands of Palestine is dignified with the title of "fountain," and lunatics familiar with the Hudson, the great lakes and the Mississippi, fall into transports of admiration over them, and exhaust their powers of composition in writing their praises. If all the poetry and nonsense that have been discharged upon the fountains and the bland scenery of Palestine were collected in a book it would make a most valuable volume to burn.

During luncheon, the pilgrim enthusiasts of our party, who had been so wild with religious ecstasy ever since they touched holy ground that they did nothing but mutter incoherent rhapsodies about how wonderful is prophecy, and that sort of thing, could scarcely eat, so anxious were they to "take shipping" and sail in very person upon the waters that had borne the vessels of the Apostles and upheld the sacred feet of the Saviour. I thought they cherished a sort of vague notion that a fervor such as theirs might peradventure earn for them a little private miracle of some kind or other to talk about when they got home. Their anxiety grew and their excitement augmented with every fleeting moment, until my fears were aroused, and I began to have misgivings that in their present condition they might break recklessly loose from all considerations of prudence and buy a whole fleet of ships to sail in instead of hiring a single one for an hour, as quiet folk are wont to do. I trembled to think of the ruined purses this day's performances might result in. Never before had I known them to lose their self-possession when a question of expenses was before the tribe, and now I could not help reflecting bodingly upon their temperate zeal with which middle-aged men are apt to surfeit themselves upon a seductive folly which they have tasted for the first time. And, yet, I did not feel that I had a right to be surprised at the state of things which was giving me so much concern. These men had been taught from infancy to revere, almost to worship, the holy places whereon their happy eyes were resting now. For many and many a year this very picture had visited their thoughts by day and floated through their dreams by night. To stand before it in the flesh—to see it as they saw it now—to sail upon the hallowed sea, and kiss the holy soil that compassed it about; these were aspirations they had cherished while a generation dragged its lagging seasons by and left its furrows in their faces and its frosts upon their hair. To look upon this picture, and sail upon this sea, they had foregone home and its idols and journeyed thousands and thousands of miles, in weariness and tribulation. What wonder that the sordid lights of work-day prudence should pale before the glory of a hope like theirs in the full splendor of its fruition? Let them squander millions! I said—who speaks of money at a time like this?

AH, ME!

In this frame of mind I followed, as fast as I could, the eager footsteps of the pilgrims, and stood upon the shore of the lake, and swelled, with hat and voice, the frantic hail they sent after the "ship" that was speeding by. It was a success. The toilers of the sea ran in and beached their barque. Joy sat upon every countenance.

"How much?" ask him how much, Abraham!—how much to take us all—eight of us, and you—to Bethsaida, yonder, and to the mouth of Jordan, and to the place where the swine ran down into the sea—quick!—and we want to coast around everywhere—everywhere!—all day long!—I could sail a year in these blessed waters!—and tell him we'll stop at Magdala and finish at Tiberias!—ask him how much?—anything—anything whatever!—tell him we don't care what the expense is! I said to myself, I knew how it would be.

ABRAHAM—(Interpreting) "He says two Napoleons—eight dollars."

One or two countenances fell—no matter whose. Then a pause.

"Too much!—we'll give him one!"

To be continued.

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