

## THE HOLY LAND EXCURSION.

[CORRESPONDENCE OF THE ALTA.]

TIBERIAS, September, 1867.

Continued.

But I digress. The flat, plastered roof of the Syrian dwelling is garnished by picturesque stacks of fresco materials, which, having become thoroughly dried and cured, are placed there where it will be convenient. It is used for fuel. There is no timber of any consequence in Palestine—none at all to waste upon fires—and neither are there any mines of coal. If my description has been intelligible, you will perceive, now, that a square, flat-roofed novel, neatly frescoed, with its wall-tops gallantly bastioned and turreted with dried camel refuse, gives to a landscape a feature that is exceedingly festive and picturesque, especially if one is careful to remember to stick in a cat wherever, about the premises, there is room for a cat to sit. There are no windows to a Syrian hut, and no chimneys. When I used to read that they let a bed-ridden man down through the roof of a house to get him into the presence of the Savior, I generally had a three-story brick in my mind, and marvelled that they did not break his neck with the experiment. I perceive now, however, that they might have taken him by the heels and thrown him clear over the house without discommoding him very much. Palestine is not changed any since those days, in manners, customs, architecture or people.

### PUBLIC RECEPTION OF THE PILGRIMS.

As we rode into Magdala not a soul was visible. But the ring of the horses' hoofs roused the stupid population, and they all came trooping out—old men and old women, boys and girls, the blind, the crazy and the crippled, all in ragged, soiled and scanty raiment, and all abject beggars by nature, instinct and education. How the vermin-tortured vagabonds did swarm! How they showed their scars and sores, and piteously pointed to their maimed and crooked limbs, and begged with their pleading eyes for charity! We had invoked a spirit we could not lay. They hung to the horses' tails, clung to their manes and the stirrups, closed in on every side in scorn of dangerous hoofs—and out of their infernal throats with one accord, burst an agonizing and most infernal chorus: "Howajji, bucksheesh! howajji, bucksheesh! howajji, bucksheesh! howajji, bucksheesh! howajji, bucksheesh!" I never was in a storm like that before.

### MARY MAGDALENE'S HOUSE.

As we paid the bucksheesh out to sore-eyed children and brown, buxom girls with repulsively tattooed lips and chins, we filed through the town and by many an exquisite fresco by some unsung Syrian Vernet, till we came to a bramble-infested inclosure and a Roman-looking ruin which was the veritable dwelling of St. Mary Magdalene, the friend and follower of Jesus. The guide believed it, and so did I. I could not well do otherwise, with the house right there before my eyes as plain as day. The pilgrims took down portions of the front wall for specimens, as is their honored custom, and then we departed. There was nothing else in Magdala to see—nothing else save treasures of art. We had no catalogue. We journeyed on.

We are camped in this place, now, just within the city walls of Tiberias. We went into the town before nightfall and looked at its people—we cared nothing about its houses. Its people are best examined at a distance. They are greasy Jews, Arabs and negroes. Squalor and poverty are the pride of Tiberias. The young women wear their dower strung upon a strong wire that curves downward from the top of the head to the jaw—Turkish silver coins that they have raked together or inherited. Most of these maidens were not wealthy, but some few had been most kindly dealt with by fortune. I saw helresses there worth, in their own right—worth, well, I suppose, I might venture to say, as much as nine dollars and a half. But such cases are rare. When you come across one of these, she naturally puts on airs. She won't ask for bucksheesh. She won't even permit of undue familiarity. She throws herself on her dignity and goes on serenely prospecting with her fine tooth comb and quoting poetry just the same as if you were not present at all. Some people can't stand prosperity.

They say that the long-nosed lanky, dyspeptic-looking body-snatchers, with the indescribable hats on, and a long curl dangling down in front of each ear,

are the old, regular, self-righteous Pharisees we read of in the Scriptures. Verily, they look it. Judging merely by their general gait, and without other evidence, one might easily suspect that self-righteousness was their strong suit. From various authorities I have culled information concerning Tiberias. It was built by Herod Antipas, the murderer of John the Baptist, and named after the Emperor Tiberias. It is believed that it stands upon a site of what must have been, ages ago, the city of considerable architectural pretensions, judging by the fine porphyry pillars that are scattered through Tiberias and down the lake shore southward. These were fluted once, and yet, although the stone is about as hard as iron, the flutings are almost worn away. This modern town—Tiberias—is only mentioned in the New Testament; never in the Old.

The Sanhedrin met here last, and for three hundred years it was the metropolis of the Jews in Palestine. It is one of the four holy cities of the Israelites; and is to them what Mecca is to the Mahomedan and Jerusalem to the Christian. It has been the abiding place of many learned and famous Jewish rabbins. They lie buried here; and near them lie also 25,000 of their faith who travelled far to be near them while they lived and lie with them when they died. The great Rabbi Ben Israel spent three years here in the early part of the third century. He is dead, now.

The metaphors of the Bible have to me an aptness and a significance now that they never possessed before. I never knew but one poem by heart in my life—it was impressed upon my mind at school by the usual process, a trifle emphasized. I even discover a new excellence in that poem now as I look out upon the still sea of Galilee and mark how these multitudes of strangely lustrous stars fling their counterfeits upon it and gem the whole broad surface with their glittering splendor:

"And the sheen of his spear was like  
Stars on the sea,  
When the blue wave rolls  
Nightly on deep Galilee."

I see the long files of burnished spear-heads stretching, rank upon rank, far away till they are lost in the mists that brood over the further shore.

The pilgrims are gone to rest, but they did not sail on Galilee. Let us not exult, but let us rather endeavor to be blandly sorrowful.

MARK TWAIN.

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