

EASTERN CUSTOMS AND BIBLE TEXTS.

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No. I.—(Continued.)

In the early morning, amid much bustle and confusion, our guides are assembling, ready for a move. They are six in number and uncouth in appearance, only two mounted and four afoot, and their clothing is particularly rough. Other animals beside those we ride carry our baggage and food, &c. Our first thoughts are all absorbed in the novelty of the situation, but we soon recover sufficiently to take note of our guides. The leader, we should already have told you, is a sheik of some little rank; the others are under his orders. We are at once struck with the long and almost flowing garments worn by the four unmounted guides, and wonder how they will keep pace with us if we go at any speed. No need to wonder long. In the cool morning air our horses canter briskly off, and these fellows quickly tighten a strong leathern belt or girdle worn round their waists, tuck up the garment beneath it, and are away as fast as we, with strong, fleet limbs and untiring breath. One in particular, as though to show his speed, ran before us. Already the echoes of old Scripture days come back. We are reminded of the "Great Forerunner" with His rough clothing and "leathern girdle about His loins"; and though there is very little of royalty about us, there is a yet earlier scene which rises vividly before our memories, how "Elijah girded up his loins and ran before Ahab" from Carmel to Jezreel (1 Kings xviii. 45.)

The appearance of the country as we saw it that day had much in it that was beautiful, but we will not delay you to describe it now. We lunched in a rather wild looking spot, shaded from the sun by large, overhanging rocks. The only feature of this meal was the conduct of one of our guides, who, however, the sheik insisted, was rightly punished for his disobedience. The Moslems are strictly forbidden to drink wine, but this fellow, who seemed to be a sort of Low Church Moslem, who didn't mind the rubrics, had concealed in his kit a small bottle of sour mixture called by courtesy wine, and he now went stealthily to enjoy it. His secret would have been well kept and all been safe, but his sudden disappointment caused him to betray himself—"the bottle had burst and the wine was spilled." Our examination of the remains of this "bottle" taught us something. It had been made of goat skin very roughly dressed, and was evidently very old. The quick motion of the horse had aroused the spirit of the liquid, which had returned to mother earth. The appearance of this shrivelled, torn skin brought very vividly back the shrewd story with which the Gibeonites imposed upon Joshua (9 iv., etc.), and at the same time it explained the appropriateness of the Psalmist's comparison when he describes his own anxious and distressed condition, rendering him almost unfit for duty, as that of "a bottle in the smoke" (Ps. cxix. 83); while the words of the Saviour were at the same time explained, "Men do not put new wine into old bottles, else the bottles break and the wine runneth out and the bottles perish; but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved" (St. Matt. ix. 17.)

We remained at this lunching spot for some hours, for it was now "the heat of the day," and we had but a short distance yet to go to our first day's journey's end. It was drawing towards evening as we approached the village, whither one of our guides had preceded us to announce our coming. The head man of the village came out a short distance to meet us, our leader at once dismounting (Gen. xxiv. 64; Judges i. 14), and when there was but a little space between our party and his he ran towards us, and warmly embraced and kissed our leader upon the cheek. How each little scene and act portrayed the long past! Abraham "ran to meet" the three strangers as they approached his tent (Gen. xviii. 2; see also Gen. xix. 1; 1 Sam. xxx. 21; 1 Sam. xiii. 10.) It was with a kiss that Laban welcomed the exile and wanderer Jacob, and thus, too, Esau met him on his return and was reconciled to him; and we cannot forget that in a darker hour, in the shadows of Gethsemane, it was

thus that Judas approached his Master to betray Him to the mob; he came and said "Hail Master, and kissed Him" (St. Matt. xxvi. 49).

The respect as well as the warmth of our welcome at the village was further attested as we entered its outskirts. We had read how "when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, all the people rose up and stood every man at his tent door" (Exodus xxxiii. 8), and here were we being conducted to the centre of the village, between houses some distance apart and all of a heavysameness of plan, but in each doorway stood some member of the family—not in any idle curiosity, but with evident respectful bearing. It was dark when we reached the house of the head man to which we were so kindly led; but as we entered the outer gate there was the Bowab, or door-keeper, with his leathern girdle drawn tightly, his garments tucked up, while in a little niche at the side of the gate post a small light was burning—the very official whose duty supplied the Saviour with his caution (St. Luke xii. 35-36): "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord." This porter, or door-keeper is to be found in every respectable house; he eats, drinks and sleeps in the outer porch, and is considered the most inferior, the very lowest, servant of the household, which fact adds its force to the Psalmist's assertion: "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (LXXXIV. 10).

(To be continued)

News from the Home Field.

DIOCESE OF NOVA SCOTIA.

WALTON.—This is a pretty little village on the Basin of Minas, lying along and at the head of a small bay, which makes inland from the Basin and into which flows, from the interior, through a long stretch of meadow interlying between sloping hill-sides, the Petite River. The village rests at the base of a grade on the left or northern bank of the bay and river, while on the right bank, upon another grade, are also a number of cottages, dotted here and there along the road, which winds over it. The roads over right and left slopes lead respectively to Summerville, about eighteen miles away, which is the point of embarkation by steamer to Windsor and Maitland. On the latter road are the two Settlements, Whale Creek and Tenny Cape, of which I intend to speak further on. From the summit of either hill a very striking and pleasing view is obtainable; from that on the left a magnificent view of Cape Blomidon, across the bay to Parrsboro, the Five Islands, Londonderry and away up the Basin; from the southern hill, towards Summerville, besides Parrsboro and Blomidon, a further view up the Basin toward Wolfville, Hantsport and the Avon River. The walk in both directions along the shingly beaches is also very interesting, leading past huge and steep cliffs of singular and irregular formations of rock, sometimes quartz-bearing slate in regular strata or fused, and bent into all manner of curves, as if by its own ponderous weight, sometimes a huge smooth surface of polished slate, with scarcely a cleft or fissure or rift, facing the sea like the broadside of "some great Admiral," and again a conglomerate of sand and soil, [shells and plaster—and everywhere caves formed by the dashing of the waves at high tides—and deep holes from grinding of hard pebbles in masses of slate and conglomerate, attesting to the mighty power of "great oceans' troubled waters." The smooth beaches give excellent opportunities for bathing, and visitors from different directions are not infrequent. Walton is part of the parish of Newport and, although twenty miles from the Rectory of Brooklyn, has been visited at regular fortnightly intervals by the Incumbent, the Rev. H. How. From a comparative small number of Church people at the time when Mr. How assumed the charge of the parish, the Church has grown to include a large part of the population of Walton, in spite of the fact that during the last year twenty-three persons, all Church members, and almost all communicants, left Walton for Manitoba, the United

States and elsewhere. The three places of worship which Walton possesses stand in a row along the road up the hill on the left bank; the Baptist and Presbyterian meeting houses at the foot and summit of the hill, and the Church in the centre. The two former are built in the usual country meeting-house style of architecture, while the latter is built with that regard to architectural appearance which our Church almost invariably consults. Standing as she does between these two other places of worship, the Church has really, as is often facetiously remarked of her, been, during the past year or two, the receptacle of accretions from either communion. By friendly sociability and Christian charity the Rector has gained the respect of and endeared himself alike to all denominations, and has gained for the Church a more general recognition of her principles and appreciation of her virtues.

The greatest interest is taken by the Rector in the Sunday Schools in pursuance of the idea that these should be the training schools for the Church Militant. The school at Walton is well attended—about 40 names on the roll—and is, as it ought to be, a part and parcel of Church work, and not an "extra" or "supplement," making its appearance when items are plenty or when some new interest is to be awakened. Great pains are taken to make the school attractive to the younger children by means of frequent singing of carefully-chosen songs "for the young," natural and interesting expositions of catechetical and other studies, and the cultivation of an easy, friendly air in communication and intercourse with the Sunday School. A Sunday School Concert is now underway, and though at first it seemed difficult to overcome a natural timidity on the part of the children and to induce them to take part in it, it now gives promise of success.

At Whale Creek School-house, three miles from Walton, Mr. Dixon Parker and his daughter, Miss Parker, have lately begun a Sunday School, and the number, at first only five, have increased from five to twenty-three. A melodeon which Mr. Parker kindly took to the School-house and left there was hailed by the children with delight, and as all children are fond of music, this is likely to be the means of a further increase to the attendance.

At Tenny Cape, Mr. J. W. Stephens, proprietor of the Manganese Mines, has generously fitted up an "upper room" in a building first erected for a store and School-house into a very comfortable Chapel, well seated, well lighted and commodious. Folding doors, with four wings, separate the nave from the chancel, where are to be communion rail and altar. The altar is being constructed, and altar cloth and linen are in due time to be forthcoming. During the week these folding doors are closed, shutting out the chancel, and the remainder is used as a School-house. An ante-room serves admirably and equally conveniently for vestry on Sunday and for school purposes on week-days. The Mining Settlement is of recent date, but already Mr. Stephens, with his indomitable energy and foresight, is making arrangements for having it set off as a school section, and for giving it all privileges, religious and educational, obtainable in more thickly settled villages.

On the morning of Sunday, the 16th of July, service was conducted for the first time in the new Chapel, Mr. H. A. Harley, of King's College, who is spending the summer at Walton as Lay Reader, reading the service. Several carriages went down from Walton, and the congregation numbered about eighty. The service was very hearty and earnest, with good responding and excellent singing. A Sunday School is begun there, also, under the Superintendence of Miss Stephens. The first session was held on the 6th inst., and the attendance was very encouraging.

About the latter part of August or first of September a picnic will be held at a beautiful farm near the shore, about half-way between Walton and Tenny Cape, at which the three Sunday Schools will meet on common ground and learn to know those with whom they are fellow-workers for Christ. The Manuals in use in the Sunday Schools are the same as at the other places, and are in use in the Parish.