

but saddened at what appeared to him altogether a soulless affair. As there may be more or less variation in the present forms of observance of this great Hebrew ceremonial, we venture to summarize from his description of its observance on the occasion when he was present. He was given a book of instructions so that he could follow the whole proceedings, and from time to time was permitted to question his entertainer about what he did not understand.

Before the head of the family was placed a plate on which were placed three cakes of unleavened bread, named "Israel," the lowest; "Levi," the middle one; "Kohen," the one on top, representing respectively the people, the Levites, and the priests. These three cakes were covered with a napkin, upon which were laid as follows: At the top left-hand corner an egg, in memory of the temple; on the left-hand side a salad somewhat like celery. At the top right-hand corner a piece of roast lamb represented the sacrifice. Midway between the egg and the lamb was the bitter herb, and opposite the salad a small cup of sauce compounded of four kinds of fruit, dates, apples, nuts, and pomegranates, the four being used to remind them of the four materials the Israelites made bricks of in Egypt—straw, lime, clay, and water. A glass of wine was then poured for each person, not excepting the infant daughter—and, of course, the usual one for Elijah. This is "blessing the day with wine." Then hands must be again washed, this time with a blessing, which was not necessary at the first. The salad was put into salted water, and, after a blessing, was eaten. The middle cake (Levi) was then broken into two portions, one being taken away for heating. Next the story of the Egyptian deliverance was told, during which the roast lamb was taken away to be eaten on the morrow, the plate being held up at certain places in the narration; at others the wineglass was held up. As each plague was mentioned the little finger was dipped into the wineglass and a little of the wine spilled, as a symbolical invocation to God to pour out his wrath on heathen nations that forget him. At this stage on this occasion the little child fell over drunk; the company shouted with laughter, and the grandmother picked up the child inebriate and resumed her place, trying to "catch up" with the ceremonies. At the close of the reading a second cup of wine was drunk. There was another washing of hands and muttered blessing, called the "bringing out," or a "thanksgiving to God for bringing food out of the earth." Then the half of the middle cake on the plate was taken up, the bitter herb was dipped into the sauce, folded into the cake, and

eaten, because "Hillel ate the two together." The egg was then beaten up in salt water, in commemoration of the destruction of the temple, a custom introduced about three hundred years ago, the reason for which Mr. Soutar could not learn.

The passover supper was then eaten, the table having been cleared and reset. Soup, meat, and unleavened bread were eaten by all. Near the end of the meal the remaining half of the middle cake, heated, was eaten; everyone must have a bit of it. Another blessing was pronounced, another cup of wine drunk, and the door opened for Elijah to come in to drink a glass of wine. He did not enter, so the head of the house distributed it among the family. More psalms were read, the fourth cup of wine was drunk. Then the benediction was pronounced, which was, "All that God requires of us has been done." Some further ceremonies followed to which no stranger could be admitted, so Mr. Soutar did not see them. The entire ceremony was mere ritual, which custom and tradition imposed upon them, and was rendered mechanically from first to last.

Verse 6 says, "The posts went with letters." The ancient oriental postal systems did not provide for departure of mail matter at any regular interval, but did establish a system of relay couriers, who were to be always subject to call. This system obtains still in the remotest parts of India. The writer has had couriers dispatched to follow him with mail matter wherever his camp might be in itinerations in the least penetrated recesses of the Himalaya Mountains. This is the only kind of mail service in Tibet, where it is made the duty of a certain native of a village to send mails by couriers or chance visitors. Seldom is anything lost, though letters are often a long time on the way. Sometimes a rope bridge is not found across the river, when the letters are attached to a stone and thrown across, not every letter reaching the opposite bank. Only when the dispatch is very urgent does the post "munshi" rouse himself to any expedition. In order to show the emergency the sender attaches a feather of an eagle to the missive, and in Chinese Tibet the address is written in blood.

The Chinese government has a service similar to this, but only for imperial documents and letters. Each district magistrate controls the courier service within his district, the couriers being required in urgent cases to make one hundred and sixty miles in twenty-four hours. But for the people the government provides nothing in the form of mail service. There has grown up in all parts of China a system of hongs, or mer-