

THE HOLY LAND EXCURSION.

[CORRESPONDENCE OF THE ALTA.]

TIBERIAS, September, 1867.

Continued.

I never shall know how it was—I shudder yet when I think how the place is given to miracles—but in a single instant of time, as it seemed to me, that ship was twenty paces from the shore, and speeding away like a frightened thing! Eight crest-fallen creatures stood upon the shore, and this—this—after all that frenzied zeal, that o'er-mastering ecstasy! Oh, shameful, shameful ending, after such unseemly boasting! It was too much like "Ho! let me at him!" followed by a prudent "Two of you hold him—one can hold me!"

Instantly there was wailing and gnashing of teeth in the camp. The two Napoleons were offered—more if necessary—and pilgrims and dragoman shouted themselves hoarse with pleading to the retreating boatman to come back. But they sailed serenely away and paid no further heed to pilgrims who had dreamed all their lives of some day skimming over the sacred waters of Galilee and listening to its hallowed story in the whisperings of its waves, and had journeyed countless leagues to do it, and—then concluded they had better not, because it would cost a dollar apiece! Impertinent Mahomedan Arabs, to think such things of gentlemen of another faith!

Well, there was nothing to do but just submit and forego the privilege of voyaging on Genesaret, after coming half around the globe to taste that pleasure. There was a time, when the Savior taught here, that boats were plenty among the fishermen of the coasts—but boats and fishermen both are gone, now, and old Josephus had a fleet of men-of-war in these waters eighteen centuries ago—a hundred and thirty bold canoes—but they, also, have passed away and left no sign. They battle here no more by sea, and the commercial marine of Galilee numbers only two small ships, just of a pattern with the little skiffs the disciples knew. One was lost to us for good—the other was miles away and far out of hall. So we mounted the horses and rode grimly on toward Magdala, cantering along in the edge of the water for want of the means of passing over it.

How the pilgrims abused each other! Each said it was the other's fault, and each in turn denied it. No word was spoken by the sinners—even the mildest sarcasm might have been dangerous at such a time. Sinners that have been kept down and had examples held up to them, and suffered frequent lectures, and been so put upon in a moral way, and in the matter of going slow and being serious and bottling up slang, and so crowded in regard to the matter of being proper and always and forever behaving that their lives have become a burden to them, would not lag behind pilgrims at such a time as this, and wink furtively, and be joyful, and commit other such crimes, because it wouldn't occur to them to do it. Otherwise they would.

So we all rode down to Magdala, while the gnashing of teeth waxed and waned by turns, and harsh words troubled the holy calm of Galilee.

CURIOUS SPECIMENS OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE.

Magdala is not a beautiful place. It is thoroughly Syrian, and that is to say that it is thoroughly ugly, and cramped, squalid, uncomfortable and filthy—just the style of cities that have adorned Palestine since Jacob's time, as all writers have labored heard to prove, and have succeeded. The streets of Magdala are anywhere from three to six feet wide, and reeking with uncleanness. The houses are from five to seven feet high, and all built upon one arbitrary plan—the ungraceful form of a dry-goods box. The sides are daubed with a smooth white plaster, and tastefully frescoed aloft and along with disks of camel-dung placed there to dry. This gives the edifice the romantic appearance of having been riddled with cannon balls, and imparts to it a very pleasing effect. When the artist has arranged his materials with an eye to just proportion—the small and the large flakes in alternate rows, and separated by carefully-considered intervals—I know of nothing more cheerful to look upon than a spirited Syrian fresco. Nothing in this world has such a charm for me as to stand and gaze for hours and hours upon the inspired works of these old masters. I have seen the chef d'œuvres of Vernet, Tintoretto, Titian and a host of others whose fame

is known in every land, but few of them ever affected me like the battle-pieces of these nameless sons of Art. Yet who speaks of them? No one. Book-makers swarm through the galleries of Europe, and lavish praises with untiring lips; they invade the Holy Land and prate of temples that are gone and statues that never had a being; they seek for beauty far and wide, and when they find it glorify it—but never a page have they given to Syrian fresco. Like the lost art of painting on glass, it will pass from the knowledge of men, and then, too late, the world will mourn.

To be continued.

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