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The Sunday School Guardian

Rev. W. H. Withrow, M.A. Editor.

TORONTO, NOVEMBER 8, 1879.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT.

With the close of the present volume of the SUNDAY SCHOOL GUARDIAN it will be published in an enlarged form, of a greatly improved character. It will be specially adapted to the maturer tastes of older scholars. For the younger scholars an entirely new paper will be prepared, suited to their age and tastes. It will be called THE SUNBEAM, and it is hoped will be as bright and cheerful as its name implies. We trust our friends will wait till they see our specimen numbers before ordering their papers for next year. We appeal to their Connexional loyalty and Canadian patriotism to support the effort of their own Church to prepare a paper that shall be every way worthy of their patronage. Specimens will be prepared and submitted for approval as soon as possible.

ACROSS THE ALPS.

BY THE EDITOR.

I.

It was a bright and sunny day that I left Lake Maggiore, in Italy, to cross the Alps into Switzerland. The railway train passed through very sublime scenery, mountains towering on either side, with snowy waterfalls pouring down their sides. A little before sunset I reached Biasca, the end of the railway. A tremendous cliff rose hundreds of feet above the hotel at which I stopped, and from my place at the dinner table I could look up and up its long slope: it seemed so far that I had to look twice, as the boys

say, to see the top of it. Before the sunset I took my first Alpine climb. And very hard work it was. The path wound steeply up to a little chapel on the mountain side, and every little way there was a wayside shrine with a rudely painted picture of the Virgin and Child, sometimes with a few faded flowers placed as an offering before it. This was a pilgrimage chapel, and the poor ignorant peasants believe that by toiling up there they will receive the forgiveness of their sins. If they only knew that, not Mary, but her Divine Son alone can forgive sins, and that He can everywhere hear and answer prayer, how blessed it would be!

I met a poor old woman toiling down the mountain with a great basket of faggots on her back that I could hardly have lifted. I looked at her with pity, and she said something in Italian that I could not understand, and went on her weary way. Coming down the mountain I lost my road, and asked a peasant woman, who was mowing in a field, to show me the way. She dropped her scythe, and very kindly tripped off down the steep slope to point out the narrow winding-path. It led me down to a little group of houses, very rudely built of stone and covered with heavy stone slabs instead of shingles. Indeed, stone was far more plentiful than wood. I asked a man to let me see the inside of his house, and he very politely took me all through it, from top to bottom. It was very rude and comfortless, with scarcely any furniture, and what there was, was home-made, and that in a very clumsy fashion. He showed me, too, a lot of wooden shoes made on winter evenings, and a quantity of silk-worms with their cocoons. The silk-worm spins for itself a sort of shroud of silk. These cocoons are thrown into hot water to kill the grub and loosen the silk, which is then wound off on reels and sold to the silk merchant.

Next morning I climbed up to the top of the diligence or stage coach which was to cross the mountains. I had secured a seat on the outside so as the better to enjoy the prospect. The huge lumbering vehicle rattled through the dirty, stone-paved, ill smelling Italian villages, and soon began to climb higher and higher up the mountain's side. The road soon became so steep that we had to have seven horses to draw the coach, and they went no faster than a walk. Up and up, by many a zig-zag, we wound, obtaining every minute wider and grander views over the broad valley and a perfect sea of mountains. At length we got above timber limits and the trees, which had been dwindling smaller and smaller as we advanced, altogether disappeared. Then deep snow drifts appeared. We passed through some which were from thirty to forty feet deep, and once we passed through a tunnel cut in the snow, which formed an arch over our heads. Still up and up we wound to the summit of the St. Gothard Pass, more than a mile high. How we got down I will tell in the next number.