

lies for the ecclesiastical year ending with Easter Sunday inclusive.

(c) To carry out and superintend, with such assistance as may be necessary, the missionary arrangements of the Ruri-Decanal Chapter and communicate for the Chapter with the Bishop, Archdeacon and Mission Board, to visit parishes or missions, if needful, to arrange for raising the assessment of the Synod, or for an addition to the salary of the incumbent or missionary; and when there is difficulty, to endeavor to ascertain the cause, and if necessary communicate with the Archdeacon, Bishop or Mission Board.

(d) To give advice to the Bishop and Archdeacon when so requested on special matters, if necessary, in confidence.

(e) To inform the Bishop and Archdeacon, if necessary, in confidence, of any reports, conduct or proceedings affecting either any of the clergy or church workers individually or the church.

We shall continue the subject next week.

EASTERN CUSTOMS AND BIBLE TEXTS.

By REV. RICHMOND SHREVE, M.A.

No. I.—(Continued.)

Years before we were as wise as now we had been much perplexed at reading those words addressed to the paralytic, "Arise, take up thy bed and go into thine house." St. Matt. ix. 6. We were so no more; any one of our party could have carried the whole six beds on which we slept. (See also Acts ix. 34.) I would not, however, seem to say that there are never any other beds than these in use. In the private apartments of the highest classes, genuine bedsteads, and really lofty, too, are to be found, sometimes requiring steps to mount them. This will explain the expression to be found in 2 Kings i. 4. (See also on ornamentation, Esther i. 5, and Amos vi. 4.) And that a smaller couch was also in use is proved by reference to 1 Sam. xix. 15. It was made probably of palm sticks, which, when securely fastened, were quite strong, except for such a great weight as it would have to bear in Og's case, where it was made of iron, (Deut. iii. 11), the palm sticks would suit all ordinary cases.

Our first effort in the early morning was to obtain a good view of the village and surroundings, and the top of the house readily suggested itself as the best place for the purpose to be found. From what we had seen the evening before on our arrival, we knew the roof was flat; and on looking round could not discover any house that was different in this respect. Around this one, and all others, was a railing or battlement, in obedience to the express command of Deut. xx. 8. Because of the parching heat in the dry season the dust flies here in clouds for many months of the year, and the battlement retains very much of it. From time to time this is cleared off. But here in one corner was a little of it which had evidently been there for some time, and a few straggling blades of grass which were puny and parched, justified to the full the expression, (Ps. cxxix. 7), "The grass upon the house-tops, when withereth afore it groweth up, wherewith the mower filleth not his hand, nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom."

The windows of the middle floor open usually into the Court rather than into the street, and therefore when anything is to be seen or heard in the street every one immediately goes to the house-top to satisfy his curiosity, — just so when any one desires to gain quick publicity for any knowledge, a most effectual way was to proclaim it from the house-tops to the people in the street! (St. Matt. x. 27, St. Luke xii. 3.) While our whole party were standing there, it was suggested that each one recall some Scriptural allusion to the flat roofs of Eastern buildings. The first one was Judges xvi. 27, where the Philistines made sport of Samson in the Temple of Dagon, and "there were upon the roof about 3000 men and women." And said No. 2, referring to Acts x. 9, it was here that St. Peter was praying in Joppa when the messengers from Cornelius were sent to bring him to Caesarea. Here Samuel and Saul, the third remembered, conversed, until the seer sent his listener, so soon to be king, back to

to his father's house. 1 Sam. ix. 25, vi. 7. The fourth quotation was by this time ready, (Neb. viii. 16), when, after a thousand years' interval the feast of Tabernacles was again instituted, after the return from the captivity, the majority of the people made their booths "every one on the roof of his house." No. 5 did not forget how our Lord when speaking of the grievous woes of war which were to come upon the next generation of the people of Judea, warned any one who might be upon the house-top in the critical moment not to return into his house to save any property, but to make escape if possible at once. St. Matt. xxiv. 17. While by the 6th of our party we were reminded of the great faith displayed by the friends of the paralytic when they could in no other way than from the roof obtain access for the sick man to the presence of the Healer. (St. Mark ii. 4, and Valpy's note.)

Just as we had thus each one contributed his reference our host appeared. His greeting was kindly and courteous; and he at once offered to shew us any points of interest in the neighbourhood. Gratefully accepting his offer, we prepared to follow him. Just as he had appeared however, we noticed that his head-dress was different from that worn on the previous evening. From the centre of the upper part of his forehead there projected a small horn, tipped with silver, and fastened with a cincture that passed round the head, and was knotted behind, the ends falling on his shoulders. At once we knew that this must be some high day with him, or he must have met with some success, or heard some good news (tho' we, of course, did not ask, nor did he explain), for the horn was pointed upwards at quite a high angle. As we followed him down the stairs, those passages from the Psalms occurred to us (lxxxix. 17), "For thou art the glory of their strength, and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted," (and lxxv. 10.)

If on the other hand misfortune comes, the horn is lowered, and even the whole body so prostrated that the horn touches the ground, as in Job. xvi. 15.

We had not gone far before we noticed at some little distance a commotion in the street ahead of us. The head-man or Agha of the village, acts as judge, and has considerable authority. As we drew near, in his company, the crowd fell back, and one most miserable looking man, with every mark of reverence bowed himself before the Agha (Gen. xxxvii. 10, 1 Sam. xx. 41 and xxvi. 8) and began at once to pour forth a pitiful tale, telling how he had been robbed in the night of some paltry possession, by a thief who had dug through the wall of his house, secured the plunder and escaped. Almost instinctively, the Agha grasped his own garment and shook it, while a frown gathered on his face, (Acts xviii. 6); to express his disapproval of the whole affair; but he motioned to the man to show him the breach. Following we came to a wretched hovel made of mud, mixed with rubbish; the roof was formed of a sort of coarse matting, daubed over with dirt. (Job. iv. 19.) The walls were very thin, and there in the rear lay the heap which the thief had dragged out, as he pierced the hole. The theft had evidently been committed by one who was familiar with the place. Job. xxiv. 16. As we gazed upon the indescribably wretched appearance of the house, and knew none occupied such dwellings but those whose lives were low and glovelling, there seemed to be a yet deeper meaning than ever before given to the Saviour's words: (St. Matt. vi. 19, 20) "Lay not up for yourselves," &c. (The word here translated "break through" is literally "dig through," and is so translated in Job. xxiv. 16, already quoted.)

We now passed on through several streets, seeing nothing specially noteworthy, until we reached the place of worship of the village. It was small and unpretentious; but as our host approached the threshold he stopped, and an attendant who had followed us stooped down, unfastened the small straps which bound his "shoes" or sandals to his feet, and held them while he passed in. This mark of reverence of removing the shoes is ever shewn to all holy places. So God bid Moses to act in Exod. iii. 5. So Joshua's advance was checked as he approached, not knowing his visitor, towards "the Captain of the Lord's host." Josh. v. 15. We said the Bowab, or door-keeper was

the lowest of the servants of a house; this attendant who unclasped the shoes is just above him in position. How great, then, was the humility of St. John the Baptist when he meekly and sincerely said of Christ: (St. Mark i. 7) "There cometh One mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose," or again (St. Matt. iii. 11,) "Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear." "This office was considered so mean that a rabbinical saying declares that 'whatever services a servant does for his master, a disciple may do for his teacher, only not unloose the latchet of his shoes.'"

Returning we passed round by other streets in the rear of the village, and were shown the course of a stream, now only a dry, rocky bed, but which in the rainy season is filled to overflowing, and the waters rush down with great swiftness and violence. Noticing a confused heap of rubbish and sun-dried brick on a sandy mound close to the bed of the stream, we asked what it was. We were told it was the remains of a house carried away by the flood, because its foundation was so shifting and insecure. Near by, just as close to the stream, stood a house secure and firm, tho' the same storm and torrent had swept by its walls, but its foundation was the solid rock. We turned away in silence as we thought what a striking comment on our Saviour's words in St. Matt. vii. 24, 27. And we thought, too, that Churchmen, as well as builders in the East, want a solid foundation on which to build.

We returned to our host's residence, collected our little caravan, and after thanking him sincerely and profusely, we bid him farewell.

LAYMEN IN THE COUNCILS OF THE CHURCH.

If laymen are to be permitted to share in the councils of the Church, there can be no question that the greatest care should be taken in the selection of the persons to whom the trust is committed. In the past men of high character and of eminence in their profession have been thus honored, and the Church can proudly point to the names of those who have been distinguished in various walks of life that have given their time and talents to aid in her legislation, and in other ways to add to her efficiency. That care is necessary and caution needed in the selection of the persons thus put forward as the Church's representatives in any official capacity will be readily admitted. There will always be somewhat of difficulty in this matter. It is likely to happen that the men who are not, on some accounts, the best fitted for such service and office will put themselves forward, and that those whose aid and efficiency and influence would be the most likely to be valuable are not commonly of a self-seeking character. It ought to be a matter of the gravest importance that the individual chosen for any prominent position should be every way worthy of it.

The mere politician, no matter how high he may stand as a partisan, and no matter what may be the strength of his claims to be considered eligible in the ranks of his party, ought to be disqualified by the very nature of that special qualification. That a man is known as not very scrupulous in the methods he adopts to accomplish his ends and to secure political preferment, no matter how high his ambition may soar, should bar him from any place or power in the ranks of the Church's defenders.

The use in any degree of the honors which the Church bestows to throw around a name that is at least tarnished the halo of religious lustre can only tend to lower religion in the opinion of those whose opinion is worthy of consideration.

Too much and too scrupulous watchfulness cannot be exercised to guard against the possible lowering of the tone of morality and honor and integrity that should be the admitted marks of the character of those who stand foremost in the ranks of defence and of guidance to the Church's well-being. The men who represent the Church, whether in her legislative capacity or in her humblest affairs, should be above suspicion. And some of the excessive caution which hedges around—and very properly so—the Ministerial office, may well be extended to lay delegates, vestrymen, and Church-wardens: