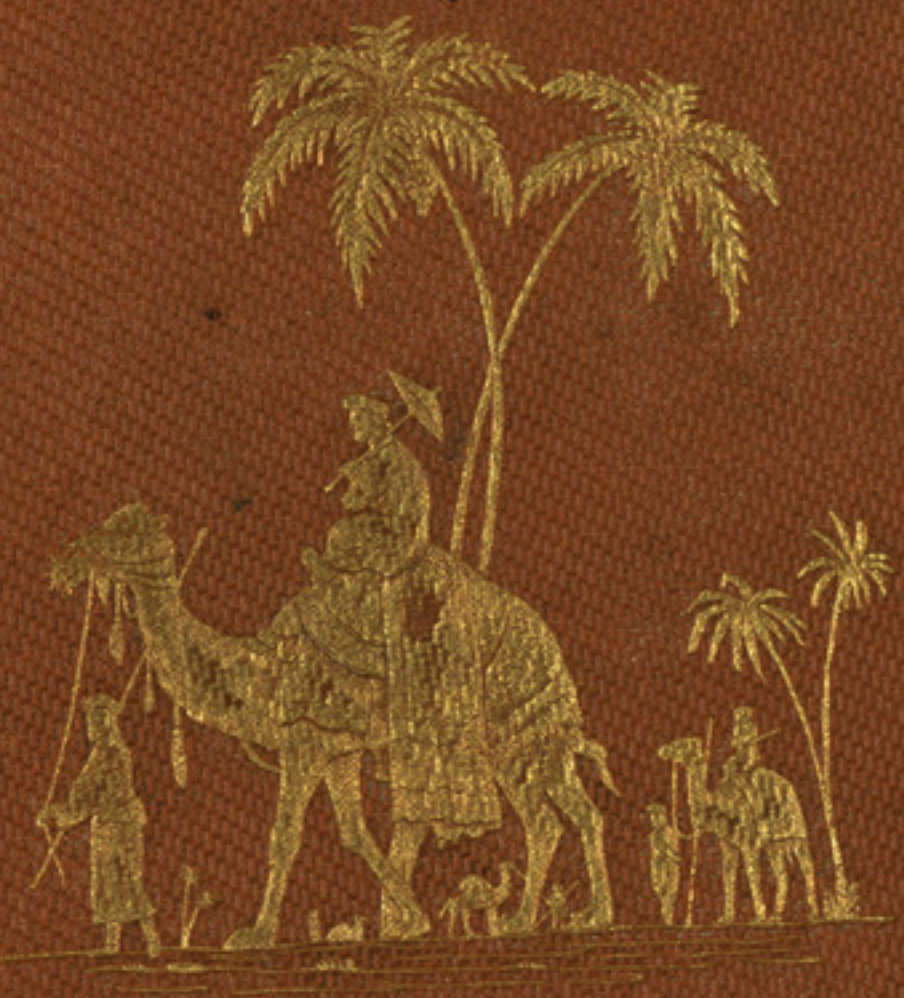

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THE RECONCILIATION IN THE WADY FERAN.

London Hurst & Blackett 1856

THE

WANDERER IN ARABIA;

OR,

WESTERN FOOTSTEPS

IN

EASTERN TRACKS.

BY

GEORGE T. LOWTH, ESQ.

With Illustrations.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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The day for leaving the 'Cambria'— the Sitt's bright home upon the Nile, arrived; and it was a day of mourning. We had become so accustomed to the boat life, its freedom and independence of forms, and so habituated to the people about us and their ways, that breaking up all this at once, and leaving them all, was like breaking up all one's

social life. The Reis and 'the slaves'—the companionable and the accustomed voices—Djad the teller of tales, and gentleman Abdallah, and Shbekkah the handsome dandy—and the cheery song and the primitive chorus—and the bright river always so gay and living—all this was to be given up at once. It was a painful morning.

With many parting words of farewell to our companions of the Nile, and sighs of the Sitt at leaving her boat, we departed from Rhoda for Cairo, attended by cackling of live stock, and barking of Howara puppies, and laden donkeys in a troop, and the Reis, and Mahommed Auad, and two or three more of the crew—as a last act of companionship—a mixed company; and were once more within that thing hated of Arabs—a place of walls and of gates and of bars and of bolts. But there was one additional regret—the 'Caliph for a day' was no longer with us with his merry round face and his laughing squinting eyes. Alas! the son of the merchant of Bagdad had drunk deeply of the waters of misfortune while we were lying at Rhoda—and he was gone. Ah, me!—it was a grievous thing thus to part with my early friend, and black was the hour that saw it—but misfortunes come upon us, and we must bear them as we may. We

saw the caliph no more. Let us draw a veil over the sad circumstances.

But now that we were in Cairo, our great object was to get out of it again; so we busied ourselves and our men, to get out upon the Desert. I fear that, in consequenc of our Desert plans, we gave but a very divided attention to the various interests of Cairo—the increase of printing and the state of education—as well as the efforts of those two excellent men, Mr. Lieder and Mr. Lauria, who give all their time and their laborious attention in aid of the good cause of religion in that country. The constant contact with Europe and with European minds, is gradually producing its effects in Egypt, civilizing the system of rule and introducing new—new to the natives—ideas and habits, and preparing the country for better things than those old things of the past. Egypt is advancing, and she cannot go back. She has her Reform-bill—a commercial and a political one—given her by the hand—the protecting and yet much-influencing—hand of the Western powers; and this is, as usual, knocking down old privileges—useless and arbitrary—and introducing light into the darkness of Egypt. The new religious light, too, which is shining out on the hills of Palestine, is also glimmering in the valley

of the Nile. Why should it not shine out there, too, unto the perfect day, and 'Egypt turn unto Jehovah, and be again his people?' Matters are ever pointing to such a future.

Who is there that does not know Cairo and its neighbourhood—the gardens of Shoobra and its beautiful kiosk? and the Land of Goshen, which stretches away from the Nile to the Desert border, all along over your left shoulder as you go towards Gaza?—and the ruined heaps of Memphis, where you shoot gigantic snipes?—and the shattered forests of petrified trees—a witness, perhaps, of the pre-Adamite world?—and the ground where Napoleon licked the Memlook army, and drove the host of splendid fellows headlong into the Nile?—You go over all these with a feeling of mingled wondering and melancholy pleasure; and you wander about the city from place to place—from the citadel, where the terrible slaughterer lies in his alabaster tomb on the scene where his betrayed victims fell—the killer and the killed,—and from mosques, where noble arches, or columned aisles, or fretwork of Saracenic hands meet you in all their unsurpassed beauty—to bazaars, where you walk, in cool and shaded ways, surrounded by the very faces and the figures, and the scenes which you have known always.—No, perhaps you—perhaps *you* have not known them—never lived among them; but I have,—and here, in these bazaars, I met with all the friends and intimates of my youth. Here was the porter of Bagdad; I met him, with basket on his back, following the Lady Amina on a donkey, who was filling it with purchases from various stalls, for her sisters (two of whom were turned by a fairy into black bitches, for treachery); and there went by me Bakbac, groping blindly along, just after tumbling down the stairs of the robber's house. There, too, was the Purveyor, sitting amongst his muslins and brocades in his little shop-front, and waiting patiently for the coming of the beautiful favourite of the Sultan to pay him for the last quantity she took away—on credit—with his heart. My earliest friends and companions of the days of Arabian greatness were on my right hand and on my left. Was not that little dwarf, who just passed me with his tambourine—was he not my intimate—the little hunchback—the buffoon of the Sultan of Casgar—who nearly caused so many persons to be hung on account of a fish-bone in his throat?—And look! surely, there go the Caliph Haroun El Raschid himself and his Visier Giafar—disguised as two merchants—on their search for adventures! How familiar it all was!

But our Arab Sheikhs were arrived in Cairo. I

was eager to see my new friends of the Desert — where were they?—They were in the great square under the trees of the Esbekeeh, and their men and their camels and dromedaries were at a mile or two distance, outside the city, on the Desert—ready for us and for the journey. I found them beneath the trees, our two chiefs, and our meeting was a grasp of the hand and a quiet smile—the hand so wiry and muscular, and cold, and the smile, scarcely on the lip, but in those dark and liquid eyes, and which—the eyes—in both men had rather a gentle expression. A few words were interpreted between my friend and myself and them. — "Would they conduct us to Mount Sinai, and Akaba?"—"They would do so—and were ready to start when we wished." And we were in brotherhood and friendship with the men of the Desert.

These men — one named Beshara, and the other Aboo El Haj, were both well known men, accustomed to travel with Europeans, of the tribe of the Towara Arabs. They were chiefs of some of the many small tribes which inhabit the Peninsula of Mount Sinai, and where dwell a great variety of tribes in a state of general harmony with each other. One tribe, of more strength and importance than the others, on the Western side of the Peninsula, has given its name, more or less, to the whole

of the community of that division of the country, the Towara — and so, although there are a great many minor bodies of different names, they all acknowledge this as their common denomination. Inhabiting a country which is, in some sort, insulated from the rest of Arabia, and which is not a passage from any one part of Arabia to another, the Arabs of the Peninsula live generally — though quarrels will occur occasionally—an unmolested and peaceful life. Their peculiar position and pastoral existence, undisturbed by the feuds of the great wandering tribes of the opener and larger Deserts, have imparted to these people a milder character and a more gentle expression than mark those men who live a ruder life on the great Saharas, where they are exposed to the contact of violent hordes on their passage from one part of the country to another, or who are making predatory incursions into their territories. The Towara tribes, being also in constant communication with Cairo, and in combination with those lying between Suez and Cairo, doing all the carrying trade between the Peninsula and Egypt, have in some degree adopted the quiet manner and civilised conduct of the people of the cities. The fact of their being within the grasp of the Egyptian rulers, a thorough impression of the advantage of being on good terms with Cairo, a growing

knowledge of the value of the gold coins of travellers—the produce of peaceable and orderly conduct—all these things have of course a considerable influence in taming down the wild passions of this part of the great family of Ishmael. By this union of the Peninsular tribes they manage all matters within their territories, and do not allow other tribes to come within their borders either to pitch their tents or to conduct travellers through them. In the same way the Towara tribes have no power beyond their own confines.

Our two Sheikhs were very different men. Beshara was a powerful, large-limbed, heavy man, short in statue, as are all the race, but of a merry face—scarcely handsome—talkative, willing to please, full of good humour, active, ready in everything. He was the manager and chief of the party of Khawaja and the Sitt of the 'Fortunata.'

Aboo El Haj was a model of an Arab—spare, slight, with beautiful features and deep glowing eyes, silent, and of a grave countenance, readily doing anything desired, but always in his own composed, noiseless manner—always at hand when wanted, and doing everything well. His whole form was that of a man of high blood—his feet small and narrow with a high instep, and his arms and legs fit for the study of a statuary—not large, but

sinewy and fine-drawn as of steel. The whole movement of the man had a grace and a simple dignity which told of the ancient blood in its purity. Frequently at the morning and the evening encampment the voice of Beshara was heard, loud and cheerful—that of Abo El Haj never.

The original intention of the party was to go to Mount Sinai, and then by Akaba to Petra; but we were warned from various quarters against a certain well-known Sheikh Hosseyn who commanded the road between Akaba and Petra—the chief of the Alaween tribe—a man difficult to deal with, violent, overbearing, cunning and extortionate—a true child of Ishmael. Various stories were rife of this man's ill conduct to travellers at Akaba, where he in a manner had them in his power; although some persons reported that he had altered of late his conduct, and was become more manageable and better behaved towards strangers. While we were at the British Consulate on the morning after our meeting the Arab Sheikhs—completing our engagement with them and getting the usual papers for the journey, and hesitating whether we should trust ourselves to Sheikh Hosseyn's new character or not—a letter was received and read from Captain Peel who had just passed through his hands, and who warned people against the Alaween chief—

whose conduct was as bad as ever. This decided the matter, as there were Sitteen in our party; and this would probably expose us to greater extortion, as well as make our position more unpleasant, if the chief should be found by us, in an evil hour—hostile and extortionate. We determined on going by Nahkl.

It is a habit of the Bedoueen to start from Cairo on an expedition, not in the morning, but in the afternoon. They brought their camels into the city on the night before, and in the morning we found them, (men and animals) in a body, lying under the trees of the Esbekeeh before our windows. The first loading of them is a tremendous affair. From an early hour in the morning of the eventful day, the noise of Arab tongues was mingled with the cries of the camel, as the former were disputing with Yusuf and Selim as to the projected loads for their respective beasts, and the latter were exclaiming loudly in their way against any loads at all. The apportioning of the several shares of the baggage of the traveller is a succession of sharp contests, for each owner is desirous of putting as little on his particular animal's back as he can; and when, after a wordy war, his portion is awarded him, the Arab furiously opposes any the slightest addition, and he and his camel join in pouring forth shrill and angry objections to the smallest article.

However, when once these battles have been fought and won by the managing Sheikh and the patience of your dragoman, there is peace and contentment for the rest of the journey. But should any one attempt during the expedition to transfer a feather's weight—a cushion—a water bottle—from one camel to another, the peace is broken, the war rises, loud and menacing and the offending feather-weight is tossed on the sand in wrath.

The whole morning passed in this battle of the baggage; but by the aid of Beshara's unfailing good-humour and the quiet perseverance of Aboo El Haj, the matter was completed in the afternoon, and the camels started for their halting place outside the city; the two sheikhs happy in the possession of a silk dress each, a token of friendship from us to them. A little before sunset we turned our backs on the Esbekeeh, and riding our quick-stepping little 'cabs of Egypt' out of the Gate of Victory, passed by the Pasha's new palace out on the Desert's edge; and turning off the track among some low hills of sand, reached our encampment as it grew dark—and were in the Desert.

It was a warm night, that of the 19th of March, warm and summer-like, and the encampment seemed a very suitable residence. The tents were five in number, forming a half-circle, all alight with

lamps; the baggage all unloaded and arranged in them; the camels lying in groups round about the tents; my friend's Howara puppies barking our welcome; the night fires of the Arabs burning, and the cooks busy at their kitchens, primitive small iron stands containing the fiery charcoal, on the sand in front of their respective tents. With twenty Arabs, and twenty-nine camels and dromedaries, two dogs, a horse, and a good supply of cackling live stock, we were, with ten persons of our own party, a rather numerous society; and life and pleasant sounds, and busy movement on every side, made the little circle in the Desert quite a cheerful place. The tents were commodious, and Selim was never tired of praising them and pointing out all their beauties.

On the following morning we were all astir at sunrise, and a most amusing morning it was, that beginning of the Desert life. There was much to be done still in arranging the separate loads for the camels, even after all the labour and pains of the day before; and then much time was used in building good and commodious saddles, or rather seats, for the Sitteen, neither of whom had ever ridden a dromedary in her life. Then there was the trying the paces of one dromedary, and then of another, till two were found to suit the fancies of

the ladies—two dark coloured creatures of a black brown, smooth paced, and slight of limb, and very much resembling each other. The whole thing was a busy and cheerful scene, and novel too; the packing and unpacking, the re-arranging and fitting things never intended by any laws of matter to fit the backs of camels; the squabbling of Arabs; the barking of the dogs; the roaring of the camels; the trials of the dromedary paces, and the doubts of the Sitteen, as they took their first lessons in riding on the 'Ships of the Desert.'

At last we were off, and all found the dromedary motion not unpleasant, the ladies soon making themselves at home—one of them preferring her pretty, smooth-going creature, to her horse—and enjoying at their ease the novelty and the wildness of the mode of travel. We soon came on the Suez road, our order of travel thus. In front were the two Sitteen and the Khawajat, an Arab on foot leading each dromedary—for it often happens that these animals will not go except when their noses are within reach of their owner's hand; and, moreover, it is convenient to have a man at your beast's head, as then you read, or write, or sleep, or get off and go away for anything you may see on the desert, without trouble or question about your animal. Behind us rode the two dragomany

and the two cooks, with the Sitt's German Jungfer, Ida — as ready for the Desert as for the Nile boat—while the body of loaded camels and the people followed in a loose order. Beshara and Aboo El Haj rode sometimes among the people, and sometimes in the second line with the dragomany, while occasionally the two Sheikhs, and Yusuf and Selim, would come up to the front line, and then there was a general talk with the two chiefs, through the medium of our two servants. The Sitteen were seated aloft, on a great building up of bedding and carpets, with stirrups in front, and rolls of carpeting behind, as supports. And thus day after day, well protected from the sun, they rode for weeks together for nine hours a day, with but occasional intermissions of a day's rest, (except at Mount Sinai) over the deserts. As for myself, I can only say that I never felt fatigue on any day, the movement of the dromedary being easy, and rather inclining you to sleep.

The loading of the camels was various enough. One carried a cask of water on each side, while a large canvas, containing the live stock of turkeys and chickens, stretched across from barrel to barrel. Another was laden with a pile of trunks and bags, rising aloft in a pyramidal form. A third marched between two swelling mountains of beds and bed-

ding, while a fourth bore that elaborate piece of furniture, the kitchen, with sundry crates and boxes of wines and oranges. A fifth, the giant of the herd—a camel of magnificent power—went springingly along for hour after hour, and all day long, under the pantry and the store room—our subsistence and our life—two enormous cases of a crushing weight—and on the top of another, aloft, above bags and boxes, rode the two dogs of the Khawaja of the 'Fortunata,' in a basket, watched over by a Nile sailor, holding a white parasol over them, to shield the young Karnak and Luxor from the sun. Others carried Arabs, seated in the midst of an indescribable confusion and medley of objects. Our dromedaries carried little besides ourselves, that little being composed of camel bags, like small saddle bags, handy for many things—such as books, note-book, coat, wrapper, spirit-case, powder and shot, and such like. Some pillows laid on the usual wooden saddle frame, and a small Turkish carpet thrown over them for a seat, with English stirrups at either side, and a gun slung behind, completed the requisite equipment.

Thus we went on till one o'clock, when we halted under a bank a little off the road, and the carpets being taken down and spread, we had out the light refection—the faithfully loved of women

—the social luncheon, where dates and oranges, and honoured biscuits of Britain, and wine, made the Desert full of life.—Here we rested for an hour; while the loaded camels and the cooks were sent forward with orders to keep on till an hour before sunset, and then stop under some sheltering bank near the road, and pitch the tents. This became at once, and from that day forward, the established order of travel, and was quite successful. Starting every morning at eight, we had five hours riding before the midday rest; and then, after an hour, we rode four hours more to our tents—reaching them at sunset. By the time we came up, the tents were pitched and the baggage all arranged, and the dinner nearly ready.

This our first day was a fine clear sunny day of March, with a fresh wind blowing behind us from the west, and which kept the air cool. The country had a degree of tameness and monotony, being a succession of low undulating hills. At times as our roads lay over some higher swell than usual, we could see far away to the north-east the dark ground of cultivation beyond the white desert—the land of Goshen on the edge of the Delta, skirting the sandy plains towards El Arish. Here and there some picturesque hills, white and broken in outline, rose up at intervals from the plains towards that

cultivated border, while behind them, in the direction of the Syrian Desert, waved long slopes of black and stony hills. At every five miles we came to a 'station' — a low square house built round a court — all of it on the ground floor with a stable attached—the stages of the Indian Transit. At some of these there is a certain temporary accommodation for man as well as beast, but most of them consist of nothing but a stabling for the Transit horses. All the way along too, on the hills near the road, were the small white houses of the telegraph from Cairo to Suez. Every now and then coveys of partridges rose from the road in our front; and in fact all the way along this route from the one town to the other—from Cairo to Suez — there is very pretty shooting, the birds finding plenty of food on the great track where so many animals pass every day. This is particularly the case at the Hajj resting place in front of the central station — where I found on the large space of litter, seven coveys—and curiously enough, a snipe.

But our first day of travel came to an end successfully—the Sitteen not much fatigued by it—the movement of the dromedary pronounced to be smooth and easy—and every thing in readiness at

the encampment when we reached it. On the second day we emerged from among the low hills, and came out on the broad plain of El Muggreh—a long level tract, four miles wide, between two chains of mountain ground, and near forty miles in length. About half way along this plain stands the hunting palace of Abbas Pasha—Dar-el-Baideh—a dazzling white building up on the white desert rocky hill—a ghastly place of pleasure. It took us two days to get over this plain. And now we had got fairly into our new mode of life; and the rising with the sun, and the cries of the camels all round us, and the bustle of packing up every thing—the furniture of the house, and the house itself—and breakfast finished, and the party all mounted, and the little village of the night become a bare place—given back again to the waste—by eight o'clock—all this seemed quite the usual and natural way of life; and we rode off with the sun in our eyes. How pleasant was the feeling that we were going due east, with Arabia right in our front—and the breath of the morning on our faces, rejoicingly. There being no heat, and but little glare, it was delightful to get off your dromedary and walk, the pace of the camels—rather under three miles an hour—enabling you to walk at your ease by their side, or wander off the road in search of plants, or

game, or any other of the products of the Desert, and recover your party at your convenience. Nothing could be more enjoyable than this kind of travel—this freedom of movement—this active idleness. The air was very pure and soft, and seemed to make all of the party ready for any exertion, for nobody felt fatigue, but rather a kind of buoyant sensation and a power of enjoying. The wild scenery, the dry light atmosphere, the novelty of life, the charm of variety—a singularly great one to some dispositions—all this seemed to communicate itself, as some spirit, to your being.

On the third morning, as we were starting, some artificial-looking mounds at a mile distance from the camp, and away from the road, attracted our attention; so, after the Sitteen were mounted—they rode away together just as much at their ease as if all their lives they had ridden dromedaries on the Desert—my friend and I went off on foot to look at the mounds, for there was a story about them. On reaching them we found they were formed by the excavations from a great pit or well of unknown depth—at least unknown to any of our people. The mouth of it was circular, of forty feet diameter, and this you could see down for about eighty feet; and then, the well narrowing to about

half the size, you could only guess at its further depth—declared by Beshara to be something fearful to think of. The story of the place was this :—

Once upon a time, about a thousand years ago, lived and reigned in Egypt a Sultan Suleiman. He had seventy-five sons. On the same day his seventy-five sons were married, and on the night of their marriage all the sons with their brides were killed in their beds. The next day the wife of the Sultan and mother of the seventy-five sons (my Arabian story-teller, Sheikh Aboo El Haj, said 'the mother'—one mother) went to her husband, and said—"All our sons are dead." Sultan Suleiman did not weep or lament, but replied to her, calmly —"God's will be done—Allah gave me seventy-five sons—Allah takes them away—He can take me, too." Allah was well pleased with Sultan Suleiman and his submissive conduct under this terrible blow—that he neither complained nor rose in anger at the stroke—and He, therefore, gave him better things than sons—viz., command over all the birds of the air, and the beasts of the Desert, and over the genii that busied themselves with the affairs of man. The animal world and the human species enjoyed abounding happiness under the wise and beneficent rule of Sultan Suleiman. Now, this part of the Desert—part of the great plain of El

Muggreh—was famous, and held in horror by all genii, as being a tract destitute of water, or of any plant or verdure; and so, when any of the genii under the command of the Sultan Suleiman behaved ill, he used to banish them from happier scenes to this plain—this arid desert of El Muggreh—as a punishment. Here they wandered up and down—(I asked Aboo El Haj if Dauhasch was among them, or if Maimouné had ever been sent there? but he said he did not know either of those personages)—as in a large prison, without employment, while the birds and the beasts screamed and howled at them by day and by night. The plain was condemned to everlasting sterility by the Sultan, and has remained so ever since. At last, Allah took Sultan Suleiman, and the genii were released from their terrible prison. But, about four hundred years afterwards, a stranger arrived at Cairo—nobody knew where he came from—and he said he could find water on this plain—this plain of arid horror. He was told he could never find water there; but the stranger persevered in saying "there is water," until permission was given him by the Sultan of Egypt to find it. He dug this great well, and he worked for seven years—but he found no water. One morning, the stranger came to the well to see how his work went on, when lo! a figure of an old

man sat on the brink—a strange white old man—and he said—"If you dig here all your life long, you shall never find water." The old man was one of Sultan Suleïman's genii—and the stranger left off digging from that hour.

It is but fair to Yusuf to say, that he had doubts about the story of Aboo El Haj.—He said he was told that, some eighty years ago, this well was sunk by an enterprising foreigner from Europe, with the object of finding water, in consequence of some appearances which led him to think there might be some thereabouts; but, after three or four years of work, he gave up the attempt as a bad job. For my part, I held to the account of Aboo El Haj as the true history of the whole thing. We threw lumps of earth down, not to disturb the old man, but to try aud measure the depth by the time of the descent; and coming to the conclusion that the digger, whoever he was, did not persevere beyond three hundred feet, and no genii taking any notice of our pelting, we went after the travellers.

As we rode along we met a small party of three men, on camels, but one of them leading a white horse. They were all armed with guns and swords. Our Towara men carried no guns, but only short swords thrust through the waist belt. The faces

of the strangers were of a different cast from those of our companions, the expression more harsh, the eyes more fierce, the features more coarse, and the hair about the face of a deeper black. No Arab parties ever meet without the usual enquiries, for there is always more or less of war going on among the various tribes; and the question of friend or foe is an important one. However, between Cairo and Suez the question is of less immediate moment, as that part of the Desert is a neutral ground under the Pasha of Egypt's hand, and in the peculiar territory of no tribe. All are safe there, and no party would venture to attack another, however much their respective tribes might be at war on their own deserts.

Our Arabs accordingly stopped this little party, and after the usual salem aleikom, the following passed:—"Where are you from?"—"Akaba."—"Of what tribe are you?"—"Alaween?"—"What is your business here?"—"We are taking this horse to Cairo for Abba Pasha."—"Is there peace on the Desert?"—"There has been much fighting beyond Akaba, but it is over."—"Selim—ask him what price the Pasha is to give for the horse."—"Twenty purses."—(£100)—"Of what breed is he?"—"High caste Nedjid."—"Aleikom."—and they went on their way. The horse was

white, a low, little horse, squarely built, with strong bony legs and short switch tail, and a kind head but not a very small one. He was large in the quarter, and looked as if he could carrry any weight on his straight powerful back.—The Alaween and the Towara were on friendly terms, but the former did not stand high in the opinion of our friends. "They always fighting somebody," said Selim,—"Alaween bad man—I know them—very great thief—Sheikh Hosseyn one big thief."

Thus we went on upon our desert way, sometimes all four riding abreast along the broad smooth road and through the sunny air, fresh, and soft, and elastic, and not hot, engaged in converse about far away England, or the Nile adventures just passed, or the enterprise present and before us. Sometimes one would take out a book from his portable library, riding in the bag at his dromedary's loins, and read out some other traveller's notions on the question in hand; or Yusuf and Selim were called up to settle some point of the journey, when their own adventures, or some incidents on the path of former travellers, came out as testimony to their statements; or Beshara and Aboo El Haj were appealed to, and then we got an Arab story in addition. Each hour of each day the Sitteen became more accustomed to the movement of the

dromedary, and entered more and more into the spirit of the expedition, and enjoyed with added zest the novelty of the scenes around them, and the charm of the peculiar and totally unaccustomed life.

On the third evening we approached the termination of the great plain of El Muggreh. The scenery became more striking; the hills had increased to mountains, for we were coming down on the great masses which terminate the Arabian chain near Suez, fine dark-coloured rocky mountains throwing out their lower spurs in sharp and angular slopes and precipices to our right. On our left, the long line of white hill bounding the plain ended in a large heavy mass, reminding us by its shape of Capri, in the bay of Naples—beautiful Capri—and which shut in with its rugged wall the white plain. Our road lay through a defile between these rocky heights; and emerging from it we found that we had passed suddenly into the open ground which slopes down in a long gentle inclination to Suez. The blue waters of the Red Sea were in sight, and the line of mountain beyond it, due east, on the Desert of Shur, now tinged with the red light of the evening sun. The Desert of Shur! With what strange import strike on your ear the great names of the Bible lands, when you for the

first time stand in front of each spot, and see and touch, at length, what has hitherto possessed for you but a kind of dreamy reality—a mysterious existence, felt by you, known to you—how well and fully—and yet how unknown. We were on the Desert of Etham, and there was the Wilderness of Shur! Names how graven on all memories—and places how alive with all the events which move around the awful mysteries of our present and our future life!

The camp was in the middle of some low hills; and as I stood on one of these, looking towards Suez, a flying figure came out from behind the slopes and went on along the road at a few hundred yards distance—a man on a dromedary, bearing, probably, some Government orders from Cairo to Suez. What a pace the messenger went. For about half a mile the road lay in sight, and over that short space the dromedary passed at the pace of a race-horse. He was evidently put out to his best. Had he come all the way from Cairo at that pace? or had he changed at Dayr-el-Baideh? The style of going reminded you of the movement of the ostrich—the body moving with that peculiar undulation, and swinging, flowing action of the fleet footed bird, and the neck and head making the same short, sharp, bird-like jerks. Suddenly, in

the twilight, this single figure had dashed out from behind a sand hill into sight, and in a few seconds it was gone, disappearing round a swell of the waste. That solitary form flitting across the sight seemed an object fitting to the scene—and the solitude of the Desert seemed to strike one, after it was gone, as even more complete than before. Under that pale twilight, so tender and so soft, how affecting in thy wide loneliness—how peaceful in thy beauty—wert thou, O sacred desert of Etham!

CHAPTER II.

The Day of Rest—Desert Scenery—History and Imagination—Suez—The Stars of Heaven—Night Travelling—The Ardent Sitteen—Jebel El Tih—The Evening Ramble—Too Still for Slumber—The Burning Wind—Sensitive Dromedaries—Mother and Child—The Smock-frock of the East—Fish-skin Shoes—Wady Megara—Wady Taibe—The Living Sea.

We had determined, as we went along, that on Sundays we would remain quiet in our encampment, and thus give a rest to man and beast on our journey.

It was not to be denied that the Day of Rest came pleasantly to us all in more ways than one. The Sunday morning, instead of being one of noisy bustle and packing, and active disturbance, was, as it should be, one of the most total quiet. Where can you have more, or more absolute quiet, than on the Desert? How singularly still and peaceful that

morning seemed. Instead of awaking to cries of men and groans of camels, I awoke to a total silence—an occasional low voice—an occasional foot-fall on the tent near the sand, only making the general stillness more apparent. However, I got up at sunrise, as usual—for how could one stay in bed within sight of the spot where 'the Egyptians pursued after the Israelites—all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them.' I could think of nothing but Pharaoh's horsemen and chariots—'six hundred chosen chariots'—galloping along that wide plain just outside my tent, and 'the pillar of the cloud' stretching all the way across it, and beyond it the waves roaring, as they rose up in two walls of waters. I went forth to see all this—but on reaching the top of a neighbouring hill, I saw—how different a scene from that of my tumultuous thoughts. Not a moving thing was visible from north to south, over that far-stretching expanse—how white and bare it lay—and how calm the sea, and the low outline of the town, beneath the rays of the sun, just risen above the mountain-top of the range beyond the water. It was a glorious bit of scenery, and the words broke out—'Where is the flat and monotonous desert?' Beyond the sea the range of mountain of the Desert of Shur, Jebel El

Tih, rose up sharply from the side of the road from Suez to Akaba—due east—and ran right away down to the south, towards Mount Sinai, a level of six or seven miles breadth separating the sea from the mountain. North of this the desert of Etham, towards Syria, presented an irregular surface of plain and hill, and range beyond range of broken mountain ground. Where was the flat desert? for this before me was broken and mountainous, and beautiful exceedingly beneath that morning light.

But where was the scene—the grand scene of history and of miracles? — It was before me — somewhere — within range of my vision at that moment—but the exact where—that was the question. Commencing a little way on my left hand the Red Sea stretched away to my right far down due south, and Jebel-Ataka rising, just behind my back, took a slanting direction towards the gulf and struck its waters at a point about fourteen or fifteen miles down—at Ras-Ataka. Thus a wide—an immense triangular plain lay before me, sloping gently from the roots of Jebel-Ataka down to the sea. What a corner to be "entangled in"— methought — a complete trap; with this Jebel-Ataka on one side; and the sea on the other, and the two meeting in front at that point of Ras-Ataka, the Israelites encamping by that sea were "shut in" by that

rocky barrier of the wilderness—and a very inextricable position, humanly speaking, they were in. But what was it to me whether people differed about the exact spot of the stupendous act, and disputed if it were done just here, or just there?—Whether the Hebrew people crossed the plain of El Muggreh behind me and came on the sea just beyond that Ras-Ataka — or whether the mighty mass wide-spreading came along this plain to Suez? —What was this to me?—Was not there at least that sea which had opened wide its bosom for the host to pass in safety? — Were not those at least the very same waters which had retired before the rod of Moses, and had "returned in their strength" on his pursuer?—Hark!—What sound of rushing was that?—A cloud gathers all across the plain from the water to the mountain — and here come, along the level waste, chariots and horsemen—a glittering and fierce array—shouting they came, and swift and terrible—it is Pharaoh and his warriors; and they have caught sight of the fled victims on the shore—"they are entangled in the land,"—the Exulter shouts —"the wilderness hath shut them in — I have caught them"— but lo! sudden darkness falls upon the earth and surrounds the chariots and the horsemen and the King—and it is black night to the arrested host. — And on the

other side of that cloud it is day—bright and shining day—as a summer morn—and the saved ones are crossing that wide gulf from impending death to life triumphant. Was it possible for any one to stand on that spot and not to people it with living figures of the scene so sublime?

How enjoyable was that whole day of quiet. The camels were all gone off to find shrubs for food, where they could — the Arabs lay asleep among their scattered baggage — no sound of the busy world broke the silence of the wilderness—and we remained in our tents—at home.

The next morning saw all this reversed, and stir and bustle, and quickened movement were around us, and enterprise was in our front. In a few hours we were at Suez; and, after a walk about the little sleeping town, and a visit to the British Consul—a very obliging gentleman—and a short stay in the Great Transit Hotel,—now silent and empty—we were all ready to quit streets and houses once more, and were eager for our tents and the Desert. The camels and the dromedaries had all gone before us, the former with the baggage round the head of the gulf—a four hours' walk—and the latter by a ford, just above the town. We took boat across the gulf. The water was very shallow all the way over, and the passage about a mile and a half. It was a

soft, still evening, and the sun went down among blood-red clouds towards Cairo, as we paddled leisurely across the waters of the Red Sea. Our animals were waiting for us on the sea-shore, and, mounting them, we rode out on the Desert of Shur. The tents were at an hour's ride from the landing-place, and the twilight being of a very short duration, before we were half way to them it became night. There was no moon, but the stars seemed to shine out with a brilliancy and a force beyond even that in the skies of Upper Egypt and Nubia. There was a diamond sparkle and movement in the whole constellation of Orion I had never before witnessed, and the Great Bear over our left shoulders —for we turned our heads south-east immediately —was more than ever boldly prominent, standing forward from the vault behind, and hanging his lamps down over the mountain towards the Mediterranean low down and largely luminous, in that transparent atmosphere.

Night travelling has always a great charm for me; and the night on the Desert is so dry and clear, and the breath of the wilderness on the cheek is so soothing, that there is a strange temptation about it. The great waste is so still, and it stretches away before you dimly, and invites you forward.

The air that passes so tenderly across your forehead as you ride along with your hat off, is so sweet and warm, and soft, that you soothly swear it is just come from the happy home of some kind genii awaiting you—why should you not go on? The measured tread of the dromedary on the sand is distinct, more so than in the day, and he moves on with the same springy step and majestic air as he did when he started in the morning. He is not tired, nor are you—why should you not go on? The bosom of the sea, over your right shoulder, reflects in long radiant lines the glittering host of heaven, and Jebel-Ataka's black masses beyond are distinct; and the mountains of Shur, on your left hand, carry the eye forward far down to the south; and the way in front seems open to you and level, and leads somewhere—why should you not go on? It is strangely tempting.

On the following morning the Sitteen were in such ardent spirits for travel, that they proposed to ride longer days—ten hours instead of nine—the Sheikhs having hinted that we should be longer on our journey than was usual, at our present rate of going, nine hours a day being too little. But we, the Khawajat, resisted the Sheikhs and the Sitteen, judging that nine hours a day on their dromedaries was pretty good work for the latter, and that,

though they did this very well, and enjoyed it, another hour would probably spoil the whole pleasure of the ride by making it a labour. And what if we were a day or two more on the Desert—what then?—The life—was it not a pleasant one?—And time—was it of that value—to us unshackled of all social rules but our own—that we should care to save it up and make a store of it, and give our enjoyments, for miserlys crapings of hours? We declared against a ten hours' bill, and stood for nine per day as the rule for our shop.

It was a fine fresh morning, with a light breeze, and our way lay over an immense plain, flat and stony. On our right, two or three miles off, was the Red Sea, of a fine deep blue colour, equal to any colouring of the Bay of Naples. Not a sail was visible on its wide bosom. A range of mountains, irregular and broken, bounded it to the west, Ras Ataka striking the water in a sharp point just about opposite the Ayoun Mousa—the wells of Moses—which we passed in an hour-and-a-half after starting—the breadth of the gulf about twelve miles. On our left, at some six or seven miles distance, was the range of Jebel El Tih—a red wall of rock, and in places at its foot were considerable open woodlands, consisting of large trees, said to be acacias.

In all that line of mountain the Sheikhs told us of the haunts of tigers and gazelle. But not a living thing besides ourselves was moving on all the surface of this plain, and which before and behind seemed to stretch away into boundless space. Here, then, we were in the desert of Shur, along which Moses led the Hebrew people by this road for three days; and it was with a new sensation I cannot well define, that I took the sacred book from my library and read, as I rode along, the song of Moses—his triumphant song on that sea-shore under my eye. As I read, imagination conjured up the events of that morning hour, and as I looked back towards Ras Ataka, and the shore by the Wells of Moses, I almost seemed to see the multitudes on the dry land, and the prophet's bold figure, so majestic in his noble simplicity, and to hear the swelling chorus of that song, and the roaring of the waves, as they rushed over the bewildered army of Egypt. The whole action seemed to rise before my senses; and the wild singularity of the scenery around—in itself, and apart from all adventitious circumstances, very impressive—combined with it to impart a solemnity to the thought, as the eye wandered from the page to the desert shore.

This day we added a new rule to our order of travel—that we should dismount every evening

when we came in sight of the encampment, then at about an hour's distance over the plain;—and accordingly, when the white tents appeared—our village home for the night—we sent all those with us forward, people and camels, and had a walk. This last hour was very pleasant, and the walk a great improvement—a strolling saunter, during which you picked up odd pebbles and marbles, and found flowers—very sweet scented some of them—or you stopped to admire some bit of scenery, or to talk over the spot and its associations; and so you strolled on leisurely to your village. This evening walk always refreshed the Sitteen after their long day in the sun, and by this means they also escaped an hour of the dromedary motion, which sometimes would produce fatigue in some degree. And a cheerful little village it was when you arrived. The encampment was generally pitched in the form of an irregular circle, the two large tents occupying nearly half of it, the three smaller ones bending round from either extremity, and the Arabs, with their camel baggage and camels, bringing round the circle to the front. When you entered within the circle, what a busy and welcoming scene it was after your long day's ride. The tents all alight with eastern lamps—the doors thrown wide, all temptingly—the kitchen fires burning brightly, and

sounds, and scents, and steamy doings on either hand. Selim and Yusuf were active and busy in making you all at home, and Beshara and Aboo El Haj moving about—the one with his gay laugh, and the other in his noiseless way—and both adding something to the general convenience of your tent or your baggage; while the Arabs and the camels were scattered about in groups, the greater part of the former usually collecting by degrees in a circle by their own rude belongings round a blazing fire. As the evening wore on, and night came, and sounds gradually ceased, your men in their beds, and the Arabs, for the most part, wrapped in their cloaks, asleep by their fire which was dying out; then, when all was still, the Sitt in her dreams, how stealthily you opened the back curtain of your tent, and stepped outside the circling encampment into the waste. You walk away, and on, and on along the smooth sand or over the stony level, and the cool air is refreshing; and the stillness of the Desert, its dim extent, its wild solitudes, they draw you on, with a charm you cannot resist, farther and farther into the places of silence. You look back, and the camp is hidden; some wave of ground and the distance shut it out—and you sit down and listen. How still it is—not a sound comes to your ear out of that intense silence. The only movement about

you is the sharp flashing out so irregularly of light from the great lamp-like stars above you, and the only life you are aware of is the jerking current of your own blood. It is very tempting, that dim uninhabited space before you—it is as some mystery which attracts you with a secret and uncomprehended tie between it and you; and you go on in the direction of El Tih, and you think, perhaps, the night air may bring down to you the cry of some wild beast of the wilderness; but you hear nothing but your own footfall. Those night walks over the Desert make a man think strange thoughts; but they are not bad ones—the solitudes are too sublime for them

One afternoon, on re-mounting after our mid-day halt, we had the first taste of Desert heat. The fresh wind, which had accompanied us all the morning, fell—and the air become hot. For two hours we rode on in silence, with veils and handkerchiefs down over our faces to keep off the burning air from the skin and the glare of the white earth from the eyes. No one spoke, for the heat had the effect of creating a drowsiness and an inertness of the faculties, and we rode on in a kind of mummied state in total silence. The slow, and regular, and rather rocking motion of the dromedary seemed to me to increase the sense of torpor;

but the animals held on as steadily as if this was their favourite temperature, and the Arabs, leading them, walked on through it at a brisk and even pace without slacking it for a moment. Occasionally I threw up my handkerchief to see how things went, and how the Sitteen bore the fiery attack, and our Egyptian men. The whole surface of the Desert seemed to be swimming beneath the body of light that lay upon it—the men of Egypt had their faces covered like ourselves, but Beshara and Aboo El Haj and the other Arabs took the matter quite easy, and made no change in their headdress —a piece of cotton stuff, not thick, wound round a red or white skull cap—a very slight defence. One of them, a young fellow who led the Sitt's dromedary, never wore anything but a white cotton skull cap, thin and small, protecting nothing, neither eyes nor head, scarcely. The little fellow walked on in this fiery light, humming as usual in low tones his simple monotonous Arab air, as much to his satisfaction as if he were among flowery meads. —The heads of the Sitteen were protected by folds of the turban cotton, of light and gauzy texture, wound round the bonnet, as well as by ye, O sheltering guardian angels—white parasols,—while cloaks kept off them all the burning flood. I was glad soon to be again behind my curtain, and to

shut out the mummies and the dazzling scene.— Thus we rode for two hours in silence.

Suddenly we were aware of a change—that the heat was at an end :—a breeze had come up across us from the sea, within sight on our right, and in an instant what a change there was in the party ! Veils and handkerchiefs were thrown up—everybody broke out at once into talk—and cheery voices made comparisons of sensations under this first attack of the great Re upon the desert travellers. No one seemed to have suffered, and all were in high spirits at this first victory over the terrible enemy so easily gained.

This day was one of mourning to me. My dromedary was unhappy, and she said so perpetually all the day long, until she communicated her sorrows to my too sympathising bosom. A fellow feeling springs up in the desert between the human being and the animal—the sensitive dromedary and her rider—passing, as they do, every day together, and all the day, The Sitteen and their dromedaries were becoming fast friends—an affection was growing rapidly on the part of the former, at least, for the gentle creatures which carried them. This was but natural, for the two animals were beautiful of their kind, with pretty heads and fine large, soft, dark eyes, and their

movements were smooth and graceful, and their tempers unvaryingly good. One was much taller than the other, but in other respects they resembled each other as two sisters, both being very dark coloured, and nearly black about the head and neck. There were perpetual little communications going on between these two animals and their riders, much to the gratification of their owners. The Arab and his dromedary become much attached to each other, and on the journey it is curious to see how the latter expresses its affection. Thus, if the Arab leads it, the animal is contented; but if the owner goes away, and another man takes its place, it goes unwillingly and complains continually. The Sitt's dromedary made a great fuss about her master, if he left her for half an hour or so during the day's march and gave her over to another man, moaning and grumbling about the matter without end. One day it happened that he was away for half the day, having gone off in the night to see somebody—somewhere. She started in the morning very unwillingly, in spite of the Sitt's biscuits and bread and many caresses and promises of more good things at night, and her step was languid, and her head constantly turning back to look for her absent master. She was deaf to the stranger Arab's words, and spent

her time in groanings. At last he came, and there was quite a tender meeting. The animal heard his voice at a distance as he came up from the rear, and stopped dead short at once, and turned her head to look for him, and grumbled her satisfaction in low tones. The man kissed her, and walked forward for some distance talking to her; while the dromedary smelt him all over, leaned her head on his shonlder, and fondled his cheeks with her long lips—and so went on caressing and contented with springing step.

But my animal's grief arose from a different cause. Ever since leaving Cairo its owner had, after leading it for the first day, ridden a young one—a four-year old—of which mine was the dam, and always somewhere handy to me—sometimes twenty yards off on one side, and then on the other, or a few paces in the rear—keeping the mother and child within grumbling distance of each other. When I got off to walk, which I did every day for some hours morning and evening, then the family trio journeyed together. Thus the days had passed in unbroken happiness and the tenderest union; but one day from Marah—we passed Marah, and tasted the bitter water—to Wady Thal, the family union was dissolved into thin air, and the sky of happiness was overclouded; for the Sheikh

and the child had disappeared from the camp on the night previous, and the mother and I were left desolate in the wilderness. We went heavily, mourning the absent ones, and our journey was piteous. For two days they did not return, and a stranger Arab led the disconsolate parent during my walking hours, and the evening and the morning found no change in our condition. It was in vain that I tried all ways of comfort, such as biscuits, and much condolence—she was even deaf to the suggestion that her daughter was gone to be married. This failing to revive her spirits, it was clear the case was utterly hopeless. There was a great meeting at the end of the two days, I heard; but I was not present to witness it, as the absentees—the daughter still single—returned to the camp in the night.

One long garment reaching below the knees—a kind of smock frock—of a whitey-brown colour, closing at the neck and with loose full sleeves, and fastened round the waist with a broad leather belt —this with a skull cap, and, sometimes, a pair of slippers, composed the Desert toilette of our Arabs. —It had the great merit of being light for walking and leaving the limbs every freedom that nature had blessed them with. It was a question among us occasionally how long a certain man—

leader of the dromedary of the Sitt of the 'Fortunata'—would make a pair of things, indescribable by any name, which he wore on, or rather under his feet, to last. The articles were of the scantiest dimensions, reaching from the end of his foot to nearly the heel; they were, rigidly measured, as broad as the broad part of his foot, at that point, but they shrunk away rapidly to a point beneath the hollow—the whole affair about the size of the palm of one's hand—and the only fastening was a thong which passed from the extremity round the big toe. They were of fish skin; and on our starting from Cairo, appeared to be on their last legs — or feet — worn out and utterly done for — worthless in any the very lowest apparel market But the Arab was evidently much attached to his old companions of many a journey, and sometimes he would coax one for half a day, carrying it, and walk with one foot bare. He will throw it away, said we, it is done for at last.—Not a bit of it— the next day it was in working order again, and the man buoyant and springy as if newly shod. In a day or two more, the other would get a half-holiday in the same way, and our speculations on a breach of old companionship were again disappointed. When we parted from him, after twenty days travelling, he was coaxing them alternately, giving

them 'leave out' with much consideration, and just as much pleased with them as when he started.—Happy little fellow—with his ghosts of sandals he was quite contented.

One day, at a point where two paths appeared, we were told that here we should choose by which road we should go to Mount Sinai — by Wady Megara and the sea — or by Sarabet El Khadem. We decided on the former, because it is believed that by the sea shore road went Moses, and because it did go by the sea—a sight dear to all our insular hearts, and because in Wady Megara are sculptured on the rocks many names of early kings of Egypt. Thus we should see again our old acquaintances of the Nile banks,—and also in the Wady Mokatteb—the Written Valley — the writings on the rocks, so remarkable and the subject of so much discussion among the learned. All these reasons led us down Wady Taibeh to the sea.

The whole of the scenery of that day was good. As we rode along the ever-winding Wady Taibeh for two hours, shut in by rocky hills, we straggled along in the most loose order, the camels straying out of the body to browse here and there; and the voices of the men echoing from side to side, the sun just what it should be, warm, without any glare, and a breeze coming up from the sea in our faces,

the way was cheerful and varied. Now we came to a hollow, like a garden, with palms and acacias, and ruttum trees and other shrubs, and there were water-plants and reeds, betraying wet ground behind them; and soon some of the baggage camels straggled off and into it with eager strides. And now we came to a small wood of the prickly acacia, and a voice cried out—'Here is the manna of the Israelites'—and on the branches and twigs were small, hard, shining lumps—congealed drops—and some had melted in the morning sun, and the thick liquid had run along the twig. We ate, and found it very sweet, and the taste not unpleasant. We turned a bend of the valley, and a mountain, black and red, of porphyry, in masses of deep colour and with white streaks of limestone along its face, rose up in our front from the midst of the low, whiteish hills. As we rode on, admiring this noble and striking feature, the valley turned, and the sea appeared—of a fine deep blue. How welcome it was—like the face of an old familiar friend; and the combination of varied colouring—the strong contrasts of the deep blue water and the black and red mountain, and the white hills—was highly effective and worthy of a painter.

We rode out on the shore, and at midday spread our carpets on its edge. How beautiful it was!—

and a cool air came off it, and the beat of its waves on the shingle was as a voice from one's home. As I strayed along the rocks, and sat down by the water's-edge and put my hands into it, methought, why should I not ask the living creature—it spoke, and lived and moved and had its being, exactly as upon the Hampshire coast—why should I not enquire of it—how fare all friends upon the well-loved shore? It ought to know, the great ocean mother, which encircled all the earth within her arms, and would she not answer me, one of her island children? We lingered near it, and wished it were evening, that we might encamp by its waters, and hear its fall and tumble in the night, and splash in it in the morning. But the desert called us away—Jebel Serbal stood up in the distance beyond that winding bay and over those white hills across it; so we mounted and coasted along the sea for an hour, the projecting rocks of the mountain pushing us into the very water as we went. Along this shore had passed the Israelites after leaving Elim.

CHAPTER III.

The Wilderness of Sin—The Plain of Legum—An Oasis—Terrible News—The Miraculous Road—The Place of Honour—The Great Man with the Long Nose—Wady Magara—The Moralities of Scenery—The Valley of Writings—The Inscribed Rocks—The Ceremony of Reconciliation—Concord and Coffee—The Day of Rest—Wady Feran—Peace and Piastres—Horeb—The Pass of the Winds—Jebel Sina—The Mighty Past—Voices of the Night.

We were now in the Wilderness of Sin. But where were its horrors, and where were the marks of the howling Desert? Anything finer or more striking could not be imagined. It was beautiful from its mountains of varied colour, white, and red, and black—their irregular shapes and most picturesque savageness—from its expansive plains and hill—inclosed secluded valleys, and its sea-shore. The Desert of Sin was a magnificent abode—a sublime presence filled with mighty

memories. What if the thought would sometimes intrude itself—Is not this beauty barren? is not this world a naked one? But immediately that thought was followed by another No; this is not barren, nor is it naked—for are not these stony plains luxuriantly fruitful, thickly peopled with figures on which our memory can never cease to feed—and are not these hill sides and rugged mountain tops clothed with a verdure of refreshment our minds can never do without?

But the Sitteen are mounted. After three hours' coasting the sea-shore, we entered on a stony plain. The mountains fell back in a semicircle, leaving the plain of Legum apparently shut in between the encircling range and the sea. This was about six miles broad from point to point of the semicircle, and about the same in depth from the sea to the centre of it, and at this centre rose up Jebel Dhafrah with fine rugged peaks—a mountain of bright red porphyry. The plain of Legum was of a smooth whitish loam, but over this were thickly scattered the fragments of various marbles—granites, and porphyries—black, grey, spotted, red, pink, green, red and white, but the red stone preponderated; and so much was there of this colour, that the surface of the ground, far and wide, looked as if strewed with the ruins of houses—with

broken bricks. Some pieces of a fine grain and colour reminded one of the *rosso antico*. It was a sea of marbles. How came it all over the plain?

At about half a mile beyond the plain we found our tents in a gorge, on a small oasis in the midst of a marble stream. The gorge was winding, and about a hundred and fifty yards wide; and mountains, black, and red, and white, were around us on all sides, and precipitous rocks rose on either hand. The south-west face of Jebel Dhafrah looked down on us, its bright red precipices, gorgeous in the blaze of the evening sun. I never saw anything so wonderful in colour. But what a savage spot for our encampment, instead of by the familiar side of the murmuring sea, within hearing of that voice which would have told us through the night of other days and other strands and faces, stored up in memory's warehouses.

The first thing we heard on the following morning was that an Arab had brought bad news in the night—that a quarrel had broken out between two tribes on our intended line of travel—that they had fought—that four or five men had been killed—and that it was not well for us to go by that road—namely, from Nahkl to Petra. This was awkward. We had laid our account with slipping by Sheikh Hos-

sein and his Alaween—the trouble-giving ruler of the road between Akaba and Petra — and crossing from Nahkl to Petra by a middle road with the Teeaha tribe; and now came the news of a flare-up between these Teeaha and the Amirat—a tribe lying on the outskirts of the Wady Araba on the Petra road. Thus it looked as if, to avoid worse, we should be driven back upon the Akaba road and Sheikh Hossein, and who, knowing of course our predicament, would take advantage of it and fleece us utterly, leaving us but as shorn sheep in the wilderness. However, we comforted ourselves with the hope that truth had not yet made her permanent home on the Desert—that the messenger of evil who had brought the tale, and related it most circumstantially, was a man of excellent imagination —and that the greater part of his story, including the dead men, was an Arabian tale.—At all events, we should hear more of the matter at Mount Sinai.

Our way lay up Wady Legum, or as it was also called, Wady Shelal—an appropriate term, for the ground rises rather sharply as you advance among the hills, and the water when it comes descends like a shelal—a cataract. This accounted for the marble sea. As we went on the valley widened; and sandy tracts appeared, in which

grew acacias of some size, besides many shrubs scattered about—the whole bearing marks, with the ploughed-up ground everywhere, of the force of the rushing stream when the storm comes. In two hours we reached the top of the valley, and leaving the granite and porphyry hills came out on sandstone ridges low and swelling, and through narrow passes and winding pretty defiles, till our road ended in a *cul de sac*. There was a tradition about this spot:—that Moses leading the Israelites up the Wady Shelal, arrived at this place and found his passage barred by the precipitous rocky hill in our front. Here he stopped for the night, and in the morning was found a road up the face of the rocks, made by God during the night, and so the people went on and over this pass of Nukb-el-Goodrah into the valley beyond. It was pleasant to hear Beshara tell of such tradition still in the the people's mouths; but it struck us as we wound up the narrow zig-zag path, that this was but an unlikely way for that mighty multitude—with flocks and herds immense—to have passed.

We were slowly mounting Nukb-el-Goodrah—part of it rudely cut in steps, and having just sufficient breadth for one loaded camel at a time,—though at one place so narrow was the way between the natural walls of the rock, that the camels carry-

ing the large and swelling loads, the beds and the pride of Abbaseh's heart — the store chest and larder—had much ado to get round the sharp angles,—we were nearly at the top, the Sitteen in front talking of the fine and savage scenery spread out below them, and myself engaged in calculating how many weeks it would have taken the Israelite multitude to get over that pass in one unceasing line—when a row took place. It so happened that a man, leading one of the baggage camels, had got into the front of the party and led the way up the pass; and immediately behind him were the two dromedaries with the Sitteen. The man in front was not an Arab, but a black from Dongola. He had been brought from that country as a slave, sold to an Arab Sheikh, and had obtained his freedom by ten years of good conduct in servitude to one master. His name was Said. Now, the Arab nearest to the Dongola man, offended at a black man and a baggage camel taking his place in front —the place of honour of the Sitt and her dromedary—every now and then up the pass jerked out some sharp words of reproach, and arriving at the top, where the road widened, he went quickly forward to the black's side and roughly told Said—'to get out of the road, and let the Sitteen lead the way.' Said bore all the remarks on the way up

without retorting, but the last—the rude command —he could not stand; so he turned upon the Arab and told him—'It was no business of his, though he thought himself such a great man with his long nose,'—turning up his own at the same time. This was too much for Arab blood, so the young fellow gave Said a blow in the face with his hand. Said drew his short sword from his belt in an instant, and the Arab did the same—the party came to a dead halt—and the two men stood in our front, a couple of yards apart, in an attitude to spring on each other, their swords in the air, and both of them talking angrily and fast. But Arabs, though they draw their swords readily, are very chary of striking, the blood law being severe: so these two men were full of menace; and, in their tunics and in angry attitudes, they were good figures. But soon others heard the row, and saw, and ran forward and between the heroes, and took away their swords. Some little confusion and loud talking followed for a few moments; but Aboo El Haj hurried up on foot, and in a few words spoken with his firm clear voice, he dispersed them all, every man to his place. "Go on," he said—"go on—there must be order on the road—to-night the matter shall be settled"—and all went on as if nothing had happened. The whole of the little

scene passed rapidly, and nothing could be better than the quiet, resolute manner of command of the Sheikh. On enquiring of him how this affair would be settled, he said that if the two men refused to come to an amicable understanding—which sometimes happened—they must fight.

Aboo El Haj told me they had a law made in the Towara country, and which they strictly observed, that, if a quarrel took place between two men while with a party of travellers, and if a blow was struck, both men were punished by being never allowed to go with travellers again. This law, he said, prevented much quarrelling. Thus, the mere passing of Europeans through this wild country exercises a slight civilizing influence, even on the descendants of Ishmael.

We descended from Nukb-el-Goodrah to the Wady Megara, and crossed a plain similar to that of Legum, covered with fragments of marbles; but on the eastern side of which was a mountain more striking than even Jebel Dhafrah. One portion of it was red—bright red—with narrow veins of black and brown running down perpendicularly from the summit to the base; and the other half of it was of a deep bronze hue, with red veins—blood-coloured lines standing out like low walls—streaking its face and crossing each other at right angles. While

looking at these rocky masses, so fine in their peaked and jagged outline and precipitous sides, and their variety of colour, I thought there was nothing wanting to their severe and savage beauty. But these scenes had a voice. As you pass along these ways, all of rock or sand—so terribly beautiful—you cannot help imagining the effect of them on the Hebrew people—a soft and subdued, and timid people—hitherto living in a level and fruitful land—dispirited by bondage, and unmanned by the luxuriousness of Goshen—and now led out from all this spiritless life, under circumstances above and beyond their comprehension, into these dread fastnesses of nature and barren wilds. You cannot but believe the effect on them one of deeply piercing power—almost too much for them to bear. How should they look on these awful wastes, and not feel in all their intensity the horrors of the Wilderness? How should they not wish to fly them and return—even to slavery? But are men formed for high deeds by timid subjection?—and for persevering daring by slothful softness? Were not these rude deserts to transform the timorous herd into a hardy host?—and the shrinking crowd into a conquering nation? These rocks and sands around you everywhere, were they not the nursing mother of the law? Were they not the vigour-giving parent,

through that law, of the faith you hold this hour? As you look up at the rugged heights, and over the stern plains, you think you hear a voice say—"From us, O man, was the unyielding strength of the people and the law—and from us are the inflexible energy and iron will of the martyr and the missionary." Such things do these rocks speak to the passing traveller.

Thus we came to the Wady Mokatteb—the Valley of Writings. On both sides of it—it was about sixty or seventy yards broad with perpendicular rocks on either side starting straight up from the level floor—high up on the face of the cliffs, and low down on the large spreading slabs of sandstone, were in immense numbers the inscriptions, with occasional figures of animals. You wonder how the places could have been reached, at such perpendicular heights were some of the writings. Although you cannot read a word of all this wide amount of inscription, yet so great and general is the question concerning the writers—were they the Israelites, or were they not?—that you gaze, and stop, and gaze again,—and you try to decipher a letter in vain—you people the whole place with living beings at this laborious and enterprising work, and you are lost in wonder at such a remark-

able and tremendous amount of apparently useless labour and skill in these untenantable wilds.

As you ride on, thus you quietly argue the matter.—Here are miles and miles of writings, if they were drawn out into lines,—and this requires that the writers must have been numerous. Their number and position oblige a long residence on the spot, for the work must have occupied a long time, the letters being large and deeply cut. The workmen must have used ropes or ladders, or have built up wooden machinery, to enable them to reach from above or from below the places inscribed—all of which protracted labour involves considerable time and an acquaintance with habits of building on a large scale. The rude style of the greater part of the writings, and the finished sculpture of other portions, betray a people of various ranks in point of knowledge of art—a large and mixed people—and also accustomed to the presence of works of art on a magnificent scale,—for how could an assemblage of common men have imagined and executed the gigantic and imposing work—'The Title,'—a work measuring, as it is guessed by the eye, about one hundred feet of perpendicular height?—Who would come here—what cultivated artists—what ingenious mechanicians of various trades—what crowds of untaught labourers—would

come and dwell in these savage deserts for the purpose of engraving sentences on bare rocks?—Would the Nabathoans come here from distant places across the deserts to do this objectless work far from all places of habitation? Would pilgrims in thousands stop on the way of their pilgrimage, and build scaffolds and make ladders, and work, skilled works in a place where death threatened them hourly?—Would the christian inhabitants of Feran—twelve hours away—leave their cool shades and their waters, and their occupations of the town, to come here by rugged ways, and where everything they had at home was wanting, for the purpose of writing volumes of words in a language not their own?—You come to the conclusion, that there is something in the matter of these inscribed rocks that is not in the usual and common course of human actions. And you ride on with your thoughts pointing, whether you will or no, in the direction of the story of the wanderers fed and maintained by God upon these Deserts for years and years—accustomed to see the works of art of Egypt,—some of them skilled workmen of Pharaoh's buildings, habituated to scaffolding and ladders, while the mass of them were untutored labourers of the field; and all not now needing to work for their bread—idle—unemployed—ready for covering

the rocks of the Wady Mokatteb—or any others—with their rude inscriptions.

It was Saturday, aud we were to rest on the morrow, a soothing prospect to the Sitteen after a week's hard riding; and the road being good between Wady Mokatteb and Wady Feran, we all dawdled along on foot, in our usual way, as the evening came on; and with Jebel El Achmar, of red porphyry, all like a red-hot mass on our left—a marvellous spectacle- and Jebel Serbal in our front, at twenty miles distance, we sauntered on into Wady Feran to our tents. In the course of the evening Selim came to say that the Arabs had discussed the matter of the quarrel of the two men at Nukb El Goodrah, and that it was made up; the men had agreed to touch hands. The ceremony of reconciliation, he said, was just going to take place, and if I wished to see it I should come directly. Leaving the tent I saw the party of Arabs seated in a circle round their blazing fire. Selim left me and went and seated himself in the circle. There was a dead silence; the fire played upon the quiet faces and figures of the party, and all beyond them was the shadowy Desert. In a few minutes a single figure came from somewhere out of the dim plain from the right, and slowly approached the party. He sat down in a place

opened for him, in silence. This was the Dongola man. In three or four minutes more, another figure was seen coming from somewhere out of the dusk from the left, and advancing with the same slow steps seated itself also in the circle. The whole thing had an air of unwillingness on the part of the two men to do anything else than fight. All sat as silent as before, the most of them smoking their pipes in grave solemnity. Then, in a few minutes, to my surprise, Selim rose from his seat: with measured steps he crossed the circle to where the two men sat on different sides, took each by the hand, raised them up, pulled them towards each other, and murmured some words in a low voice to them: the circle all repeated the murmur, the men touched hands, then kissed each other on either cheek, and then sat down on either side of Aboo El Haj, Selim retreating to his place, and saying aloud—'We are all friends here.' A great coffee drinking then took place; and pipes were vigorously smoked, and talking commenced, and concord reigned in the camp again.

The next day—how grateful to every sense and every thought were the rest and quiet of that day. The motionless camp, the soothing silence, the fresh breeze that blew all the day long and kept the tents cool, the following on the inspired page our path

from day to day down to the spot beneath our feet; and the evening stroll with our friends in the Valley of Paran—such it was to us—all these made up a sum of—what shall I call it? enjoyment?—yes, of enjoyment not easy to surpass. There was not one of the party who did not feel, that to have moved on that day from our resting place among those hills—to have entered on all the bustle and business of a journey—would have been as a profanation of the scenes around us, and have robbed us of all the freedom and amusement which each hour of travel supplied. Were we not almost within the shadow of that mount on which the command was given—'Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but on the seventh day thou shalt do no work?' From that day and from that spot, as from some hill top, we looked back—on the six days which had passed in that savage land in safety and in health, and we looked forward—with an increasing desire to see the still more wonder-associated scenes before us.

After five hours' riding up Wady Feran, a valley with Tamarisk shrubs and Sayal trees growing at intervals, and winding between rocky hills of granite intersected with veins of red and black porphyry, we reached the ruins of the ancient christian town of Feran. But what attract you there, are not the

ghosts of the buildings, but the signs of living waters—damp earth, and trees — a wood — in the middle of the valley beyond the town and the ruins, and then water—a stream of sparkling water flowing briskly along—and then all of you, the horse, and the camels, and the people — refreshing their feet in the wet sand—all hurry your steps towards the wood, the palms and the tamarisks, the oasis of shade in your front. How delightful was the thick shade of trees, and the cool air from the verdure, and the stream, now six feet broad and running swiftly along its bed among reeds and rushes in the quivering current, with tamarisks hanging over it, and palms and nebbuk. Soon we had spread our carpets; and while the peasants of the place brought us the nebbuk fruit—like a small apple—the dogs were loose and dabbling in the stream, the camels drinking, the horse standing in the middle of the brook, the men on its edge bathing their faces, and the Arabs their legs, and others filling the water casks. Everything and every body were in the water or beside it—scattered along its course for a couple of hundred yards. And delightful it was, and as an unreal and phantom thing, that stream which came out from somewhere so sudden, and transparent, and rapid, and then disappeared in the sand, under your eyes, before it

reached the ruined walls of Feran; and so you walked along its wet sandy sides among the rushes, and splashed its glistening waters, and gladdened your eyes with the bright green of the reeds, while the feeling was hanging about you all the time — this strange little whispering stream, coming and going no one knows whence or where — this is not a real stream—but a fairy.

As we were riding up the valley from this place, I asked Aboo El Haj, with reference to the quarrel of the two men on the Saturday previous, how he had made up the matter, as a blow had been struck. He said that he had found great difficulty in arranging it, as, for some hours, the men had positively refused to touch hands—the black refusing to forgive the blow, and the Arab objecting to pay fifteen piastres, which he and the other Sheikhs had adjudged him to pay to Said, as an atonement. "At last," said Aboo El Haj, "I became angry, and I told them, that if they did not do as they were desired by the Sheikhs, they would both be dismissed the camp that night, and would never be allowed to join any travelling party again." This decision of the Sheikhs settled the matter, and the men gave in. "And was the money atonement made?" "Yes; and now the black having ac-

cepted it, the blow is wiped out." I confess I liked the men for resisting reconciliation on the point of honour; for the Arab—the child of freedom, and the inheritor of the old fierce blood—the Arab tamed down, and spiritless, and unresenting of insult—what a sad spectacle would he be! The reason of Selim's interference at the meeting of reconciliation was, that, with his usual love of influence, he had managed—by 'delicious words' and his wonted energy on the journey, and his natural tact—to get all our half of the party, from Aboo El Haj downwards, under him—the imperious Selim; and though he had failed in his efforts to get the two enemies to touch hands, yet, when they had agreed to do so, he was the man to bring them together. He was thoroughly contented, the influential personage, with his share in the final act.

The next morning we came to the Wady where the Sarabet-el-Khadem road enters from the East, the Wady Sheikh; and near this point we turned off to the West from Wady Sheikh—which is the great open highroad to Horeb and Sinai, now just in front of us—and, leaving all the baggage camels to go on by that road, we went by a shorter cut impracticable for loaded animals- After crossing a long plain, El Seheb, and taking many a look back at Jebel Serbâl and its fine peaks—in full view all

the morning over our right shoulders, but soon to be lost sight of—we advanced through a narrow opening in some hills, and there, beyond it, and at a mile or two distant over a waving plain—there, in our front, was Horeb. This was a range of red mountain, running in a circular form from our right to our left—the outer barrier of the sacred district within. It looked like a wall of rock about a thousand or fifteen hundred feet high, and it bent round away from us, as we approached from the west, towards the north-east and to the south. At some miles distance within this wall was Mount Sinai.

There are but few openings in the outer barrier, which maintains a tolerably even height all along; and while, outside of it, the country is open and rather low and waving, sandy and stony—inside of it, the whole enclosure—the Holy Mountain of Horeb—is a district of lofty and rocky ranges intersected by deep vallies, and about the centre are the highest points. The centre is Sinai, and the district Horeb. When we arrived at near the foot of the barrier we turned to the right, and a narrow path led us up a long sloping valley—with the red barrier of Horeb on our left, and some fine heights of a similar colour on our right- Up this pass we

went for two hours, and sometimes the way was steep and cut in steps, and sometimes it was level and stony; but the whole of that pass of Nukb Hawy—the Pass of Winds—is one of the most striking I have ever seen. Nothing can be more savage than that piece of scenery. We loitered up it at our leisure, sometimes on foot and sometimes riding; for as we mounted up, the features became more and more fine, and we had plenty of time before us; and, besides, travellers should never hurry through really fine scenery. The Pass of Nukb Hawy struck us as less grand than other passes of the Alps and Pyrenees, the features being much smaller; but these features—how peculiar they were, and how different from those of all European mountains—the deep red colour of the sides — the blackened and burnt summits — the shattered rents—the great crevices—the hopeless desolation everywhere in this valley of stone—the look of enormous age about the sombre cliffs which projected over the pass from the heights on the right—all this was peculiar to Horeb. And then the associations of the spot—the gate of Sinai which we were passing through—gave it an interest and an aspect all its own.

The pass terminated in an elevated platform, where the two sides of it opened out, and left a

wider space; and from this platform the ground fell steeply and at once to a plain—a long, broad, smooth plain, inclosed between two lines of rocky ridge, and at the extremity of it rose straight up in our front a mountain—a bluff mount standing alone. We reached the platform; and coming suddenly out from the pass, we were saluted by the exclamation from our men—"Jebel Sina." The scene was very striking, and the suddenness with which we came on it, added to the effect. I confess the sensation in my mind was—awe. The plain — El Raheh — was in my eyesthe plain on which the Israelites had camped before the mount, and the bold and perpendicular, and lofty mass of rock standing out alone and separate at the extremity of the inclosed plain of El Raheh :—this was the Mount Sinai. Thank Heaven, there was not a doubt on my mind as to the spot—answering so well to the great story—as I stood and looked along that broad level to the solitary and striking mountain at the end. We made a long halt on the platform, and then descending the steep pitch, rode along the plain towards Jebel Sina.

It was difficult to manage one's thoughts and keep them in order, under the very impressive and novel circumstances. At one time, the imagination insisted on realising the great scene of the Exodus

with all its detail—the people and the voice;—and in the next minute, the reason tried hard not to be carried away too far from the actual and real present. Then, while looking round one at the simple magnificence of the scenery—the shut-in plain and the mount—and scanning the distances, measuring the heights, recognising plants with the Sitteen, or speculating on rocky formations with the khawaja—in fact, living in the present,—suddenly, and with force, the Mighty Past would rush in and take possession of all your thoughts, and carry them back to the world of the terrible and the sublime scenes enacted on that remarkable spot beneath your eye. The distance from the platform to the Mount was about four miles; though from the size of the features of the ground—the ridges on either side El Raheh being, perhaps, nine hundred feet high—nearly perpendicular rocks—and the Mount fifteen hundred—it did not appear to be more than half that extent. The breadth of El Raheh was about half a mile. As we rode on, the plain sloped gently upwards till we arrived within about a mile of the Mount; and then El Raheh widened, the rocky ranges on either hand fell back, and the mountain in front grew out in bulk and height as we approached it. And now the plain ceased to slope up; the range on our right broke down at once

and altogether, and let in an extensive and nearly level tract with Jebel Lehummar and Jebel Katerin behind it; and right on in our front, and in a narrow valley, secluded and sheltering under the towering sides of Jebel Sina, appeared the Convent; while El Raheh sloped down gradually, a smooth and wide, and beautiful plain of unbroken surface and of fully a mile's breadth, to the foot of the Mount.

We liked our tents too much to think of exchanging them for the convent walls; and who would shut himself up in such narrow bounds when liberty was in his hands, and such a place of dwelling at his command as the camping ground of the Israelites on El Raheh!—Here we pitched our tents at half-a-mile's distance from the foot of Jebel Sina—towering above us solitary and solemn.—Here we remained for five days; and never during that time was the feeling absent from you, that there—on the brows and on the sides of that mount before you — were done the awful things related in the book by your side. And at times when you awoke in the night, and could not help looking out, and up, in the bright clear air to that dark impending height, the picture would present itself—'There were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet ex-

ceeding loud, so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole Mount quaked greatly.' Never did a doubt of that mountain being the Mount of God throw its shadow across this picture; and never did I walk along that wide plain of El Raheh without the conviction, that far and wide, on that smooth hard sand, had camped with their flocks and their herds—'had camped before the Mount,'—the wandering hosts of the Israelites.

CHAPTER IV.

The False Report—The Garrison of the Valley—The Polite Lieutenant—The Convent of St. Katherine—Old Monks—The Superior's Invitation—The Magic of Gold—Parthenius—The Convent Garden—The Quiet Dormitory—In Memoriam—Phases of Faith—The Rock in Horeb—Tradition and Truth.

THE first thing we heard in the morning was, that a man of the Teeaha tribe had arrived in the night with an account that there was no truth in the report of the quarrel and fight between his tribe and the Amirat. The peace between them had not in anyway been disturbed. The report was believed to be a story got up by Sheikh Hossein's friends, the Alaween, to drive aawy travellers, as the season for wandering Europeans was arrived, from the Nakhl route to Akaba. In the course of the day other accounts reached the camp confirmatory of the truth of the Teeaha man. There was therefore

no further doubt of our taking the Nakhl road to Petra.

There had been continually for years so much squabbling between the monks of the convent of St. Katherine, and the Arabs of the Peninsula, by which travellers were put in occasional peril, that Abbas Pasha had placed here a small garrison of sixty men; and in the mouth of the Wady El Dayr —the valley of the convent—just in front of us at the edge of the plain, was their barracks a low six foot wall encircling a court yard and some rude buildings consisting only of a ground floor. Just as we were starting to pay a visit to the convent, a party of twenty of these Egyptian soldiers, with an officer at their head, marched up to our tents —with drum and fife. Our Sheikhs Beshara and Aboo El Haj, with all their men and camels, were gone off to their homes for the five days of our proposed stay at Mount Sinai, and the Egyptian lieutenant announced that he was come to take care of us. Such were his orders. A tent was pitched at about thirty yards' distance behind us, and his men took up their quarters there night and day, a sentry with firelock being stationed at no great distance from each of our two larger tents.

I invited the lieutenant to smoke with me the

pipe of amity, and to drink the coffee of good-will. He told me that the Arab tribes of the Peninsula were all now at peace—there was no fighting anywhere—that this body of soldiery at Mount Sinai, though small yet had a considerable effect in preventing quarrels, and saved the monks of the convent also from trouble—the result of preference of one tribe to another. The lieutenant had been in his present quarters for thirteen months, and he voted them a decided bore. I could not help feeling that a man with a weakness for the delights of Cairo—poor fellow, he talked of Egypt with sparkling eyes, as he remembered her fat things—would not be happy amid these grand desolations. — The lieutenant, as we were starting, quietly enquired of our servants if my friend and I were officers. "Yes," said they, in their usual oriental way of magnifying everything regarding their masters—"Yes, we think they are two Generals." "Then," replied the lieutenant, "I must do them all honour, and escort them to the Convent with soldiers and with music. Would they like this?" We were accordingly applied to on this point. We did not disabuse the worthy lieutenant as to the imaginary rank of British Generals, which Selim and Yusuf had conferred upon my friend and myself, but we thought the drum and the fife and the soldiery,

though an effective approach, certainly, to the convent, yet not quite appropriate to that of lowly pilgrims to such a spot. So we left the Egyptian officer with his guard, and went *incog.* and humbly to Dayr Katerin, and not as Generals with drum and fife. The effect of the fife among those wilds, as the guard had marched up to the camp, was curious enough, breaking in upon the solemn silence of the scene with its sharp, lively notes, and reminding us cheerily of England.

As we came towards the convent we saw three black figures on the walls, cloaked and hooded, monks watching us from their place of defence. A rope was let down from a door thirty feet high up in the long dead wall. This was for the letter from the Greek convent at Cairo, our letter of introduction—then a larger rope was let down for us, and one at a time we seated ourselves in a loop and were drawn up into the Convent fortress,—where in a great place like a hay loft, the bearded men—one of them a fine, handsome, dark man of forty, the others, three or four, more aged—received us with much cordiality. It had been proposed, on a view of the height and the loop in the rope, that the Sitteen should go round to the garden gate and enter by a way cut through the rock, a subterranean passage from the garden to the interior; but

they would not hear of this irregular proceeding—this sneaking in—and were drawn up according to rule, much to the alarm of the careful Yusuf, who stood, all the while his mistress was mounting, with mouth open and hands clasped, staring up and muttering—'Ya Sitt—Inshallah—Ya Sitt!"

Then came an aged monk, and led us up some stairs to rooms, opening from a corridor unenclosed, with the windows looking on the garden and along the valley to the plain. From the open corridor we commanded all the little confused town within, with all its terraces and quaint buildings, its courts and gardens—diminutive plots of ground, but very refreshing to the eye. These were the strangers' rooms, four or five in number, lately built, and they were clean and light with a neat divan running round three sides. Another old monk, whose business among the fraternity was to look after strangers, brought glasses of date brandy—very fiery stuff—and then some fresh water and sugar-plums. Then came a still older man who spoke Italian—the others had only spoken Greek and Arabic. This last had been forty years in that place; and he seemed to have suffered nothing in his spirits in consequence of this long residence in his desert home, for he was extremely gay, and gave one the idea of a man who could enjoy his

cheerful glass, and had his joke ready for all occasions, defying the sombre influences of mountainous deserts. On inquiry about the Superior, the Italian said he was forty-five years of age—did not read much—no—not studious—was a good monk—passed his time in much eating, and drinking, and sleeping, and doing service in the church—he did not walk much, as he had bad feet. The good monk's manner of describing his Superior had more of levity in it than respect.

After half an hour the Superior came to pay us a visit. He was not forty-five years old, but seventy, at least, (an irreverent misrepresentation of the Italian) a worn out and decrepid man, lame in both feet, bent in body and subdued in mind, with long white hair and the sharp features of a Greek. As pre-arranged between us, I addressed, through the Italian, a few words to the ancient man about our arrival at Mount Sinai, and our satisfaction, as pilgrims, in reaching the memorable and sacred spot. He seated himself very quietly, received all that I said with a vacant look, and then drew the Cairo convent letter from his robe. He turned it about, tried to read it, failed, stammered over the first word, and then, as if he had forgotten his Greek, handed it over to another, and then invited us kindly to come and stay in the convent. Poor

old gentleman. I felt a degree of pity for him, he looked so aged, and sad, and weak, and bullied a creature. It was clear that the Italian—the convent life had not softened his heart—looked on the old man with unpitying eye, as a fit subject for jesting. The Superior's manner was so kindly and warm, when he invited us to make the convent our abode during our stay, that I felt quite sorry to say—No; but I did, with many acknowledgements and excuses. The countenance of the old man fell, and so did those of the other monks, at this announcement. They offered us every seduction—all they had, rooms, bread, dates, milk, with real earnestness; and deep disappointment was graven on their faces when we stuck to our refusal. The fact is that these monks of Mount Sinai are not allowed any money from the estates of their church, everything needful being sent to them in kind from Cairo, and about the only money they ever see is what they get from travellers who visit them, and accept their hospitality, and leave something behind them in recompense. On this casual supply depends their ability to provide themselves with many little extra comforts for their souls and their bodies in their mountain home, which the church functionaries at Cairo do not send them. The Christian men were but men, and they had counted

our gold, and our silver, and the various little luxuries we should provide them with, and thus the refusal of so large a party to be their guests was a blow to them. We were as robbers stealing from them the image of gold—the little golden calf which these men of Horeb were worshipping deep in their hearts. However, we hastened to restore to them the little calf, by saying—that our stay would be for four or five days in their neighbourhood, and we should be thankful for all the things which they had offered us; and we assured them we should consider that we had lived within their walls, and should beg them, on our departure, to accept a present, the same as if we had really done so. This was enough. The Superior's face brightened, and the hearts of the monks warmed goldenly towards us again; and the old man took his leave in happy mood, after placing everything he had at our disposal.

A younger monk, by name Parthenius, now came and showed us the buildings—the church, the library, and the mosque—how different from the church, the one all lamps, and pictures, and decoration!—the other, how simple!—bare white walls and a matted floor—nothing there but—Allah. But we were glad to get out of the convent early in the day, for a more cold and chilling

place I was never in. The sun sets early at this mountain dwelling, for the heights of Jebel Mousa hang over it on the west; and at three o'clock in the afternoon the shadow of the mountain came over it. We rejoiced that we were not the guests of the good monks, as we looked from the grey and sunless battlements down the valley to the plain of El Raheh, where we could see our white tents, gay and cheerful, bathed in the warm sunlight.

Parthenius conducted us by the subterranean way into the garden. What a paradise it was!—as the garden of the Hesperides to the longing eyes of Hercules, so was this to ours; but here was no dragon, no one save a man tending his trees; and here was something better than golden apples—here were grass, and green leaves, and flowing water. Some almond and apricot standard trees—the former thirty feet high—and olive, and pomegranate, and others, made pleasant shade, and streams of water, conducted along narrow channels throughout its extent, converted the wilderness into a bower. One of the trees, unknown to any of us, was declared by Parthenius to be of the kind from which the rod of Moses was cut, when he struck the rock in Horeb. There could

not be less than four or five acres of ground in these gardens, and our guide led us about them through the green alleys and umbrageous walks, as he recounted to us the reminiscences of the place. In one corner was the cemetery, a small plot of ground, perhaps thirty feet square, inclosed with a wall, and having at one end two long vaults. Here are buried the monks; and the corpse lies in its grave for three years, and then it is exhumed, the bones collected and carried into the vaulted chambers, where they are arranged in a hideous order. The plot of ground was level, except in one spot, where was a fresh grave—of one of the brethren, who had died a few months previously; and all the rest of the inclosure was bare and flat. When the last bones had been exhumed, the ground had been levelled, and the spot of the poor monk's, not last, but temporary resting-place effaced. So, within three years, would it be with that little mound of earth, and the last thing to mark the individual man wiped out.

We entered the low doorway of the vault, and a long range of skulls, white and ghastly, occupied one-half the breadth of the deep, narrow place. Here they had collected, for ages, the skulls of the brethren. There must have been many hundreds of them. Passing along by these we came to a

heap of bones, a disorderly and indiscriminate pile, occupying the whole end of the vault—a pile six feet high. It seemed to us that the fraternity had done its best to make death as vulgar, and as coarse and undignified as they could. The only spot in that cemetery about which there was a decency and a respect, was the solitary mound above the body of the dead monk in the little plot outside the vaults. About that low tumulus there was an individuality and a memory; but in the confused charnel-house, with its tumbled heaps, where was there an object for feeling to rest upon, or the heart to distinguish? Had any one of our party now there returned to that garden after a lapse of a few years, and asked of Parthenius for some aged brother—dispenser of friendly offices on the former visit—asked him thus:—'My old friend is dead?—and where is his quiet grave?' What would be the reply? 'He was buried somewhere out there—I forget where; but his bones were taken up, and they are somewhere here.' 'Where?' 'I don't know—somewhere on that heap.' 'And which is his skull?' 'Anyone—whichever you like.' The poor monk, who lived apart from the world for the good of the world, was blotted out of all memory by that world when he died.

As we walked home to the camp, it struck us what a different kind of resting-place for their dead would the ancient Egyptians had made, had the priesthood of that people possessed a temple in that valley. What excavations would they not have made in the rocky sides of Jebel Mousa for their repose,—and what a difference would there not have been in the treatment of their dead, as compared with that we had just witnessed. They did all honour to the remains of the human being —our Christian monks made of them an indecent and hideous exposure.

It is painful to have a faith in a thing, or a place, or a person, overthrown. As your hold on it relaxes, you try to retain it in spite of reason, and in defiance of circumstantial evidence against it. At last the moment comes that the old belief slips from your grasp, insensibly, and without your knowing when;—you make a last effort to recover it, but it is gone—and you give a regret to the once-cherished confidence. Thus it was with me at Sinai. I began by believing all things—that each spot claimed by tradition for an event of the great story was the real spot; for instance, that of the Burning Bush; of the rock in Horeb struck for water; of the stone where the tables of the law were broken. But during two days on the ground,

a doubt had been gradually been growing up in my mind, whether the monkish legends were worthy of any credit. This feeling of a waning faith in the monks' sacred geography was increased by their not regarding Jebel Tor—the mountain standing out so finely on the edge of the plain of El Raheh—as 'The Mount,' but considering the heights beyond and behind it, called 'Jebel Mousa,' distant nearly two miles from the plain, and unseen from it, as the 'Mount of God.' And the 'Rock in Horeb,' in the Wady El Ledja—here was another and an unconquerable difficulty for the monkish tradition. Is it possible that the rock, of which the Almighty declared to Moses—'Behold, I will stand before thee there, upon the rock in Horeb'—could be a lump of rock fallen from the mountain side, a mere big stone? I had a conviction that the words cannot be read in this way, but that they must be read to mean part of a rocky mountain in the district of Horeb. Also, that this must be looked for, certainly not in the Wady El Ledja, or anywhere at all near Mount Sinai, but at some miles distance from it—a day's march,—by Rephidim. Rephidim must, unquestionably, mean some place distinct from Mount Sinai, and distinct from Horeb, and not less than a day's march from the former. It is not possible, then, that when Moses was told to go on at Rephi-

dim before the people—that is, in the front of the people—with the elders of Israel, and to strike the rock in Horeb, that he and they left the people, and went a whole day's journey from Rephidim to Mount Sinai—far out of sight of all those on whom the miracle was to have an effect, and up into a little valley, out of the way,—and that there Moses struck a mere big stone. The thing is incredible. No—the Israelites wanted water, quickly, immediately; and Moses went on in front of the people—and, of course, in their full view—and struck the side of the rocky mountain, and the water flowed down to the thirsty host at once, while the Almighty stood—in some form not related—on the height above, or on the precipitous side. This is a grand picture:—The Almighty, perhaps in a cloudy form on the impending cliff—Moses and the elders of Israel at the foot—and the expectant host at a short distance in front,—the mountain face of rock is struck by the chief, and the mass opens—and the stream gushes forth. But the monkish tale would oblige Moses to go a day's journey, from Rephidim to Mount Sinai, to a big stone—an object too small and mean for any such sublime action as the standing thereon of the Divine Presence. Moreover, the water produced at Sinai would be a day's time in flowing to Rephidim—in reaching the people,

and who would thus have been left for a whole day, or two days, without the water they were clamouring for.

But though my faith in various localities broke down—localities grouped arbitrarily round the mountain for the convenience of the convent—happily there remained a thorough conviction, that Jebel Tor and the plain of El Raheh were the scene so finely described by the Israelitish chief. As to Jebel Serbâl being the true Mount Sinai, there was one circumstance, apart from all other proofs, which decided the point against Serbâl, as far as I was concerned. Jebel Serbâl is known to be covered from the base to the summit with the same inscriptions as are found in the Wady Mokatteb; and, at the time therefore of their execution, there must have been hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of men all over it, working with tools and ropes and platforms.—Now is it possible to believe for a moment, that the people who were forbidden, on their first coming to Mount Sinai, to come near and touch the Mount—the Mount too sacred for their footsteps—which it was sacrilege to touch—that they would, on their second approach towards the scene of the awful things they had witnessed—to the Mount of God—look upon it as a common place, climb all over it, erect works on it, cut, and hammer,

and break—desecrate it in every possible way?—Is it possible that the Hebrew chief would permit such things—that he would ever look on the Mount of Sinai, except as a holy object with the warning still in force,—'Take heed that ye touch not the border of it.'—This alone was sufficient objection in my mind to Jebel Serbâl being Mount Sinai.

But there was no doubt about Jebel Tor. The grand objects here were too much in accordance with the sacred description of them to admit of a question of the probability—the very highest probability of their being the real scene of the events of Mount Sinai. They are suitable in point of size for the sublime actions performed—suitable in convenience of arrangement to answer all the requirements of the story, and so suitable in geographical position as not to offend against any part of the relation. There is only one point that appears to oppose the identity of Jebel Tor with 'The Mount'—viz., the precipitous height of this mountain—the lower part sloping and the upper part unscaleable—and the consequent difficulty of Moses going up 'on the top of it.'—The statement of the sacred writer is that—'the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the Mount, and Moses went up to the top of the Mount.'—But it is also written—'Moses went up into the Mount, and a

cloud covered the Mount, and Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and got him up into the Mount, and Moses was in the Mount forty days and forty nights.'

It is evident, I think, that the cloud did not rest only on the summit of the Mountain, but enveloped it all round and low down. Now, may not the expressions 'on the top of the Mount,' and 'into the Mount,' without taking any great liberty with the text, be read to mean the same thing—viz., that Moses went up into the cloud, which rested on the top, and descended with enveloping folds down the sides of the mountain?

As to the monks' belief that Jebel Mousa is the Mount, the only thing that can be said is, that it is so far away from the plain of El Raheh, that if encamped on that plain—and there is no possible space anywhere else for such hosts, without 'touching the border of the Mount,'—the children of Israel could have seen nothing at all of all the great events related, if they had taken place on Jebel Mousa. Moreover, it would have been impossible for Moses to have gone from that camp up into the mountain, two or three times in a day, in the sight of all the people, so great was the distance,—whereas from the plain up the slopes of Jebel Tor the Hebrew leader could have gone, fre-

quently, and in the sight of every one—for Jebel Tor rises right up from the extremity of El Raheh.

CHAPTER V.

The Teeaha Sheikh—Superfluous Camels—Aboo Keleh—Jebel Mousa—A Liberal Luncheon—The Chapel of the Relief—The Ascent and the Summit—The Sea of Rocks—The Story of Parthenius—The Lonely Man—A Theological Dispute—Conventual Economy—The Desert within Walls—Afternoon Service—The Religion of the Heart—The Stirrup Cup—The Man of Feeling in Exile.

On the third morning of our stay, Selim came to announce that the Chief Sheikh of the Teeaha tribe had suddenly arrived at the camp. This was considered a happy event, and I went out to him. We met, and embraced with Arab touching of hands. The reason of his coming was, that he had some business with a Towara Sheikh, and hearing of travellers at Mount Sinai, he came on. He was an old man, with white beard and straggling whiskers, short of stature, but remarkably broad, large limbed, hale and active, with a quick, grey eye.

He was clothed in a red and brown striped silk robe, like a large, loose dressing-gown over the usual Arab dress, a red turban, and red slippers. His name was Aboo Keleh. We had continually, on our way, heard of this old chief from Yusuf and Selim, the former of whom had once travelled with him, and spoke of his having rendered the old Sheikh an important service. The latter had never met him, but talked of Aboo Keleh as a hero, whose character, as head of the great tribe of the Teeaha, was of considerable dimensions.

It was settled that Aboo Keleh should stay in the camp for the three other days of our continuance at Mount Sinai, and go with us on our road for a day or two. We were not to go by Nakhl nor by Akaba, but by a middle road between these two places. On the border line of the Peninsula, he should have men and camels to meet us and take us to Petra. By this road we should save three days of travelling. But we were all rather sorry that Aboo Keleh stayed in our camp. These Arabs make to themselves a kind of rule, that travellers must finish the journey of the Desert with the same number of camels with which they commence it, and thus, with whatever number of camels we should arrive at the Teeaha border, with the same number that tribe would require that we should

continue. Now, our journey had commenced with a heavy outfit of larder and stores of water, and all these were rapidly diminishing under daily consumption; moreover, there had been a certain liberality of loading at Cairo in favour of the Towara, and we had determined that we would, by a little change of packing, manage to present ourselves to the Teeaha with two camels less, paying off these two as if they had made the whole of the journey agreed on. But if the Teeaha Chief remained at the camp, it would be his business to learn the exact number of camels with which we arrived at Mount Sinai, this being a point important to him to know. He had already asked this question, and had been put by, and two camels less than our present number had been named as our future wants from the Teeaha. Beshara and Aboo El Haj, and their men, had all left us on the night of our arrival, and carried off their camels to their homes, and would not return till the evening before we should start; but an Arab or two hung about the tents for odd jobs, and from these the old Sheikh would extract all he wanted to know, and we should have a disturbance. We gave him many hints to go and prepare his men and camels for us on the border, but he stuck to us, and divided his time between Yusuf's coffee and Abbaseh's soup with

much sense of justice. Abbaseh was our cook, in the place of the departed caliph.

The Egyptian officer paid us a short visit once a-day, but after a little conversation, through the medium of Selim, he soon left us, and he seemed to enjoy the companionship of Selim and Abbaseh in the kitchen much more than our society. There, when at home, I could hear him in full flow of talk by the hour together. It would have been difficult to place the lieutenant in the social body, looking at him from an English point of view. His blood was certainly not pure—not blue—his lineage not high caste—the face, and person, and manners all being too common for any admixture in his nature of sense of descent. He was not wanting in an ordinary shrewdness, but he was evidently much more at home and happy with Selim than with us. It was a question with my friend and myself how we should treat him—an Egyptian officer. It was imperative on us not to let him pass his evenings with his men just outside our tents. Should we invite him to dine with us on alternate days? It would not be becoming merely to invite him to coffee; and to seat him daily at our dinner-tables was to make him and us go through a daily amount of uneasy awkwardness. After discussing the matter, we decided that as the lieutenant clearly preferred Yusuf and Selim to us, for he passed his whole time between them, we would dine him alternately with them. Though this did not look quite right—the dining the Pasha's officer with our servants being rather an anomaly—yet the arrangement succeeded admirably, and the lieutenant was quite happy, if we might judge by the perpetual rattle of his tongue, his unconstrained fits of laughter, and his praises to us of the cookery. In my own mind I had no doubt that those five days of dinner and talk were white in the lieutenant's life at Mount Sinai, both the cooks being good, and treating his palate to things which the barrack cook probably never saw even in a dream.

On Saturday, the 5th of April, we all started early for a climb to the top of Jebel Mousa. Jebel Mousa is a monopoly of the convent, the good monks being the only guides for travellers from Wady El Dayr through the intricacies of the mountain to the summit. The custom is for one of the convent servants to carry up a provision for the party when on the top, in a leathern affair resembling a pair of saddle-bags. The saddle-bags and their contents go under the general name of a 'shorbet'—literally, a drink—liberally, a luncheon. As we were a double party, a double allowance of

provender was considered by the monks to be necessary for us, and certainly a more ample supply for four people I never saw. Had the Sitteen been two ogresses, and ourselves of the same family of devourers, there would have been something for new-comers to the spread. It was hinted by us, when this affair was being arranged beforehand, that a single luncheon would be fully sufficient; but this hint the managing brother scouted, insisting on the double shorbet with an earnestness and a feeling for the Sitteen that were worthy of all our gratitude for his prudent care of them.—He did not fail, when all was settled, to tell us that there was a fixed price for a single shorbet, and a fixed price for a double one,—also that each guide was paid one dollar. We thought that one guide would be able to direct us safely, and we said so;—but this was at once overruled—'were there not two Sitteen—two parties in fact?—Were not two guides absolutely necessary for our safety,—and a double shorbet for our sustenance?'—Who could resist the kind creatures, so thoughtful in all their little arrangements for our safety and our strength in the arduous undertaking before us?

From a postern gate of the convent we stepped out on the mountain side, ten persons, including two monks for guides, and Jebeleeh to carry the

shorbet. In half an hour we reached the perpendicular rocks; and in another half hour we reached the Chapel of the Relief—a small rude building, into which our monks entered, and burned incense, and lit tapers before a recess, in front of which hung two small humble portraits of the Saviour and the Virgin.

The road to the chapel was good, being laid with blocks in rude steps all the way sharply up from the shoemaker's cave. You looked back—a bird's-eye view—into the convent lying below at your feet in the ravine, a pleasant object with its heavy encircling wall, and life-looking and orderly buildings within, and church roofed with shining zinc, and the new white wing for travellers looking over the garden full of bright green trees. Amidst the world of desolate rocks and mountains all blank, the whole little establishment was an inviting and a fairy spot. How silent and quiet it lay in the morning sun, like a home for the wandering man amongst the savage wilds—a retreat and a resting-place for one broken down by the griefs, or the unceasing contests, of a turbulent and a suffering world.

In the next hour we passed through two stone arched doorways, on the summits of the precipices,

built over the roadway. What were these for? The monk said—"that in the earlier days of pilgrimage to Jebel Mousa, a monk stood at each arch, and required that each pilgrim should make an offering—at one, for the Holy Mountain, and at the other, for the Saint of the Festival." These were the palmy days of the Christian City of Feran, in the Wady Feran, when numbers came to the mountain on holy pilgrimage on great festivals. But those days are gone, and the arches are unguarded, and the poor monks levy a humble toll on pilgrims, indirectly, through guides and shorbets. At mid-day we reached a level place—a long green valley with grass and water, winding among the heights. And in another hour we were at the top, having been just three hours in the ascent. The last part from the green valley was less good walking than lower down, the steps having become merely large blocks loosely laid. The ascent for a man is a fair two hours' walk, except he be just loose from Oxford or Cambridge, when an hour and a half would do for Jebel Mousa. Mahomet's camel left her footmark on the top—a deep impression in the rock; but I could not make out from the monk if the prophet rode her up, or if she came there by other means. On the summit

are the ruins of a small chapel, and of a mosque, and our monks burned incense, and lit tapers, and said a short prayer in the former of these, as they had done in all the other chapels of the Virgin, and Elijah and Elisha, on the way up. By the chapel wall was a small hole under a rock, into which a man might drag himself in a prostrate position; and this the monk assured us was the place of the passage—'I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by.' Courageous monk! When a bold statement comes upon you suddenly—an assertion—a daring assertion—that a terrible and an awful event of the great history took place there—there, on that spot of ground by your feet, a something of awe strikes you, a strange sensation comes over you—the awful circumstance rises up before you in all its grandeur—and then—and then—you reflect a moment—and a voice whispers—"'Tis a monk's tale,"—and the whole apparition vanishes in an instant;—you see a mere hole in a rock, and you don't believe a word of the story; for you are convinced that this mountain you are standing on, is not 'The Mount.'

The air was so light and elastic that the Sitteen walked up to the top without any fatigue. It was,

unfortunately, not a very clear day, and the Red Sea to the east and west lay all in mist, as well as the Desert in the far distance, towards Suez and Akaba. But, nearer, we could well distinguish, where the granite district of Horeb rose up from the white plains, all round from the north-west to the north-east. The border of this district appeared to be, northwards, at about ten miles distance, and the whole of it was one wide rugged circle, filling the apex of the Peninsula from sea to sea, and throwing out long, splintered, sharp ridges from the centre to the exterior; that centre being the mass of Mount Sinai. Among the many lines of far stretching ridges running out irregularly to the north, we tried to make out Wady Sheikh, the road of the Israelites up from Rephidim, and to be our own towards Petra; but we could make nothing of it in that terrible 'Sea of Rocks,' as a traveller appropriately calls it, although its opening on the Plain of El Raheh was close below us. But, nor that opening on the plain, nor any part of El Raheh, was visible, except the far end of it, miles away, by the entrance of the pass of Nukb Hawy. Jebel Katerin, on the south, was slightly above us, but all the rest of the mountains around were below us.

I had seen Alps, and Pyrenees, and Appenines —some of the best points of all of them—but so

utterly savage a scene as that from Jebel Mousa I have never seen. In other mountain ground there was always some relief. If there are snowy regions of terrible beauty in the traveller's front, as he looks from the Faulhorn, towards the Jungfrau, or from the Point de Vignemalle, towards Gavarni, there at his feet are the green pastures of Switzerland, or the fir forests and hamlets of the Pyrenees; but as he stands on Mount Sinai there is no relief to his eye, as his searching gaze travels round the limitless and blank wilderness. All is desolation,—as though the angel of death had swept his poison-dropping wings along the face of the land, and everything of life had shrunk from them down beneath the surface of the smitten earth. There was colour,—but the very colours of the rocks had an unnatural appearance. Long broad veins of blood-red ran over hill and dale along the dark ground, terminating in a crimson solitary pic with its black head—you might imagine it burnt black by fire. And again, a black wall ran in a direct line for miles across the grey rocks; you lost it in the dips of the waves of this stony sea, but then it appeared again on the next slope, far ahead, like a blasted line of demarcation of some demon-governed territories. There was before you the type of the rude and unluxurious life of warfare demanded of

the People of God; and this was the symbol of the severe discipline which, in one generation, converted them from the poor timid things of bondage into the martial nation, conquering by the sword—the source of the hard unbending nature they have ever since possessed.

It was a grand scene; grand, wild, and sublime in its depths of desolation. Jebel Serbal and ruined Feran were visible:—but there was one direction in which the telescope was most frequently bent with long and earnest gaze, due north—as we tried to penetrate the desert country which we were to traverse. A white and indistinct mountain line, crossing the pale Desert at a distance of some thirty miles, was described to us as Jebel El Tih, over which our route lay. But after two hours' stay, and, it must be confessed, a total consumption of the shorbet by the aid of all parties—the monks and the Jebeleeh playing a very liberal part in the affair—we turned away from that extraordinary scenery with the feeling of regret one always is sensible of on quitting anything that much affects the senses, and went home.

The next day Parthenius came to pay us a visit.

The story of Parthenius was this:—He was not a monk. There was a rich Greek merchant, at Cairo, and this was his son, Petros, or Pierre. The

merchant gave his son a good education, as he was fond of books, and especially of the study of different languages. Pierre learned French and Italian, Arabic and Turkish, as well as ancient Greek and Latin. His father intended him to be a merchant, and considered that his knowledge of many languages would be useful to the house. But Pierre was of a gay disposition, and as he grew to manhood, his love for society made him neglect his studies, and indisposed him to business. His father tried to check this idle life by sending him to Constantinople, to a relative, with a request to employ his son in his business, thus breaking through Pierre's Cairo intimacies. But this step failed to produce a good effect, and Pierre was sent back home as incorrigibly wild. He now ran his rigs at Cairo. He was clever, imaginative, given to metaphysics, fond of argument, and his pleasure was to engage in disputations with all who would dispute with him. He led a dissipated life, and one day he fell ill. A fever attacked his brain, and, as he recovered his bodily health, it was observed that at times he appeared as if his brain continued to be slightly affected. For slight causes, he would fly into the most violent state of rage; society excited him, and the restraint of his home was irksome and irritating. After much consideration of his case,

the Greek friends of the family recommended the father to send his son to the Convent of Mount Sinai, where the quiet, and the regular life and fine air would restore, perhaps, his health. Pierre came and remained a year, at the end of which time he was quite well. He returned to Cairo; but in a little time it was found that the bustle and excitement of the capital were too much for him, and business worried him and made him ill. Again he was induced to go to Mount Sinai—and here we now found him. He now wore the dress of the brotherhood, attended all the church services and lived as a monk, under the name of Parthenius, although he had taken no vow, nor entered the fraternity by any ceremony. His second residence there had now lasted for two years, and his occupation was reading the MSS. in the library, and copying some of them, which he did in a particularly ornamental manner.

As Pierre now sat in our tent, telling the Sitt how delighted he was to see and converse with Europeans who could tell him of the world—of something beyond the narrow limits of the convent life, it was impossible not to feel deep pity for the position and fate of this man. He had been born to an useful and an honoured career, was gifted with a bright intellect and cheerful disposition, and

now he was eking out a dull and monotonous existence in these savage solitudes, without an aim of any kind to make his life cheering, and without a companion whose heart would warm to his. Active and energetic, he was linked with drones—educated and talented, he was buried with ignorance and stupidity. Poor Pierre! He told the Sitt his tale and unburthened his griefs. "Did his father ever write to him?" "Yes—occasionally; and sometimes he was told he should go home to Cairo when he was well; but"—and he shook his head doubtingly—"I have been quite well for more than a year past, and I am here still." "Do you wish to go home?" "Sometimes I do, and sometimes I am afraid of it. Here, I am well—I do as I like. I go long walks, alone, among these mountains for a day or two at a time, and sleep under rocks. All the Arabs around know me, and give me food at their tents. The air is fine, and, with a book in my pocket I am in good spirits and strong. If I went back to Cairo, perhaps I should be ill again. I should enjoy seeing my family again, and my friends; but, then, the bustle, and the noise of the city, after this quiet here, and the turmoil of society—these frighten me; it might be too much for me—and then"—and Pierre looked very miserable. "Perhaps your father thinks this,

too, and shows his affection for you by letting you stay in quiet among these inoffensive monks." "Maybe he is right; but they are so dull—they know nothing; I have no companion among them." "Perhaps that is a good thing for you. If these monks were learned men they would dispute with you, and you would agitate yourself about questions, and exert yourself to find arguments, and the convent would be as bad for you as Cairo." "It is true—and probably it is better as it is. But there are so many things I want to know, and nobody here can give me an answer to my questions, as, for instance"—and Pierre rushed at once into a theological question, and asked my opinion. I gave it cautiously and generally; but he was ready with his comment upon it, and attacked it, alluding to German philosophical writers. We were fairly in a dispute, in which he evidently delighted, and gathered himself up for a tussel—till I saw that his earnestness agitated him. His whole manner became excited, and his eye glittered—we were on dangerous ground. By a pretence of doing something in the arrangement of the tent, I slipped at one step out of theology into common things, and then brought him back again to talk about the convent. "Has it any property in Europe?" "Yes; it has lands in the Greek

Islands, and which are managed by the Patriarch of Constantinople. He never sends any money to the convent, only provisions, clothing, and other necessaries. If the building wants repair, the Patriarch of Constantinople orders some one from Cairo to go to Mount Sinai, take workmen, and pay all expenses of journey, materials and labour; but he gives no money into the hands of the Superior. Thus the monks are almost without money, and they are always in want of a little to buy fish, butter, oil, and other things, from the Arabs, besides little extra comforts to their bodies from Cairo; and almost the only money they ever get—except some one, some friend at Cairo should send a little present—is from travellers." "Have you any idea what is the cost of this establishment?" "Yes,—ten thousand Egyptian dollars a-year." (This is equal to something less than £2,000 of English money). "And what do the monks do in the neighbourhood? Do they give any education to the Jebeleeh, or to their children?" "None of any kind; they give them bread." "Do they teach them any religion?" "None." "What is the religion of the Jebeleeh?" "The monks do not know. These people are not true Moslem, but have some kind of mysterious worship." "Do the monks ever try to convert

them to Christianity?" "It is against the law of the country for Christians to try to make converts from the Moslem." "Have any of the Jebeleeh ever become Christians?" "None." In fact, beyond affording shelter to travellers, and aiding the Jebeleeh to make out a hard existence, I could not learn that the Christian establishment of Mount Sinai had any real use or influence beyond the walls of the convent. The spiritual and useful labours of twenty men are confined within the narrow boundaries of the buildings. They do not teach anything to anybody, and, from Pierre's account, the Desert seemed to be as much within the convent walls of St. Katerin as without.

In the afternoon of this our last day (Sunday) at Mount Sinai, we all walked up to the convent to be present at a service which would take place at three o'clock. Pierre led us in through the garden gate, and in that garden, so green and cool, we loitered away an hour before the service commenced. —We went into the Church, and eight of the Monks, Pierre forming one of the number, were thinly scattered all up the nave—sixty feet in length—standing in stalls, with moveable desks in front on the floor. The aged Superior was in a corner. A young monk read from a Bible, as well as from a book of prayers—also a litany—but he

read everything in the most rapid and thoughtless manner, totally irreverent. The monks chanted at intervals, but I must confess it was a most miserable performance, and the Superior, poor old man,—he made only a wretched whine. More than once they all made a succession of obeisances, which reminded us of Moslem prayers, so often did they fall down—and rise up—and fall again—and rise again—and again—and again.—Altogether it was—with the exception of a Jewish service I once witnessed in the little old synagogue at Prague—quite the most irreverent and irreligious service I was ever present at. Within your hand's reach, too, of that chapel of the Burning Bush—claiming to be so very sacred a spot—this ceremony of worship was like a sacrilege.

After the service was over, the Superior came to us to ask for our health, and then of our further stay. We told him we were to go away on the following morning, and we asked for an interview that afternoon to take leave of him. Poor old man, as he left the church I saw him hobble up with his crippled feet to a small picture of the Virgin and the Saviour, and stand kissing the figures over and over again with the greatest fervour. His manner—and he thought he was unseen in an obscure corner—was thoroughly earnest. How happy

for him,—methought, as I looked at the bent and withered form,—that in these his last years, amid these dreary solitudes of the wilderness without these walls, and the desert of all social life within, he has one true and strong affection to solace and warm his heart.—He looked as if another low mound would soon rise in the little plot of ground by that of the monk in the garden.

We all went up to the strangers' rooms, the Superior and others too, and then we had a parting cup of coffee together. We made him our thanks for all his civilities to us, to which he replied, they had been nothing—not so much as he wished—and he desired us to ask for anything the convent afforded —all was at our service—(at the moment of parting the heart is always generous). After a little conversation, and paying the inferiors of the establishment various small sums for pots of manna, cakes of dates and almonds, and other things,—my friend and I walked up to the old man and placed in his white thin hands our expected present to the convent. No traveller before us had in books done more than mention in a general way these presents, and the good brethren were represented as difficult to satisfy. Our party had talked this matter over frequently, and were much troubled thereon, remembering the shorbet. To our great relief now

as we put gold and silver—ingeniously contrived to look as much as possible—in his hands, the Superior's face was bright and smiling. And then he offered us again all the convent afforded; and so, with many adieux and mutual wishes for our safe journey, and for his health and welfare, we went down stairs.

But before we were half down, Pierre, who had avoided the parting with the Superior, interrupted us, and insisted on leading us about among many other buildings of the labyrinth we had not seen. In the various courts were twelve small chapels, in which service is performed on occasions —the days of the Saints to whom they are dedicated. Some of these were plain, while others were hung with pictures of the Byzantine school and rich in ornaments. In one were suspended from the ceiling many lamps—among them some of brass of rich and curious workmanship, and studded with emeralds, diamonds, pearls, and turquoises,— or at least for what passed for those things. Pierre and I had become warm friends, and at various times had had much social converse, the poor fellow pouring out all his griefs, and asking for all my sympathies. His was a kindly nature ruined, for he would talk at times sensibly and gratefully of the monks, and their attentions to him during his

long illness; and then he would break out into lamentations over his banishment, and his wasted life and powers, and his imprisonment there far away from his home and all friends My heart warmed towards him. This last day, as we were leaving the last of the small chapels, he drew me away to his cell—a small but not uncomfortable room, with bed and chairs, and a table, and a book-shelf stocked with a few books of various languages. He begged me to take to the Sitt a rosary, as a memento from him; and then he hinted that he had some silver seal-rings—the seal being the arms of the convent—a Greek cross and the initial K. "I do not sell them," said Pierre—"I do not *sell* anything—of course not. I have, too, a few pots of manna—I do not sell it—I make you a present of these things—some rings, and the manna, and the rosary." He said this in a plaintive tone. "But have you a book—only some book you do not want,"—he went on as he put these things into my hand—"or anything else?" "No, I have no book that will suit you—but I will try to find something else;—ah, yes, here I have some things which are of no use to me, none whatever—put them in your drawer in remembrance of me." "Oh no," he exclaimed, starting back, "I don't *sell* anything." "Just so—we exchange presents. You

make me a present—I make you one—there it is in paper, and you must not look at it till I am gone." "*A la bonne heure,*" said Pierre, with cheerful resignation; and he fumbled in a drawer till he found a purse—an empty one—and he put my dollars carefully into it, whispering to me—"It is not a purse for money—what should I want money for?—but it is a little bag—I hate to lose anything." Poor erratic Pierre!—he took an affectionate leave of us all at the garden gate, and stood in the doorway, waving his hand, as we walked along under the garden-wall homewards.

CHAPTER VI.

The Towara Sheikhs—Opposing Interests—Aboo Keleh's Downfall—Off again—A Letter from the Convent—Wady Sheikh—El Bab—Rephidim—Rambles on the Desert—Arab Domesticity—The Sick Dromedary—An Arab Cemetery—The Widow's Prayer—The Plain of El Ramleh—Open Ground—The Premature Halt—A Stormy Night—The Mountain Top—Agricultural Longings—An Arabian Hampshire—The Desert of El Tih—The Terrible Wilderness—The Wady El-Arish—Farewell to 'Good People'—A Chance of Adventure—The Fort of the Palm Tree.

On our reaching the camp we found a commotion. Our two Towara Sheikhs had arrived, bringing with them men and camels for the next day's start for Petra, and they were in distress. They had had a meeting with the Teeaha Sheikh, Aboo Keleh, and there was dissension. The cause was this:—It had been arranged between us and Aboo Keleh, as stated in the preceding chapter, and in the absence of Beshara and Aboo El Haj, that the Teeaha chief should lead us by a middle road to the border line

of the peninsula, between Nakhl and Akaba, and so on with that tribe to Petra. When this plan was named to the Towara Sheikhs on their arrival, they exclaimed against it. "We shall not get through," said they; "the Haweit lie on that road—they will stop us, as they have stopped others—they will demand money for the passage through their country, and we must pay or fight. We cannot go." This was news to us, as we had understood that all the Peninsula tribes were in a friendly association. But now it appeared that these Haweit Arabs were a small but turbulent tribe, near the border, and difficult to manage. They were, and they were not, friendly. Sometimes they would join with the others, and send men and camels on a travelling party; and sometimes they preferred getting the money by being troublesome. Now it happened that there were no men of the Haweit among our people, and it was quite understood the tribe would demand money for the passage. This took Aboo Keleh quite aback. He declared "he could get us through the Haweit country—he could manage it"—and there was an immense deal of argument on the matter. But the Towara Chiefs stuck to the fact in a dogged way—"The Haweit are on the road, and spoil the way."

The secret of all the opposition of Aboo Keleh to going by Nakhl was this, as the Towara men explained it :—If he goes from Nakhl to Petra, he will have to pass through the country of a Sheikh who is determined to share the profits of the chief of the Teeaha, and which are large in right of his headship of the tribe ;—whereas, if he goes by this middle road, he will slip by this inconvenient Sheikh, and pocket the whole of the Head Sheikh's rights. If we go by the Haweit road, we shall be the losers—and if by Nakhl, Aboo Keleh will be the loser.

It was stated that the Head Sheikh has twenty piastres per camel for every one belonging to his tribe going on our journey from Nakhl to Petra and Hebron. This is paid down by the owner of the camel, and secures to him all the remaining money for which he lets his camel to the traveller. Hitherto this rule had not been objected to by minor Sheikhs of branches of the Teeaha—but now a Sheikh upon this road to Petra demanded that he should share this money, or else he should require that every camel passing by this way should pay him something. The Teeaha people, therefore, declared they would pay some part oft he twenty piastres to Aboo Keleh, and a part to this other Sheikh. The traveller's gold is becoming a subject of much jealousy and dispute among all the tribes lying

near the usual routes. Some small Arab ruler becomes dissatisfied with his share of the profit, and threatens to come down on a travelling party, and 'spoil the way,' if he does not get more.

This was a blow for Aboo Keleh in many ways. Hitherto for two days he had been in our camp a personage—talking rather large—Lord of tribes and Compeller of highways—our fortress and our stronghold. This afternoon he is in all eyes but an artful dodger, scheming to let our Towara sheikhs into a trap to save his own pocket, and checked in his wide and desert lordships by another and a smaller chief. We called a cabinet council to consult on 'ways and means,' admitting to it Beshara and Aboo El Haj ; and then learning that all this was confirmed by other Towara men, now with us, living towards the Haweit border, we decided on going by Nakhl, and not by the middle road. We then sent for Aboo Keleh, and told him our decision. The old chief was very angry ; but between 'hard words and delicious words' we induced him to give up the point he had set his heart on. 'Had there been,' said we, 'only men in our party—no Sitteen—then it would have been our pleasure to have gone by his road—to gratify him, and for the little additional diversion of eating up the entire Haweit tribe, and so making

the road comfortable for other travellers; but the Sitteen—it would not do to expose them to such a scene. We must fight if we went that way, and carry the Towara nobly through; he, Aboo Keleh, must see the impossibility of the Sitteen going that road.' The chief retired, crest fallen, to a distant Arab fire beyond our camp. He had eaten dirt, and his mouth was full of sand. The Towara chiefs had found him out, and already he felt his pocket lightened and his dignity lowered by the inconvenient little sheikh beyond Nakhl. He left the camp that night to go on to his people, and prepare camels for us at Nakhl.

In the morning what a row there was after the five days of quiet. Now the disputing of men and the roaring of camels around us again at sunrise, were cheery sounds; rest was over, and travel with all its exciting novelties was before us. Some sixty camels and forty men lay about us, full thirty more of the former than were wanted having been brought by their owners to put in a claim to employment. We were to carry on the same dromedaries to Nakhl; but all the baggage camels were to be changed, so as to let into a share of the travellers' money more of the various Towara families. This new arranging and choice of men excited an intense talking. Beshara was very

voluble, and hurried about from group to group, making a hundred explanations in his cheery way to the men whom he did not choose. Aboo El Haj selected his men in his usual noiseless style, dismissing the others with a kind manner, and two or three words—laconically, but decisively.

At sunrise a messenger came from the convent, bearing a last supply of bread, together with an affectionate letter from Pierre, containing the satisfactory assurance that the Superior and the whole convent were more than contented with the amount of our gold and our silver, as a present. The lieutenant drew up his guard of twenty men behind us, as, our tents down and our baggage packed, we were preparing to start. As we went down Wady Sheikh, we heard the drum and the fife's shrill notes, as the lieutenant marched his men back to their barrack in the Wady El Dayr.

For some distance, as we went, we could look back and see the Plain of El Raheh at the foot of the mount, the latter standing finely out, with its precipitous front and bluff head. A turn of the valley shut it out, and we never saw it again, the intervening ridges concealing it all along our route through the valleys of Horeb, until a day or two after we saw it from a distance, as part of the Sinai mass, rising high above all the surrounding Horeb

district. For four hours we continued along Wady Sheikh, a level surface of sand and stones, and of varying breadth—from one to three hundred yards—and bounded on either side by granite ridges, precipitous and broken. Throughout its length, between the long spurs of Mount Sinai, it is a fine and striking way from the outer and more open country up to the Holy Mountain in its centre. At mid-day we reached the boundary—a circling wall of black and red rock—rising straight up from the sandy level inside, as well as from the plain outside, to the height of seven or eight hundred feet—a noble barrier between the low waving ground without—towards the Desert, and the sacred mountain world within.

We came down straight on this barrier, and found, on getting near, a narrow pass—El Bab—the gate—of about fifty yards in breadth and a quarter of a mile in length, and which led us out, as it were, from a fortress into the open country. The pass is also called El Wateer—the falling ground. In this narrow pass is a rock of red granite, standing out from the great wall. It has something the shape of a huge chair or seat, on a pedestal twelve or fourteen feet high, and was called by the people the Seat of Moses. Not far from it was a singularly-shaped rock—part of the

great perpendicular wall of the pass. The lower part was smooth, and had on it marks of water flowing, though now dry; while above this, at fifty feet from the ground, projected a canopy of rock, stretching far out forward, and looking almost as if roughly worked by hands into a rude imitation of art.

You cannot but look at this pass and these rocks with considerable curiosity. Burckhardt's page is in your hand, in which he supposes the opener country outside this pass to be the situation of Rephidim, and that the rock struck by Moses should be looked for near this very spot—and which is part of the district—the rock in Horeb. As you emerge from El Bab, you are struck by the peculiar formation of the country, and the greater probability of the truth of Buckhardt's opinion than of that of the monk's tale. You imagine at once the Israelitish host encamped all over and among the low, white bare hills in your front, at a short day's journey from Mount Sinai:—they thirst, and murmur; and Moses, with some of the elders of Israel, goes forward in the sight of the people—a cloud, the presence of the Almighty, rests on the red heights above you,—the Hebrew leader strikes with his rod the rock in Horeb—the granite crag at its foot—the water gushes out from the mountain side,

and flows down the sloping ground from the pass, in a rapid stream, down into the opener and lower country of Rephidim—into the Hebrew camp. The Amalekites, who occupy the Desert of Sinai,—who dwell in the valleys, among the ridges, within the granite boundary—they hear of this host of strangers at the gate of their territories—at the Bab-el-Wateer—and they come out in force from their fastness within, and fight with Israel in Rephidim. On that low hill, in our front, may have sat Moses, with Aaron and Hur, and watched the battle. He wins it; and the Israelites enter that gate of Horeb, and march on victorious and unmolested into the Desert of Sinai, and to the plain before 'the mount.'

We passed the whole of the rest of that day in the outer part and continuation of the Wady Sheikh, which wound on among low hills for twenty miles, sometimes so thickly grown with tarfa-trees, thick and bushy, as that only a narrow way was left in the middle; and sometimes spreading wide, and studded with bushes of broom, all white with flower. At every turn we looked back at the rugged and wall-like barrier of Horeb, running in an even and regular line across the country behind, and shutting us out from Mount Sinai. The feeling would force itself upon you, that inside that

massive and far-extending wall were the sacred precincts, and that you were outside; and the thought, springing from the association of ideas, rose up and took shape and form;—such may have been the barrier, repelling and impassable, which surrounded and girded in the Garden of Eden, separating it from the outer world; and on such a height as that may have stood and warned the terrible Figure; and the banished pair looked back, as we did, from the wild and uncultivated waste, at that which shut them from the sacred domain beyond.

The camel pace is so easy that it leads on the traveller, if he is fond of walking, mile after mile, and hour after hour; and the air is so buoyant and invigorating that he scarcely feels fatigue. Then there are the little hardy Arabs by his side, on foot some of them for the entire day, leading the Sitteen's dromedaries, and their step is so light and free—in spite of their marvellous shoeing (the Sitt's little Arab had brought back with him to Mount Sinai, and was now coaxing, the same pair of incomprehensibles on his feet which were thought to be quite done up before Marah) — so springy from the morning to the evening, that it makes the traveller through the varying scenery forget the distance and the time. On the fine warm April days—not hot—I used to envy them their uncon-

fining dress—their simple attire, so suited to walking exercise—a smock-frock and a belt; but, in spite of European ligatures and un-Arabian superfluities, I used to give my dromedary over to the society of her child and their master, and walk sometimes nearly the whole of the day's journey. This freedom of movement gave me opportunities—when overtaking the party from little devious excursions—of many social walks with the other Arabs and much communication with them, by the aid of Selim, on their mode of life, as they too walked along leading their laden camels, or taking a lift for the nonce upon one or other. The men were nearly all married, the state of marriage appearing among the Arabs to be almost a necessary part of their simple and pastoral life. Only the youngest were unmarried. The state of matrimony seemed to be held in high respect among them, the young wives being left at home by their husbands, when on distant expeditions, with the most perfect security as to their safety and good conduct. The great matter for a young Arab appeared to be to become possessor of two camels. Without these he was not in a condition to aspire to marriage, as he must generally give these to the father of the Arab girl, as a proof that he was in a position to take care of a wife. These two camels were the measure of his

claim to be a man of property—without these, he was a pauper. But these might be the all of the substance of the young Arab—how then? That did not matter—he might have more elsewhere. Their mode of talking of the domestic tent gave one the idea of the Arab being a man of warm and true affections, and that in their own tribe, and among their own people, the young of both sexes are well conducted. Marriage is their great object, and to risk losing their good name is to risk their reaching this honoured social position. Few Arabs have more than one wife, and, in fact, generally speaking, few Mahometans of the middle class anywhere have more than one, the possession of more being regarded as betokening—not immorality, but uncertain habits and the quality of foolishness—a crime in Eastern eyes. The Reis of the 'Fortunata' would not have stood high among the wise men of the Desert.

All this day one of the dromedaries was sick—that ridden by the Sitt of the 'Fortunata.' It went with its head down near the ground, groaning and coughing perpetually. The animal was ill, but the owner declared it was well—that it had only eaten some chicken feathers at our camp at Mount Sinai, and which were in its throat. The other men laughed at this simple device of the man to save the

character for goodness of his beast, and said it had a malady which is often fatal to camels. They called it by a name meaning 'a trap'—'it is caught, said they. The owner asserted that this was untrue, and stuck gallantly to his feather solution of the cough. Now and then some one of his companions would ask the man, who pretended not to be uneasy about his beast, whether his dromedary had a particular liking for feathers—more than for shrubs—as that would affect its value;—or if it was turkey feathers and not chickens'—everybody knew about turkey feathers, and they warned him solemnly on the point—to be very careful for the future,—and so on; and his answers afforded merriment to the party. In the middle of a long silence some absurd question would be asked about the sick dromedary, and give all the men in the rear great delight. However, the vexed man received in recompense plenty of sympathy from the Sitt, his mistress. —He declared the animal would cough up the feathers at night and be well in the morning—an assurance to the Sitt which was not satisfactory, and was received by his companions with fresh jesting. He did his best to save the credit of his favourite and his own pocket, for it became a question of sending it away—a loss both to the Sitt—for it was a smooth-going and gentle and pretty

creature, and a great favourite—and a loss to the man.

In the course of the day we passed an Arab cemetery—the place marked by a few small rough pieces of rock stuck in the sand in oblong circles round some dozen graves on the open hill side—the Desert being its protecting wall from injury and intrusion. As we stood by this place for a few minutes —a rising ground among waving plains—and looked around—far and near there was nothing visible but the waste—not a tree, not a shrnb, not a living thing was to be seen, except our string of camels. The only thing else that told of life on the face of the wilderness, was this little tenement of death.— As we stopped, the owner of the sick dromedary knelt down by a grave and prayed. Then he brought away from it in his hand some sand, and sprinkled it on the animal's head. He seemed quite satisfied with what he had done—the whole action being grave and earnest—and we all agreed that the dromedary ought to be very much the better for it. The other Arabs, however—the unbelievers—they laughed; and in spite of the sand application they continued to keep all their animals quite out of reach of the sick one for the rest of the day.

Beshara told of an Arab custom as we left the cemetery. When an Arab woman intends to marry

again after the death of her husband, she comes, in the night before her second marriage, to the grave of her dead husband. Here she kneels and prays to him, and entreats him 'not to be offended—not to be jealous.' As, however, she fears he *will* be jealous and angry, the widow brings with her a donkey, laden with two goat-skins of water. Her prayers and entreaties done, she proceeds to pour on the grave the water, to keep the first husband cool under the irritating circumstances about to take place; and having well saturated him, she departs. She has done her best for him. One imagines the coffin'd man, obliged thus to listen to the deserting wife mocking him, and telling him to 'take it coolly,' whether he will or no.

We left Wady Sheikh, and passed two days amidst some bold scenery—narrow valleys shut in by rocky ridges—and went by the Wady El Berhk and the Wady Kameeleh out on the plain of El Herr Ramleh—here the mountain district, in which we had spent fourteen days, ceased abruptly, and the barrier, a precipitous range like a wall, of red sandstone, ran away for miles on our right and left. To our left was the road to Marah and Sarabat El Khadem.

The plain before us was ten miles wide and, perhaps, double that distance in length, lying smooth and inviting, with a gentle slope from us of sand,

yellow and cheerful, and sprinkled all over with tufted herbs. Its boundary on the far side opposite was a long, precipitous range of white limestone mountain—Jebel El Tih. From east to west that long chain ran on as far as the eye could reach on either side—the Mountain of the Wandering. We went straight across the plain of El Ramleh to the white wall, over which our road lay nearly due north to Nakhl.

It was with a sensation of relief that we emerged from the valleys hemmed in by impending rocks and savage precipices out upon this fine sloping plain. The air seemed to come more fresh and pure across the open ground; the colour of the sand, so golden, reminded us of Nubia; the novel beauty of the scenery, and its far-stretching space, imparting a sense of freedom to us poor pilgrims, so long debarred it and shut up in the stern district of Sinai, gave to all the party a new animation. The day was rather cloudy, and a fresh air blew from the north in our faces; the sun was behind us—a great and happy change, for at times, as we went to the south, the sun in our faces all day had been rather trying, and now, as we were advancing into the spring his rays were becoming dazzling. We stopped for an hour out

on the plain, and although there was not a bit of shade to be seen, far and near, over that yellow sea, the shrubs scarce a foot high, yet in a few minutes, as by the hand of the enchanter, the light and the sand were shut out, and your eyes bathed themselves in the luxury of deep colours in the shade. Presto!—your umbrella is fixed by a shrub—your thick deep-toned carpet is spread beneath you—a five hours' ride and walk make you throw yourself under this shelter—how eagerly—the treeless waste is converted into a small thing of home, and the ready Selim places before you in the shade things to set before a king—wine and ice—cold water from the Zemzemeeh, and dates and biscuits, and that lord of all fruits upon the desert—the orange, loved of Maltese groves.

When we stopped on the plain of El Ramleh, our orders were to the cooks and the men with the baggage camels—to get forward, and on to the top of Jebel El Tih, and to pitch the tents on the table-land on the summit, if they could do so by an hour before sunset; but if not, then they were to stop at the bottom. We now followed in their track over the plain, the ground sloping with gradual fall to within a mile of the mountain foot, and then breaking up into irregularities. We could therefore see our body of camels at one hour

in advance of us, as we descended the long slope towards Jebel El Tih. As we came on we could mark them leave the plain, cross the broken ground, and reach the mountain foot. The time for them to stop was approaching, and yet they began to ascend. Gradually they mounted, the dark line of camels, in a string, showing itself against the white bare mountain face, till they were about half way up, and then we lost sight of them. "I knowing the road," said Yusuf, "they going all long, and we seeing them." But they did not go all along, and we did not see them again. "Is the road along the front of the cliff, Yusuf?" "Yes, master—me not seeing them—me thinking them stop on the mountain." And so they had—the very thing we did not wish them to do, and had ordered them not to do, as the bottom or the top of any precipitous and high ground is less liable to gusts of wind than the middle. Now there was no wind at the foot of Jebel El Tih—there it was a still warm evening—but when we arrived at our camp, which we found pitched in a basin about half way up, we began to hear murmurings and sighings along the face of Jebel El Tih, which threatened wrong. However, there was no help for it, it being too late to load the camels again, and reach the top—an hour's distance—before night. The people had mistaken

the time, and believed they could reach the summit by the hour specified.

The whole face of Jebel El Tih, towards the south, is more or less precipitous, while the summit is a table land, running into the interior of the peninsula, but the high country soon slopes away gradually down towards the north. The air was quite fresh upon the mountain side—on our shelf—and before dinner was over we had a warning of the future by a gust coming suddenly down upon us and knocking over the kitchen tent. The only thing to be done was to provide against the enemy, by heaping heavy stones all round on the bottom of the canvas of all the tents, to prevent the wind getting in and blowing us up, and by well hammering in all the tent pegs and looking well to the ropes. Till past midnight it was a doubtful point whether we could hold our ground or no. As I lay on my bed I could hear the wind coming howling along the face of the mountain at a distance. It would come sighing and sobbing at first round the tents—the advanced light troops of the enemy—until the heavy gust arrived; and then it would rush down on us with a violence that threatened to sweep us all away. The sensation, as it approached, was novel and not altogether pleasing. 'Will this gust do for us? that last one was a narrow escape;

here it comes moaning and grumbling—will it break away the ropes, carry off the tent, and leave us, desolate pilgrims, unsheltered out upon the mountain side, with the chaste moon staring down on us in our very natural bed-room—curtained by the sky?' Soon it came—rushed right down on us—the little tent shivered all over beneath the blow. Hold on, good ropes—a kingdom for an honest rope! The gust tried our defences all round, and finding the door a weak place—it always was a poor fence—dashed in headlong, like a pack of hounds killing their fox. Mats and carpets, towels and curtains, bed-clothes and table-cloths—everything rose in arms; the *générale* was beaten—the enemy was thoroughly victorious in creating an entire confusion. It trampled its feet over my face as though I had been its personal rival in its dominions of Jebel El Tih, and itself was the Spirit of the Mountain; and it treated the Sitt with daring discourtesy. Happily the ground was good, the ropes were honest, and the enemy, having made his grand attack and failed to drive us off the shelf, made only some minor assaults afterwards which we beat off easily.

On the following morning we all had a walk of an hour and a half up to the top, our path leading us all along the face of the mountain by an easy

slope. The view of the country to the south as we went up, was good. The great plain of El Ramleh was at our feet—a field of gold beneath the morning sun—and beyond it was the rocky land, a rugged and gloomy country with Jebel Sina distinct in the midst, stretching far away to the south-east. Nearly opposite to us, to the south, was Jebel Serbâl, easily over-topping every intermediate hill; and to the west was Sarabet-el-Khadem, with its remarkable cliffs on the limit of the plain, with the hills of Elim and Marah behind; while, beyond them all, the long range of the African mountains across the Red Sea filled up the picture with a blue and shadowy outline.

We halted for some time on the top to enjoy this striking piece of scenery in the bright morning air; and then, taking our last look at Mount Sinai, we turned away and entered the Desert of the Wandering. We found ourselves on a table-land of low waving hills of a reddish brown colour. The country looked like a succession of hills of Hampshire ploughed ground, and as I turned up the surface in various places—a surface of small, thin, flat stones—I found, just beneath, much earthy matter mixed with the stones. Here, as in many other parts of these deserts, there appeared to be quite sufficient soil to bear cultivation, if

water could be supplied in any quantity and with regularity. An immense quantity of water is, one may say, wasted; storms of rain fall frequently in the mountains and the mass of waters rushes down into the plains, across which they have formed channels for themselves to the various seas. If these bodies of water could be held back for any time in favourable spots, by embankments, how many an oasis in the desert might be made 'to spring up and blossom as the rose.' As it is, whenever this water does happen to stop a little longer than in general, there are plants and partial verdure—grass, and thickets of coppice and bushy islets. We followed our road due north between the low Hampshire hills.

Still in the country, earthy and not sandy, we arrived in a couple of hours at a valley—a narrow, rocky cleft—and found a succession of small ponds of water. This lay in natural basins part of stone and part of earth, some of the pools out in the open, and some under the shelter of rocks, and lying deep down in stony chasms. There was grass, too—real, short, close turf with a sod—round the margin of more than one basin, and oleanders in flower and other shrubs and bushes grew along the damp bottom of the narrow Wady. All this was not to be resisted by us, so we stopped the

whole caravan, and soon all—men and animals—were by or in the pools, filling the water barrels from the cool chasms, or bathing their heads and legs, or drinking as they lay at full length on the turf—how brilliant, and companionable, and loveable it looked, that bright green strip;—while the dogs were barking round the edge, and the horse plunged his head deep down into the refreshing water nearly to his eyes—a general enjoyment. The soil was the same as that on the dark brown hills hard by, and these pools made of the spot—how easily it might be enlarged—a little garden in the wilderness.

After a few miles more, we emerged from among the hills upon high level ground, and here we had an extensive view over the wide Desert of El Tih. East and west, and far down to the south behind us, was one continuous expanse of waving ground—the brown Desert—for many miles. On our left, in the direction of Suez, the Desert rose in long slopes from the interior to the top of the wall of Jebel El Tih. On our right, beyond the dark foreground, at perhaps twenty miles distance, from the north-east to the south-east ran a white chain of mountain, glaring in its whiteness as of chalk—a striking boundary—Jebel El Edjmee. In our front was an immense white plain—not level, but

broken ground—extending from the brown slopes towards Jebel El Tih right across to El Edjmee—and beyond it; at perhaps thirty miles distance, bare sharp white peaks at intervals were the boundary. This was the Desert of El Tih—the wandering—around and before us, and from this high platform we commanded it all. It was vastly more extensive than El-Ramleh—but had none of its pleasant features—no smooth surface—no golden sand—no shrubs sprinkled over its face—but it was one shrubless and stony waste,—dark and gloomy here, and pale and ghastly there—the Terrible Wilderness.

From its peculiar name, linking its localities more especially with the wanderings of the Israelites, you are inclined to regard this Desert with more than a common interest. The name seduces the senses; but though, in fact, this particular part of these deserts could not, of course, be considered as the scene of the Hebrew wanderings more than many other parts we had passed over, yet, when this great scene opened before us, we stopped and gazed on that memorable ground—that arid waste;—while the feeling took possession of us, that its aspect was desolate and repulsive in the extreme, as we pictured to each other the Jewish encampments and the multitudinous hosts in the midst of its wilds.

In the afternoon, having reached the lower grounds, we descended suddenly and sharply into a valley, or broad water-course—sometimes a hundred yards in breadth, and sometimes two hundred, and even more. This was the Wady El-Arish. It is so called, because, starting from near Mount Sinai, traversing the Peninsula, and then crossing the Desert between Egypt and Syria, it reaches the Mediterranean near El-Arish. This long gully lay deep down in the ground, and was not seen till we were close upon it. It crossed the Desert of El Tih from south-east to north-west. The Wady was now dry, but after storms in Sinai and on El Tih it carries the waters, for the benefit of numerous tribes who dwell about its banks, throughout the entire country to El-Arish and the sea. The banks were steep and about forty feet in height, and so thickly was its whole space grown with shrubs, that our road was one continual winding in and out between small islands of shrubbery; for we did not cross the Wady, but turned at once along its course. The appearance of the Wady was that it had been formed, its bed washed out, by water; and it struck us that, under the usual circumstances of other lands, the Wilderness of El Tih would have been a green pasture country, and this Wady El Arish a fine, broad deep river of beneficent waters. And what ages of time must have passed before these casual and long interrupted waters could have swept out for themselves so deep and broad a bed. The sudden change from the bleak and stony waste down into this unexpected and unseen, but verdant roadway, was like something of magic—the work of some benevolent genii.

That night, in the Wady El Arish we had rain. The wind came in sharp gusts with showers of rain, short in duration, but heavy. These continued all night, at intervals, and in the middle of it I was awoke by finding one side of the mansion driven in, the ground in the water-bed being less good-holding than on Jebel El Tih. Presently I heard loud voices and hasty orders, in which Selim and Abbaseh were the leaders—and methought, there 'goes the kitchen;' and so it was—the domestic establishment was roused from sweet slumber to find itself houseless.

As we approached Nahkl—on our last day—a feeling of regret began to grow upon us, that we must, on the following day, part from our good friends the Towara Arabs, quiet and mild people, reputed to be better and more manageable folks than any of the tribes outside of the Peninsula. We were to pass into the hands and the country of the

Teeaha, who bore the reputation of being all rogues; and, moreover, the Sitteen were to lose their two smooth-going dromedaries (the sick one got well suddenly while crossing the plain of El Ramleh, and its owner always stuck to his assertion that it had coughed up the feathers), as they would not be allowed to ride Towara dromedaries through the Teeaha country. Then we were told, that in the deserts of our new protectors all our careless freedom of travel must cease—that our whole party must keep together in a body all day—and we must give up the pleasant hour of rest and refreshment in the middle of the day. All this was to be given up—the stop at mid-day must be for a quarter of an hour only—and all must stop and all go on together. Why was all this change? "Why we not do the same as always, Selim?" (It is a curious fact that you get into talking a broken language by much converse with a foreigner who does so—you use his phrases as easier for him to understand.) "Why we not stop as now?" "Because all different, master—Towara good people, you going where you like. Teeaha different—all bad: this country nobody bad—Teeaha country many bad people everywhere. One day you come stopping—bad people finding us—we only two, three—taking all our camels—we all walking—

what the Sitteen doing?" Now, whether this was all true or not—that we should really run the risk of our small and select luncheon party being despoiled ignominiously of our dromedaries in mid desert, and left to walk, very humbly indeed, through the Wilderness of Zin, like so many wandering Israelites—still it was clear that the day of our easy security of travel was passed, and the fashion of our journeying was to be altered. However, there was something in prospect to balance this loss of ease—there was the chance of adventure. This was a consideration—we might be made highly uncomfortable, but we might see novelties. I began to wish for the Teeaha.

After mid day we left the Wady El Arish on our left, after having followed its course for twelve hours—and we saw no more of its shrubberies of tarfa and oleanders. Our road lay over the white plain, dotted with small circular hills—tower-like rocks—their summits as though castellated by art. The mountains on either hand had broken down into low lines of small elevation,—even El Edjmee had lost all its fine effect—and the general aspect was as if we were leaving one country for another.—As we rode along it became very hot and the glare from the white soil trying to the eyes. If you raised the green gauze hanging down over your face, the light

seemed to dart up from that surface at the eyes, like some wild and subtle spirit of the air; and the veil was dropped again quickly—and the head drooped again, and you subsided into a state of brooding—not thinking. In the midst of this one of the Arabs called out 'Nahkl,'—and looking up we saw in the distance a square stone building standing in the midst of water—of a lake—and a few trees beside it. This was the Fort of Nahkl —the fort of the palm tree—and the water—how blue and shining, and refreshing it was to our thirsting eyes,—as the waters of Horeb to the eyes of the Israelites, so were these to ours:—but—no —these waters, they were but as the brimming element to Tantalus—they mocked us—they were but the mirage of the Desert. Our tents we found pitched at a few hundred yards from the castle walls.

CHAPTER VII.

The Fort of Nakhl—The Garrison—A Silent Sunday—A Whisper of the Khamseen—A Visit to the Governor—Politeness Here and There —Conversation on a Divan—The Teeaha Chief—Djoomar's Son—No Family Monopoly!—Salameh—Diplomatic Selim—Booked for Petra.

THE little fort of Nahkl is a stone building, square, with round towers at the four corners. The walls are about thirty feet high, with only two or three small windows high up looking outwards from each face—and each face is about a hundred and fifty feet in length. Three sides are free, but on the southern side a stone wall seven feet high runs out into the Desert and incloses a considerable space and low buildings only as high as the wall——a rude village;—this is the barrack. The Governor and his family with a few only of the garrison occupy the castle, and the rest of the soldiery with their wives and children are in the

village barrack outside. The garrison consists of about fifty men, the fort stands on a rising ground in the midst of a wide level plain, the mountains to the west, low and broken, being two miles distant, and those to the east, Jebel El Edjmee, but humble hills—about four miles off; while to the north and south the plain stretches in one continued and level line far away, till misty and shadowy mountains—perhaps not real—seem to terminate the view—the Desert of El Tih—and the Wilderness of Zin.—The little fort and the palm trees in the middle of the barren and silent waste looked like some strange and misplaced thing—What did it do there? How came it there?—Was it a goblin dwelling?—Would it be there to-morrow morning—or disappear in the night?

Soon after our arrival some of the garrison came down to see the strangers. They were stout swarthy men and were not part of Abbas Pasha's regular army, but an irregular body of men—volunteers—some of them born and bred up in that place. It had been found that the regular soldiery in the old Turkish times, imperious and cruel according to Turkish fashion, were perpetually quarrelling with the Arab tribes, and there had been continued warfare. This was bad; and instead of the force making the Desert more secure, they only made it

more dangerous for travellers; for the garrison had no influence with the tribes, were too weak to act against them with effect, and being frequently in a state of hostility with their neighbours, they so managed matters that the whole country was overrun with angry Arabs, and the Hajj road from Akaba to Suez was unsafe. Mehemet Ali remedied this by placing at Nahkl a volunteer corps,—men of half Egyptian, half Arab, blood, which he collected in Upper Egypt in the Howara country—the people so famous for horses and dogs—and which he collected by offering large pay to those who would occupy the post. These men were allowed to take their wives and children to Nahkl, and here they have since formed the garrison, vacancies being supplied partly in the same way from the Howara and partly by the sons of this irregular soldiery brought up on the spot. They rarely returned to Egypt, but had the liberty of throwing up the engagement if they pleased to do so. They were said to be but indifferent soldiery, little acquainted with drill and discipline, but living peaceably with their Arab neighbours, holding a useful post, and ready to act, if required, with vigour.

On Sunday, the 12th of April, we lay all day at Nahkl—a day of rest and quiet after our six days

of travel from Mount Sinai. The Sitteen had gone through the six days, not quite without fatigue or suffering, but with undiminished strength and, if anything, with improved spirits and augmented enjoyment of the journey. In fact, the early rising, the fine air of the Desert, when not too hot—and which it rarely was—the constant novelty and interest of the scenery, the quiet and undisturbed night—how voiceless and intensely still—and, last not least, the store of good things laid in by the prescience of the Egyptian servants; all these things quite outweighed any labour of the many hours' ride, and gave the Sitteen a new supply of health. The healthiness of the Desert is proverbial. Still, when the Sunday came round—the day of rest—the break in the journey was a relief, a pause that seemed to give a satisfaction and a finish to what was done, and a zest and a starting point to the coming adventure; while the day itself, from associations, possessed a singular charm in these wildernesses.

On going towards the hills that morning, I found that the whole air seemed to be swimming. It was not with heat; but there was a peculiar dazzle in it that seemed to prevent one's looking at anything directly. On the previous day the white range of Jebel El Edjmee, in our front, four miles

off, was clearly defined and the outline hard. Now it was impossible to look steadily at it with naked eye. As I went on, a hot wind—a fiery breath—passed by, meeting me from the east. It did not last—it came suddenly—at once—and was gone—but it was a glowing blast, burning on my face as it went by. Was this the breath of the Khamseen? or was it a forerunner of the simoom? I confess that this first taste and sensation of the hot breath of the terrible wind was a surprise—a shock; but, then, was it not delicious? It came on my cheek as the fervid and passionate kiss of some mysterious being—spirit of the fiery wilderness. Of course I walked on in that grateful atmosphere, and hoped for another ardent embrace of the beautiful unseen. But it did not come again. Its presence was not as that of the sun's heat, depressing and producing languor. No; it was as if some invisible being of air passed by me from some torrid region—escaped from the earth's central fire-world. Was it a wandering inhabitant of the scorched waste—its congenial dwelling-place? or was it sweet Maimouné? Towards the middle of the day, the heat increased to 95° of Fahrenheit in the shade of the tent side; but the hot wind did not return; that blast went upon its wild way and

came no more. The Arabs said a change was approaching in the weather, and that this swimming of the air, and the hot gust, were the almost certain forerunners of a Khamseen wind. Where would this catch us—or should we escape it—this wind which beats down with its terrible breath and suffocating dust both man and beast to the earth?

The Governor of the Fort had paid us a visit, on the evening of our arrival, to give us welcome; and now, in the afternoon, my friend and I went up to the castle to return the visit, and to thank him for all his polite attentions to us. He had sent us pigeons and bread, as a present, on the evening before, and he had again in the morning sent us a second supply of that welcome article, bread. The entrance of the Fort was a deep arched gateway, or vaulted passage, with a raised divan or platform, three feet above the ground, all along one side of it and also filling up the whole upper end. From near the inner extremity of this vaulted passage—some twenty-five feet in length—a strong heavy gate led sideways into the Fort. On the side divan, of boards only, sat and lounged many men; and on that at the upper end lay reclined one man, on shawls and carpet. Others stood about the entrance, or sat on the ground just

within it—soldiers, Arab sheikhs, hangers-on of the castle—a motley group. We told the object of our visit through Yusuf—a visit to the Governor. We were invited to go up to the upper end and sit on the divan, and a man immediately went through the gate by the side of it into the castle, as we thought, to deliver our message to the Governor We expected to be invited to his apartments in the interior. In the meanwhile, the man lying on the divan of honour made way for us to sit, but said nothing. He was a tall man, of middle-age, dressed in a long blue cotton gown over a white one, and he wore a dark red seedy kerchief tied carelessly round his head, and hanging down half across his face—a very loose style of figure indeed. Soon a little boy came and climbed up by us, the Governor's eldest son, with a big sword on, and a red jacket. We talked to the boy, and the man in the blue gown, whom we took to be some castle official, joined in the talk, fondling the boy with kind words and caresses. By Jove! this was the Governor himself, but so disguised by his seedy red kerchief and his cotton blue wrapper—so altered from the brilliant Egyptian, in white and red, of the day previous—that until he spoke to his boy my friend did not recognise him. For my part I had never seen him, having been away from the

tents when he came. Our manner hitherto had been the reverse of courteous, for we had seated ourselves on the divan of honour, when the disguised Governor made way for us, with cool unconcern beyond laconically thanking him—and then we took no further notice of him.

Happily, in those countries, the manners of people are not precisely our manners. There, to enter a man's house, sit down, sit gravely—silently—without a word—with scarcely a gesture—is not to be wanting in politeness. The visitor wants something—he will say what he wants in his own time—the host will not hurry him—he is too well bred to do so—when the visitor is ready to speak, he will speak. Silence is dignified and safe—talking may be foolishness. Our visit to the Governor began, unconsciously to us, in Eastern style, and not western. In the school of the former our manner was cold, dignified, and polite—while in that of the latter it was rude and thoroughly uncourteous. But finding out our mistake, we slid into little courtesies as quietly as we could, making Selim, who was standing by, our interpreter, and the boy the ground of our amenities. And so we fell into conversation. The Governor had been for sixteen years in command at Nahkl, rarely going to Cairo. He was a great admirer of Mehemet Ali,

who had placed him there, and considered him a great man—("old Pasha liked the Governor much," whispered Yusuf to us)—and when Mehemet Ali went down to Mecca and made the campaign against the Wahâby tribes, the Governor received him at Nakhl on his way. Ibrahim Pasha was never there—at Nakhl—as he went on his Syrian expeditions to El Arish. The Governor liked his residence in the Desert, and his people and the Arabs lived on quiet and peaceable terms at all times. He was going up to Cairo, on the day following, to see Abbas Pasha, who had sent for him about the affairs of his garrison. It appeared that some liberated slaves—men from Abyssinia—had been admitted by the Governor to form part of the irregular soldiery of Nakhl, and Abbas Pasha had disapproved of this, wishing that all the men of the force should be of the same mixed race as hitherto, and solely recruited from the Howara country of Upper Egypt. The Governor talked of all these matters in a plain, sensible, straightforward way, more in the manner of an European than of an Eastern, there was so much freedom and readiness in his replies to our observations. He always named Abbas Pasha simply, but of the old Pasha he spoke with evident pleasure, expressing his admiration of his old master in an open, downright way, that showed

much heartiness of feeling. He was a tall and swarthy man, with rather handsome features, and a strong, intelligent, and open countenance; and his manners were frank and free, and kindly towards his dependants and the Arab Sheikhs, and thoroughly unceremonious. He gave us the idea of a sensible, worthy, and business-like man, admirably suited to his situation.

The Teeaha Chief had arrived at Nakhl during the Saturday night with plenty of men and camels. The greater part of his tribe were on the Syrian border, with their flocks and herds among its rich pastures, so he had been obliged to go some distance to collect people enough of his own tribe still on the Desert, and of other friendly ones among the mountains, to supply us. While we were 'sitting in the gate' with the Governor, Sheikh Aboo Keleh and the other newly-arrived Sheikhs gathered about the entrance, and it was proposed that we should at once proceed to an arrangement, in the presence of the Governor, with the Teeaha, as to our journey to Petra and Hebron. At once the scene became animated. Various Teeaha Chiefs came within the arch, the old Chief, Aboo Keleh, among them, our two Towara men, Beshara and Aboo El Haj, and others.

It had been long arranged that Aboo Keleh was

to be the head and manager of my friend's division of the party, and that we were to choose one for our division at Nahkl. Now Selim had among the Teeaha tribe, a friend, one named Djoomar—an old sheikh, with whom he had travelled once before, and of whom he frequently spoke in terms of praise. "When you come Nahkl, we taking Djoomar—he good man—he like Aboo Keleh." Selim had always been a little jealous of Yusuf having secured the chief of the tribe as his manager. But, as luck would have it, on our arrival, Sheikh Djoomar was absent on an expedition. Selim, however, heard that Djoomar's son was among the Teeaha, and so he found him out, and had some talk with him, and came to me in the course of the day in high spirits. "We taking Djoomar's son—he good man—he better his father—know everything." This was satisfactory; and now the moment was come to draw up the contract and arrange the various matters of our journey forward—price, time, road, and sheikh.

Among the men lying on the side and subordinate divan was a clerk of the Governor, with pen and ink and paper. He now came up to the Governor's side. "Whom do you take for your sheikh?" said the clerk to Yusuf. "Sheikh Aboo Keleh." "And you?" to Selim. "Aboo Djoomar"—and

Selim stepped across the place, and took a man by the arm, and led him up to me. "This our sheikh, master," said he, as he brought up a short, powerful man, with strong, handsome features, and laughing, pleasant, glowing eyes. I took a liking to him at once, and gave him my hand; but hardly had the words passed Selim's lips, before a clamour of six or seven voices commenced, and a storm of words ensued for a quarter of an hour. Selim was very angry, for all appeared to be against him — the imperious man was opposed openly, and he was wrathful accordingly. When the Governor—who interfered little and but mildly in the discussion—had obtained silence, the matter was explained to us thus: Aboo Djoomar was of the same family as Aboo Keleh. The elder Djoomar had, just before our arrival, obtained the leading of a travelling party, with which he was now absent. It was therefore very unfair to the other sheikhs that Aboo Djoomar should now obtain the management of another party. Moreover, the family of Aboo Keleh would be unduly and unjustly favoured if three successive parties were led by members of it. All this had been represented to Selim—but Selim imperiously stood up for his right to choose his own sheikh, and set at nought all the Teeaha laws of fair play—till the whole gateway was in a

true Arab storm. The point was referred to me. I was very sorry for Selim—very sorry for Aboo Djoomar—and particularly sorry for myself; but as I think, sometimes, I have a proper sense of justice, and, besides, am liable to a certain leaning away from monopolies, on occasions, I sacrificed the man of my heart at my side on the altar of Teeaha justice. "Aboo Djoomar, you cannot go with me." A total silence followed this decision. The young sheikh was a good fellow, for he took it well. He had not spoken a word during all the noisy discussion about him; and now, his countenance never losing its pleasant expression, he smiled as he turned away, as if he thought that his friends of the tribe were right in their view of the matter, although it would have been very agreeable to have had the job under any circumstances. He went quietly back to his place, at the lower part of the gateway, from which Selim had led him. As for Selim—he turned his back on the Governor—his arms fell listlessly by his side—his head sunk on his breast—he put on the air of the deepest grief.

The word "Salâmeh" was called aloud by the clerk, and a short slight man stepped out from the Teeaha party and came towards the Governor. He had a narrow face and eyes near together, but a mild and not a very sensible countenance. The

clerk addressed a few words to him, when Selim turning round looked at Salâmeh with an expression of utter contempt, and told him — "that he did not like him, and he would not have him for our Sheikh"—and turned his back on him. "Selim, said I—this is no use. These people have declared that we must not have Aboo Djoomar. — You do not know any other Sheikh, and this man Salâmeh will do as well as another—you can manage him." — "I know that, master" — he replied, looking at me with a cunning expression in his eyes—"but this my way—Salâmeh not much good—I seeing him—I give him hard words now —he better man — do as me wishing."— Worthy Selim—he possessed the soul of an Eastern despot —and held to his rule of putting every body he came in contact with down under his feet, if he could; and so he bullied Salâmeh at starting.

A new contract was drawn up by the clerk, between us and the two Teeaha Sheikhs, Selim taking every opportunity during the arrangement of the details to "give hard words" to Salâmeh—who, however, bore all of them with great good-humour. At last it was all finished—the Teeaha chiefs contracting to take us safely and well to Petra, and then to Hebron, and to rest on the Sundays without extra pay. We were to pay them

two-thirds of the money before starting, and the remainder at Hebron.

One by one the Arabs went off in their slow noiseless way; our conversation with the Governor came to an end, and we took our leave of him in the now almost empty gateway. He had scarcely interfered in any part of the long discussion, and then always with good sense and in a kindly engaging manner towards the Arabs; all this showed us that the great power he was said to possess over these wild people, was as much the effect of his personal affability towards them, as of the half disciplined force under his command in that little fort of Nahkl.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Wandering Bedaween—The Sitteen lose their Dromedaries—Aboo El Haj and Beshara—A perverse Steed—A Sand-Storm—Lost in the Wilderness—The Khamseen—A Dreary Halt—Selim's Story—Alone with the Storm—Camel-hair Cloaks—Yusuf's Weather-wisdom—A Pleasant Morning—An Agreeable Wilderness—'El Sayl—El Sayl'—The Fool's Example.

THE next morning we were all astir at sunrise. It was an important day—one on which we were to exchange ease for trouble, and careless security for at least the appearance, if not the reality, of danger. Within the Peninsula the general harmony of the settled tribes is only occasionally broken up by some temporary dispute or personal quarrel, usually arising out of the conveyance of travellers; but the interest of all these tribes is that the dispute should cease, and so, of course, it does soon cease.

But, beyond the precincts of the Peninsula the case is different. The deserts which lie between the Syrian border and that of the Peninsula are the great highway from the wilds of Africa to those of Asia, and parties of wandering Bedaween, and small tribes hanging about the outskirts of the two countries are continually passing over this highroad on marauding expeditions from one continent to the other. There are large tribes who dwell on these deserts, and who live in a kind of league together to protect themselves against the inroads of parties from either side, and thus these isthmus tribes live in a state of perpetual petty warfare. The Teeaha is one of the most numerous and powerful of these tribes, and they have given their name to the Arab league of these isthmus deserts, very much as the Towara have done to that in the Peninsula.

At seven o'clock the Towara men took leave of us. We were very sorry to part with them—our daily companions of nearly a month—civil fellows, always attentive to any of our wishes, ready to oblige, and doing what was to be done in a simple, quiet manner. I liked them, and our hand-touching now, as we separated, was with words of regret. We made an attempt to induce the Teeaha to let us take on the two dromedaries of the Sitteen with their owners, offering to pay for the two Teeaha

dromedaries not employed, as though they were with us; but this plan they would not listen to—"Had not the Teeaha as good dromedaries as the Towara?" they exclaimed. They resisted this scheme rather rudely and fiercely, giving us a foretaste of a rougher manner than we had been accustomed to. The Sitteen saw their two smooth-paced dromedaries, dark coated and sleek, with their fine mournful eyes — as they thought, looking more mournful than usual at the parting—depart with deep regret.

But there was another source of concern to us all in this exchange of the Towara for the Teeaha, and that was the loss of our two Sheikhs, Aboo El Haj and Beshara. These men had become our intimates, joining in our daily converse, and telling us stories of themselves and their peeple. Not merely were they our guards and protectors, but our friends and associates, drinking of Selim's and of Yusuf's coffee morning and evening, and eating of our salt; and the idea of parting from them was a dolour to the Sitteen and ourselves. But when the moment came they both declared—"they would not leave us—they would stay with us—they would not go home, but to Petra and to Hebron." This was a great satisfaction to all the party, and we looked on it as an act of friendship.

The Towara departed—how mournful seemed the movement of their camels.—The Teeaha men showed themselves less expert in arranging their loads and more rough and violent than the Towara, and made more noise and bustle with less ingenuity.—The Towara were generally men of slight mould and mild countenance; but these Teeaha were more robust, had large features, strong countenances, a rather wild and fierce expression, were stout and large-limbed, very muscular fighting-looking fellows. Their camels were as themselves, large-boned and powerful, rough-coated animals. There was not a delicate-limbed dromedary in the lot, and the Sitteen were mounted on big and rather rough-going animals. When mine, picked out for me by Salâmeh, was brought in front of the tent to be dressed for my riding, he roared and fought when ordered to come down on his knees,—and, when down, he threw himself on his side and refused for some time to be caparisoned at all. When he did get up with me, he leaped up like a wild brute and went away at a trot, and was active and daring, and in fact a young violent-tempered half-broken beast.—However I rather liked him for his activity and his spirit—but in a day or two I was obliged to give him up, for if I wanted to go one way he was sure

to have a reason of his own for going another; and when I got off, there was a regular battle—such rearing and fighting with his fore feet and screaming—before I got up again.—In his coat, which was of a red brown, rough and short and curling, he was like a Scotch bullock.—For five hours did the noise of packing, and settling money affairs—the knotty business of distribution by Sheikh Aboo Keleh who received the sum for all in a lump from us go on—and at midday we started.

There had been the same blinding glitter and swimming of the air all the morning, as on the previous day. In the fiery dazzle the Fort of Nahkl and the palm trees were all in movement, and to look steadily at any distant object,—as the line of El Edjmee, was painful to the eye. The veil, which we all wore now—never needed in the quiet morning on the cool and clear Desert—was on this morning necessary before the Towara left us. Neither they, however, nor the Teeaha took the least heed of it. Just before we started a whirlwind crossed the plain near the castle,—a bad sign, combined with the peculiar state of the air. As we mounted, suddenly a strong wind swept over us in a gust, and before we had gone a mile the wind was increasing steadily from the south-east, nearly south, over our right shoulders

—for we turned our faces at once nearly due east. —The Arabs talked of a Khamseen wind coming. That terror of travellers was at hand. This wind is usually not hot at first, but increases in heat as it continues, and is sometimes very terrible in its effects. On this occasion it was cool, but became by degrees very strong. It increased every half hour, and so strong did it come rushing over the plains that at times it made our camels stagger, and had it been in our faces we could not have made head against it.

As we proceeded, the scene was good. The wind became warmer—never hot—but had now filled the whole air with sand, and as it increased, we could only see each other with any distinctness at a few yards distance. Aboo Keleh led the way, and the whole party, afraid of straying from the track, followed in single file. From the head of the file we could just see the hindmost camels, as some figures in a dim distance—as in a fog. Around us was sometimes the sand storm, and nothing else; and then we would enter among low, dark hills—shadowy things; and then we were suddenly at the foot of a precipice, and which faded away again as some gigantic and phantom form of the Desert, momentarily, as it were, approaching us, and then

gone again. We knew of our being near the mountain sometimes, even when we did not see it, though close at our left hand, by the roar of the Khamseen among its hollows, and along its jagged face. It was a wild, desert scene, and good. Nobody spoke, everyone being too much taken up with wrapping up his head, his eyes, and his mouth, from the penetrating sand. The Arabs had the best of it, and beat us in the matter of clothing, their long wrapping cloaks and loose garments folding round their necks and shoulders, and drooping over their faces, most effectual preservatives against the enemy. We, with our bonnets and hats—out of all time and place—and kerchiefs and veils—were rather victimised.

It was in vain that occasionally the Sitteen were called on to regard the sand-storm and the Khamseen as 'good'—as an incident of travel—a thing which had its bright side—its novelty, and its strange and striking features. They were deaf to all such recommendation of the circumstances, and blind to the charms of thus 'eating sand.' They, in fact, thought it odious as they rode on through the cloud of fine powder, drifting through everything, into eyes and mouth, and unable to see anything. They saw nothing—no scenery—no romance of travel—no beauty whatever in the situation—

nothing but a prospect of being blown off—some of the blasts were savage enough—by the next rushing gust.

We had gone on gallantly for about four hours—no one, for a moment, ever thought of stopping—when the old Sheikh Aboo Keleh, who, as matters became worse, got down from his camel and led us on foot, that he might see the track better—(so dense had become the storm, that the rear camels were quite invisible). At a dip into a little narrow Wady, the old Sheikh dropped behind, and other men led on in front. We went on for some distance, and then suddenly there was a cry from the rear to halt. What was the matter? We had lost the road. The leading men had taken a wrong track on coming out of the little Wady, and we were all wrong. The old Sheikh had detected, through the storm, a point of ground which he knew, and which was not on the road. After a sharp altercation among them for a few minutes as to where we were, Aboo Keleh turned sharp to the right, to recover the road, and so brought us dead into the wind's eye. This was fatal. The mistake put an end to our day's travel, for we were so blinded by the sand in the half-hour it took us to fight our way across to the path, that when we had found it—going right over some low hills, without a track of

any kind, and in a very loose disorder—we were fairly beaten, choked, and blinded. Suddenly, too, the light became rather gloomy, although it was only a little past five o'clock, and the sand was so thick that you could scarcely see, at times, beyond the next camel. It was getting serious. 'Stop!' was the cry—and in a moment every man of the party was on the ground, and in another the Sitteen were down too, and sitting with their backs to the storm —mummied in shawls—seated helplessly in the wild Desert—with the Khamseen in its anger, utterly regardless of the laws of good society, bullying and relentless, and rejoicing, as some monster democrat, in the taking down of members of the upper classes caught at a disadvantage.

The place we stopped at was a most exposed one —at the foot of a long slope—as we saw the next morning—and down this the wind rushed with a sound and a force as of the feet of trampling and armed hosts. The storm was evidently increasing —"Pitch the tents directly,"—was the next cry—but how?—Where?—The party divided into two, each seeking some place a little sheltered if possible from the fury of the Khamseen. In a few minutes a spot was found by Selim under the lee of an abrupt fall of ground, and soon all hands were at work to get up the larger tent. But scarcely was it

half up with all our efforts, and a few windward pegs driven into the ground—which unluckily proved to be a thin layer of earth on a rock—when a rush of wind came down upon us, tore up the pegs and sent the tent flapping over us in a disorderly mass. Just then too, a flash of lightning broke through the growing gloom, and a peal of thunder burst over our heads; and in a minute the rain began in big drops, and then it poured on us with the fierce down-pour of the rare but terrible storm of the Desert. Luckily, the wind fell a little as the rain increased, a few of our tent pegs held to windward —vigorously driven in by Aboo El Haj—and baggage and servants were all huddled under the shelter of the tent half up—every man holding on somewhere to keep it from being blown over us again — or away altogether. — The Arabs pulled their camel-hair cloaks over their dresses and set all rain at defiance, squatting patiently under the lee of their recumbent camels. We were not a happy looking party as we stood under that lop-sided and uncertain shelter, covered with white sand and dust —half-blinded; and now the most of us wet through, and all thoroughly damped.

But the worst things come to an end — the incident terminated—the sand storm and the Khamseen wind became things of the past—the gusts ceased

by degrees—the rain stopped — a fresh place was found for the tents, and soon cheerful lights were burning in them. Hot soup and dry garments—do they not restore a happy equilibrium, both of body and mind, under most circumstances? and discomfort—does it not vanish at the presence of carpets and mats under your feet?—It was acknowledged by the Sitt, as she looked back at the day's performance from amid the fumes of Abbaseh's good things and the cheerful home comforts of the tent, that a change from perpetual sunshine to a day of Khamseen and a storm—first of sand and then of water—has its favourable side—to a traveller of any spirit. "This bad day, master," said Selim, looking grave, with a face of condolence, as he brought in coffee. "Not at all, Selim—something new for the Sitt." "But, Selim," said the Sitt; "the Khamseen is worse than this sometimes?" "Very much more bad, lady. Me recollect one time travelling with English gentleman—you come one Khamseen. It one hundred times more bad as today. We going a little time—it come all dark—sand covering us like one cloak—I not seeing one hand — gentleman call out — stop — we stopping three hours on the ground."—"But why did you not pitch the tent?" — "We no tent — the camels and the baggage, and the tent all lost — we calling

—nobody coming."—"What did you do?"—"We making camels go down — we going down too — what we do?—We there for three hours—all along on the ground with our face so,"—(covering up his face with his handkerchief.)—"And the other camels and the tent?" — "They quite near — the men saying they calling and calling — but we not hear, the wind make such noise — and nobody dare go away from his camel—not one bit—he lost it." — The English gentleman evidently had had a better sand-storm than ours—of which superiority I tried to rouse the Sitt's jealousy, but failed. She was quite satisfied with her own storm, and looked upon the English gentleman's three hours passed in darkness at noonday, recumbent under the lee of his camel, with his handkerchief in his mouth, and without tent or comforts, without any envy whatever.

It rained still at intervals, and in the middle of the night I was awoke by a peal of thunder, loud, long and magnificent. It came from the south, and rolled away in grand reverberation over the Wilderness towards Syria. The sense of loneliness, which the Desert imparts to you—the feeling that there is no one out on the waste but you —and the thunder,—this gives the booming roll a voice—as of some living mighty thing pouring its

column of sound down on you—alone. And then the rain came down in earnest. There was no wind, but a steady perpendicular down-pour, positive, big-dropped, resolved on getting at us. But it did not act up to its resolve, for the good little tent beat off all its best attempts. As I lay and looked up at the slight covering above, I expected every moment to feel the big drops splash down on my face; but, in the midst of expecting, sleep—gentle sleep—took me in its arms,—and a sunny morning was the next event.

On going out, the Arabs said that it had rained in that heavy style for three hours in the middle of the night, and yet, there they were all as dry and as fresh as I was—as happy and as guiltless of a wet night as if they had all been under a good roof, instead of out in the open, with their camel-hair cloaks as their shelter. So many things, however, besides the tents themselves, had got damp on the evening before, and which it was necessary to dry before packing up, that we were unable to start before midday. The ground, for three or four hours, round the camp, looked like the front of a shop of some low dabbler in all things—from frippery and furniture to old stores,—such a medley of properties was spread out there,

in the sun, or suspended from the ropes of the various tents, and waving in the breeze.

At last, guns cleaned, and the effects of the storm banished, we started. Our friends had fared like ourselves, except that the ground Yusuf had chosen was sound, and held the tent-pegs well at once; so that they were less wet than we. Yusuf's opinion was, that in case of a storm, the more open the spot you pitched on, the better, as you have less wind to contend with on an open space than in one among hills, or apparently sheltered by one, as we were. On the former, the wind is steadier; in the latter, the gusts are more dangerous. He accordingly pitched his master's tents on the open slope where we stopped the camels. Nothing could be greater than the contrast of that morning with that of the previous day—nothing more delightful than the change. Now, a cool, light breeze passed across us from the north, tempering the heat of the sun, and the whole Desert was damp and fresh under our feet, and the atmosphere so clear, that the distant mountains towards Syria stood out sharply as the sunlight lay upon their yellow sides. The Sitteen, especially, rejoiced in the change, and got on their dromedaries in the highest spirits, proud to have achieved the khamseen day and the sand-storm, and fresh and buoyant as Arabs in the

fresh light air of the Desert, and ready for more adventure.

At first we went through a country of low hills for an hour or two, and then entered on a broad plain perhaps seven or eight miles in breadth. Into this four large valleys opened, the intervening ground between these rising into fine lofty hills. Beyond them and far away in the north-west was a mountain range, Jebel Yellak—and in the north-east right in our front was another, Jebel Achrib, with many peaks. As we passed the opening of one of those large valleys there appeared a boundless extent of desert, an unbroken level, right away to the south towards the Peninsula; and the direction of the Akaba road from Nahkl, nearly due east, was pointed among some rocky bluffs. The sky was full of large white clouds, and the cool breeze continued all the day rendering our day's work but a summer's afternoon ride. The scenery was very varied, and from the forms of the hills and the shifting of the shadows of the clouds on them and across the valleys—each Wady thickly grown with shrubs—we could almost believe at times that we were no longer in the wilderness.—The country wore in these spots quite an inhabited look,—for why might not a town be there on that level plain so bushy at the foot of the hill?—And why is there

not a village in this pretty sequestered nook of the Wady so green among the slopes?—We shall come to the town presently—and the village is just behind the hill.

Now as we went gaily along on this summer afternoon a man who had gone on in front, returned to say that our road was spoiled—'El Seyl—El Seyl,'—was the cry among our people, and one or two ran forward to see something. A torrent was reported to be flowing down from the mountains on our right and across our path. It was too true. In a few minutes our party arrived at the bank of a rapid river of twenty yards breadth crossing the centre of the plain. It was a turbid rushing stream, three or four feet deep, within regular banks grown over with bushes at intervals. This was an impromptu river created by the storm of the previous night. The principal part of it had fallen on the mountains to the east and south of us, and the water collecting from various valleys poured itself in one mass down this Wady Legaba—a deep torrent—on its way to the west and north into the Wady El Arish. We sent men up the stream to a bushy island and down it to look for a ford, but in vain; and after half an hour's search the stream was declared to be everywhere too deep. The zealous Selim, ambi-

tious, as always, of success where others failed, found a ford on to the island, but got a ducking in a deep hole on the other side of it. There was no passage. What was to be done?—The fool was laughed at for sitting down on the river-bank to wait till the stream should run out—but we did as the fool did. We pitched our tents near the torrent's bank—and waited till it ran out.

The sight of a rushing river in the middle of the Desert was so novel to us, that had it not been a bar to our way we should have enjoyed the freshness of the cool and rushing waters as they went eddying by us. As it was, we all sat on the bank and murmured—as did the Israelites—they for too little water—we for too much, in those same Deserts. We had been promised trouble on leaving the Peninsula of Sinai, and here we had been on the open Desert but two days, and strange things were upon us. Were these the beginnings of larger events to follow?—Was not the Genius of Adventure hovering above us?—Was he not not shedding on us from his wings charmed incidents of happy novelty—on us, dwellers in lands where all things are done by order and by rule—on us, sitting there on the bank, waiting, like the fool, for that deep rushing river to run dry?

CHAPTER IX.

Assad's Story—A Camel for a Wife—The Erment Dogs—The best Guide—A terrible and howling Wilderness—Jebel Areif-el-Naka—A Fancy Way—Alaween from Akaba—The Magic of Home—A Boudoir in the Desert—Frustrated Arrangements—'Dum Vivimus Vivamus'—A Lost Day—The Troublesome Sheikh—Selim and Yusuf mistaken—An Arab Circle—An Attempt at Extortion—Aboo Kelch's Warrior Days.

As there had been among the Towara party a black man, so was there now one among the Teeaha. He was from Sennar, a liberated slave, by name Assad, and belonged to Salâmeh's half of the party. He was a clever, quick fellow, handy with the baggage, ready in comprehending any new mode of packing, willing to do anything and always good-humouredly. Assad soon became the intimate of Selim and Abbaseh, doing odd jobs for them about the kitchen affairs, and dividing with Aboo El Haj,

the Towara sheikh, all the honours of arranging our tent each evening—for our new Sheikh Salâmeh turned out to be but a noodle, and not clever in anything.

His history was this: He had been the slave of a Teeaha chief, having been brought from Sennar, among a number, and sold at Cairo. He lived some years with his master, and was liberated by him for good conduct, and admitted to the privileges of an Arab, as one of the tribe. He fell in love with a slave-girl, a countrywoman of Sennar, in his former master's family, and wanted to marry her. The master consented to the marriage, and to give the girl her liberty, on condition that Assad brought a camel to him as her price. Now, Assad had nothing in the world, and how should he then be able to pay a camel for his wife? He bethought him of a plan, which, if it did not show a rigorously honest turn of mind, bespoke some energy. He set off alone from the Teeaha, crossed the Suez isthmus, and traversed the deserts to the south, lying on the eastern side of the Nile, till he reached Upper Egypt. Arriving in the neighbourhood of Keneh, distant about six hundred miles from his starting-place, he stole two camels. These he led off safely into the Desert towards the Red Sea; and then he made his way back again over the six

hundred miles of desert, with his two prizes, and reached the tents of his tribe in safety with them. With one of these he paid the sheikh for his wife, and with the produce of the sale of the other he set up housekeeping. He was clever and industrious, in Arab fashion, going on small commercial expeditions of the tribe to Cairo, and prospered. He was now well to do in the Desert world. He had at home the Sennar wife and some children, with sheep and camels, his possessions; and now he had two camels, his own property, in the camp with us. Assad was about thirty years of age, above the middle height, athletic and well shaped, certainly not handsome in features—judging the face by the Caucasian standard—but he had a strong intelligent countenance with an engaging expression, which made one forget that he was not so handsome as Aboo El Haj. I took a great liking to Assad's pleasant black face. Was he not black, moreover—'the finest colour for a human being?'

There was one source of continual regret now daily to us all, after leaving Nahkl, and this was the state of the young Erment dogs of my friend. When we left Cairo, and down to Mount Sinai, they did very well, and every evening

and every morning their barking and racing among the tents, in play, added to the life of the camp greatly. But in spite of all the care of our friends and of the Nile sailor, their especial guardian—who sheltered them from the sun all day long, and sang to them his Nile songs to cheer them—the young dogs sickened from day to day—the journey was to much for them. The heat and the exhausting motion of the camel, day after day, weakened them; and now, as we left Nahkl, they both sensibly lost strength and spirits. In the evening, when the day's work was done, they crawled off to the side of their master's tent, and laid themselves down, weak and spiritless. There was now no more chasing of Yusuf's chickens, let out of their kawass to feed—no more jolly barking at camels, or some fancied enemy beyond the camp. Poor young fellows! they had not a word, good or bad, for any one. But where were our two young Erment dogs? They were left in the care of our good host the British Hotel at Cairo.

To make up for lost time on the previous days, we were all in our saddles—or rather on such piles of things as did duty for saddles—before seven o'clock. The river had run out, and the camels had only to get through the slippery mud. They rolled about in it with their heavy loads awkwardly

enough. A report got about that the only man of all our party who knew the road was old Aboo Keleh, and the losing the way by other men, when he dropped behind in the sand-storm, seemed to countenance such a report. It appeared a singular thing that out of so many men dwelling in these deserts, none of them should know this road from Nahkl to Petra but this old man. However, so it was said; and there he was in front of us, on foot, leading the way alone, at some distance ahead. During the early part of the day the country resembled that of the day before, and we followed a path through it; but about mid-day this roadway or track was left, and then we saw no pathway at all, or direction of any kind whatever. Our way was, truly, over the pathless Desert; and the old chief in front occasionally appeared to be rather at a loss—stopping, and seeming to consider, now turning rather sharply from his line, and now back again to it. At this time, too, we emerged from among the hills, and entered on an extensive, an almost boundless, plain. Here not a shrub was to be seen, and the surface of the ground was a dark-coloured, small, sharp-edged stone, almost as hard and sharp as flint, and as there was no path, it was bad for walking. For miles

on all sides, as we advanced into this, as far as the eye could reach, the country was of this sombre hue—the black and stony waste. On no day previously had we seen any part of the Desert, of such extent and such a gloom, which so thoroughly realised the 'terrible and howling wilderness.'

As we went on, this scenery was very striking. All minor hills ceased, and nothing was around us but this immense and nearly level plain, and a few of the higher mountains beyond it. On our right, at a considerable distance, was the range of Jebel Themmed, from which had flowed down the accumulated waters which had stopped us in Wady Legaba. To the left was Jebel Achrib, and in the far distance beyond it, a high range towards Palestine; while in our front appeared for the first time visible a single conical mountain higher than all the others, Jebel Areef-el-Naka. This latter was a fine feature in the view, white, towering, and alone. In the afternoon we crossed a dip, where another torrent from Jebel Themmed had just passed towards the north-west, leaving the ground very muddy and slippery. On our leaving it, Aboo Keleh stopped to talk to one of his men, and another led us forward; but, after going on for an hour, he said we must wait for the old chief, for he did not know the road. There was no path of any kind.

It turned out afterwards that many of the men knew the country well, but the old chief was taking us by a fancy way of his own.

This day we met some Alaween from near Akaba. There was a slight touching of hands—a few words—and they went on their way. Our people gave them the character of being great rogues, much the same as the Towara had done by the Teeaha. The Teeaha and the Alaween, though on peaceable terms now, are always on the edge of quarrelling, they being the rivals for the gold of travellers going from Cairo or Mount Sinai to Petra.

Towards sunset we came to a part of the great plain where were a few shrubs, and the ground was waving, and among the low swells—all sombre and stony as in the morning—were spots less repulsive, and so we stopped in one of these hollows and pitched the tents. The Sitteen were glad to have done this day's work, for it was the first long day under the new conditions of travelling. They had been ten hours riding—walking over the pathless and stony Desert was out of the question for them—and had only rested for a short half hour at midday. The air, however, was so cool after the rain, a fresh breeze blowing in their faces all the day from the south-east, obliging them at times to wrap

their cloaks round them, that they experienced but little fatigue. On arriving at the place of encampment, we were inclined to think less regretfully of the loss of our old way of travel, and to look with approval on our arrival all together at the resting-place for the night. In the Towara country we had always found everything ready—tent pitched, and baggage arranged, and dinner half cooked; but, now, we chose the spot, and saw all the busy preparations for forming our little home. Not among the least of pleasant and novel things was the way in which the open plain at a moment assumed, with the rapidity almost of thought, the air and comfort of a homestead, with all its belongings. The moment for the halt arrives—everyone rejoices at the welcome cry of 'Stop—pitch the tents!'—the men hurry their beasts to the spot selected—the camels come readily and understandingly down to be unloaded—silence is turned into noisy bustle—cheerful voices are everywhere mixed with the cries of camels—tents spring up in an orderly arrangement—a circle is formed—the ground within it is covered with baggage of all kinds—fires are lit—heart-stirring sounds of cooking follow—and in a few minutes the Desert is shut out, and your eyes rest upon familiar objects of home. You are at home, and the Sitt walks into her house, and she

finds all belongings to her hand, and that haven of happiness to woman upon earth—her boudoir, ready;—carpets are under her feet, and that last best luxury, a mirror, courts her willing hand.

It had been arranged at Nahkl that we were to be six days on our journey from there to Petra, Sheikh Aboo Keleh making out each day's travel, so that we should arrive at Petra by Saturday evening. We were to stop two days at Petra without any extra payment for the camels. All this was a very happy arrangement; but we had not laid our account with a sand-storm, nor with an impassable torrent, as enemies in our path. These hostile influences had destroyed one entire day, and thus our scheme was disordered, and there was no possibility of reaching Petra by Saturday, and thus bringing in the Sunday as one of the days of rest there. We became, therefore, rather careless as to time, and indifferent about making exertion to get forward, the only thing in our front that called us to hurry on being the hot winds, which were said to be lying in wait—somewhere—in their haunts ready to attack travellers by the way in the latter part of April. If these should come out upon us, we should be in trouble. However, the weather was cool and delightful for travelling, and it was voted by the party, to be suicidal to conjure up

difficulties and hot winds. *Dum vivimus vivamus*, was the motto of our party. Enjoy the goods the gods provide you, and do not spoil the present by prophecies of ill—such should be the rule of all travellers.

Thus, the morning looking rainy—we had had another storm in the night—we were in no hurry to start. A council was held. The Arabs said it would be fine—we thought it would rain—so we decided thus :—Keep the camels handy to the camp, and we will start in an hour or two, weather permitting.

In about two hours, I happened to go out of the tent, and to my surprise found a sunny and beautiful day. All the dark threatenings of weather in the north and west were gone, white clouds chequered the sky, a light breeze was blowing,—it was a perfect travelling day. On looking round for the people, not a person could I see :—the servants were asleep in their tents, and of the Arabs and their camels, not one was to be seen anywhere over the plain. In a few minutes, however, the camp was all alive, and we resolved on starting without delay, as it was still quite early. But where were the Arabs? Presently, some of them were found lying on sunny banks among the hollows of the plain; but, on enquiry of the sheikhs

for the camels, it was replied—that "the camels had all been sent off to a place famous for food—a plain covered with shrubs at some miles distance." "How long would it take to get them back?" "Four hours." It was in vain that we called on them to remember our warning of the morning not to send their beasts far away, in case that we might want them to start:—the old sheikh, Aboo Keleh, put on a *non mi ricordo* air on the point of the warning, and said that "we had determined on not starting—that there was no food for the camels near the camp—that he was obliged to send them to feed,—and that they could not be got back till the afternoon." A considerable quantity of talk was expended on the principal point between the sheikhs and our own servants, Yusuf having particularly enjoined on the old sheikh to keep the camels near at hand. However, the discussion ended in our submitting to what we could not help, and staying where we were. The delay was not of much moment—that we bore with our wonted philosophy—but it struck us that the manner of old Aboo Keleh in treating the affair, was not good, and that the whole proceeding wore the air of being done with an intention. This was suspicious. But the scenery was fine, and our situation not an unpleasing one.

This old sheikh, Aboo Keleh, was to become the torment of us, and of every one about him, from the time he arrived at our camp at Mount Sinai, throughout our journey. He had been the cause of much trouble when there, and he had done his best to get us all into a scrape with the Haweit tribes on the Peninsula border. When we were at Nahkl, and since leaving it, he was perpetually making some disturbance—finding a mare's-nest, squabbling with Yusuf, or Salâmeh, or Selim, about some trifle, and keeping the camp in perpetual hot water. He stood upon his rights, as chief of the great Teeaha tribe, and demanded to be considered as the head and manager of our whole party. Had he been a sensible sort of man, like Beshara, or Aboo El Haj, we should have consented to this in deference to his chieftainship as head sheikh of the Teeaha—but he was so violent and so troublesome—taking his coffee in Yusuf's tent, and getting up a squabble with the easy, good-natured Yusuf; and then going off to Selim's tent, and, over more coffee, hectoring about some fancied right over the imperious Selim—that it was found necessary to object to this, and to make the old man understand that we were two parties—that he was in command of one, and Salâmeh was sheikh of the other—and that Salâmeh's party had nothing whatever to do with

him at any time. The old chief received this intimation, of course, with much ill-humour. Aboo Keleh's conduct was a sore point with both Selim and Yusuf. These two men had boasted to us all along the way from Cairo to Sinai about this Teeaha Chief—what a fine fellow he was!—a warrior!—a great Desert hero! Yusuf had travelled with him years ago, and had done him a kindness. Selim had heard that Aboo Keleh had wished to meet him. There was honour reflected from his person on all who might be within the circle of his acquaintance—and if we could but have him for our leader, then—'then would the sun of good fortune shine out for the Sitteen, and we should make the best journey that ever was made.' How we pictured to ourselves the great Teeaha chief—and what rejoicing there was in the camp on the day when this redoubted sheikh came unexpectedly upon us at Mount Sinai. It was a miracle—a God-send—how I embraced him!—whereas now—how were the mighty fallen!—the great chief was a bore, and an idiot, and a firebrand, and a trickster, and a stirrer-up of all bad passions among the Arabs, and a perpetual breaker of the peace. As for Selim and Yusuf—they were much cast down by all this—they had not a good word left for their boasted hero, and

would gladly have buried the great Teeaha, together with all memory of the treasured act of kindness, and the honours of name and fame, in one grave of oblivion, beneath the sands of the Desert.

In the evening there was a circle of the Arabs collected round a fire, Aboo Keleh presiding at a coffee drinking, and serving out the odorous beverage to the society in the tiniest and quaintest of old cups of porcelain. From quiet, mumbling talk, they went on to loud exclaiming, as was to be expected, the old sheikh being among them. After much and violent discussion, the subject of it was explained to us. Aboo Keleh had proposed that they should demand of the Ingleez five piastres per camel for the halt there that day, and Salâmeh had opposed the demand. Aboo Keleh had done his best to incite those of his own party to join him in making the travellers pay—"They had not travelled," said he, "and the agreement at Nahkl was, that they should pay this sum for any day they stopped, except Sundays and two at Petra." Salâmeh represented that the Ingleez had ordered the camels to be kept near the camp, and that they had been ready to start after two hours' delay, and that they had only stopped all day because the camels had been sent off so far. Salâmeh carried all the others with him, and the old chief seemed

to give up the point. This conduct told in their favour. After all, the Teeaha men were not such rogues as had been represented, and the friends of my childhood and the cousins of Antar were good men and true. Arab honour was still bright and shining.

We went down with the Sitteen to Aboo Keleh's fire and his circle, to make up matters with him, and sooth the irritated chief. He gave us coffee in the quaint little cups — once white, now much blackened by time and smoke—as was the small, old, broken-spouted coffeepot of the same material, and he related to us some of his exploits in war. He was a man of more than common physical power—as the Arabs acknowledged he was in his better day—his hands being of immense size, and his arms long and powerful, with great muscular development.—Beshara was a man of much personal strength, heavy and large boned — but Aboo Keleh, though shorter, was of larger frame. He wore a heavy old sword in his waist-belt, straight, very sharp and pointed.—With this he said he had killed in his time seven men—four in one battle, and three in another—a modest number for a hero and chief among the sons of Ishmael of many years standing. Of the latter battle he made but a mumbling, but of the first—he said—'his tribe,

the Teeaha, had fought well — they had fought against three other tribes combined, and had won.' This was evidently his great battle, and he was proud of it — the cause being a question of territory.

CHAPTER X.

Good Friday—A Mutiny—The Arabs Victorious—Punishment in Store —Jebel Areef-el-Naka—The Land of the Haweit—The Beni Sukhr Tribe—The Horsemen of the Dead Sea—A Mournful Picture—Wady Kamileh—Enemies at Hand—The Attackers attacked—Much Screaming interpreted—Plunder and Theft—The Teeaha's Virtuous Indignation—An Extensive Prospect—The Camp of Kadesh—The same Then as Now—The Israelites in the Desert.

THE 18th of April was Good Friday—and we were up with the dawn.—As we read the service of the day, before starting, the picture of the awful event recorded seemed to be more vivid and more striking, from the near neighbourhood of the spot which witnessed those all-amazing scenes. Just beyond those shadowy mountains lying all along our horizon to the north, was the Holy Land—almost within sight and nearly within our reach. And as from the tent door we looked in the direction of Jerusalem—nearly due north—that clear and simple narrative

seemed to possess more than its wonted force, and the words to strike the sense with a new reality. Then, too, the very spot we were on seemed to strengthen the impression by its associations.

The descendants of the people who wandered over these very deserts we were standing on, and who—there, on those plains before us—for so long were protected and were preserved by the Divine Hand — there, on those hills, committed the Great Crime — *there* did the children smite the hand that saved their fathers *here*. The place—the day—and the associations—formed a combination which was exceedingly impressive.

We were nearly ready to start, when a little incident of travel occurred. Selim entered the tent with a grave manner,—"Master, the Arabs not doing nothing—they not bringing the camels."—"What do you mean?"—"When I calling Salâmeh, Salâmeh say he not coming."—"Why not?"—"I know nothing—perhaps master telling him." On going out I found, instead of the usual bustle just before starting, a dead silence. All the Arabs were sitting by their camels in a group at thirty yards distance, by the coffee-drinking place of the day before. Not a man moved. The state of things was this;—during the night Aboo Keleh had revived the question of the day, and had tried to

persuade Salâmeh to join him in demanding the five piastres per camel for stopping that day. Salâmeh's virtue had given way before the prospect of piastres—alas! for the bright and shining honour of the cousins of Antar—and under the influence of much coffee he had consented to join the old chief in his demand. On my calling him, Salâmeh came; and now he declared that he could not act against the opinion of the Sheikh of his tribe, and that it was now determined that no camels should move until he and Aboo Keleh were paid the money. Selim took him in hand and remonstrated with the little Sheikh, but without success. Salâmeh did not lose his temper, for he was a man of an easy temper, but he took his stand quietly on his new ground,—"that he could not go against Aboo Keleh who was sure to be right." Aboo Keleh was called up by Yusuf and sharply taken to task for his conduct, and was warned of the consequences of such treatment of travellers; but the old Sheikh was deaf to all argument and remonstrance—and went off angrily to his people.—Of course we refused point-blank to pay the unjust demand made under a threat. Here we were then landed in a predicament—no pay no play—we were taken at a disadvantage and had no remedy at

hand. A council was held, when it was reported that the old Sheikh had even talked of going off with his camels and people, and leaving us altogether if we refused to pay. This was probably only a threat to settle the matter; but indeed the old man was so crazy that he might even do something very mad and give us real trouble. The upshot of the council was this—a message was sent to the Arabs—"if you insist on this payment, we will pay you—but you will be no gainers by it—we consider it a most unjust demand—we will settle the matter at Hebron."—The chiefs agreed at once to receive the money at Hebron, and amicable relations were at once restored between the parties. They received our protestations against their conduct, and our warning "that we should not forget it," with much equanimity. They had gained the day, and were quite content with the present,—and were, like children, regardless of the future.

Aboo Keleh's general conduct was so violent and so absurd, and his threat of leaving his charge in the Desert, in spite of all engagements at Nahkl to take the party in safety to Hebron, was so contrary to his interests, that we began to have many doubts if the old man was sane. On our way this day we set our Egyptians to enquire among the Arabs what was thought of him and his mode of going on,

and we then heard that Aboo Keleh had a son there among the people, who was thoroughly vexed at his father's conduct. The son was spoken to about it, and he said his father was very old, and now did not know what was right—he had remonstrated with him about the demand at the encampment, but it was of no use—and he could not go openly against his father. Salâmeh declared that he had done all he could to prevent the demand on us—but that Aboo Keleh had sworn, "if he did not have the money, he would go away with his camels,"—and so he gave in. Salâmeh and all of them agreed that this treatment of travellers was doing the tribe an injury—that it would be known, and the Teeaha would get a bad name—which they did not deserve. This explanation smoothed over matters a little, and healed, in a degree, the sore of the morning. But justice demanded that the great Teeaha must be punished—so we considered that, whether all this explanation and excuse for their conduct were true or not—and, perhaps, it was only partly true, and used as a cover for their own fault—a little punishment at Hebron would do Salâmeh and all of them good, and be a warning to them, and a benefit to future travellers. Thus, we went on our way with a nice little comfortable revenge warming our gentle bosoms.

Our course was north-east all day, lying still along the great plain on which we had encamped. The scenery continued much the same, except that we approached nearer to Jebel Areef-el-Naka, and passed across its southern face, and on to its eastern side. The sides of this mountain sloped towards the south and west, but on the east the white mass rose up a fine bold perpendicular wall, terminating in a cone and a sharp point, and was a very striking feature of the landscape. Beyond it, eastward, was a low white line of hill—the limit of the plain; and northward was the higher range towards Palestine. Gradually, too, the line of mountain in our front came more and more clearly into view. This extended from the low hills beyond Areef-el-Naka, on our left, across our front and down towards Akaba, on the right—the road from Akaba to Dhareeh, on the Palestine border, running all along for a considerable distance at the foot of it.

We were now leaving the territories of the Teeaha, which ceased in this eastern direction, extending, however, widely to the north and south—and wereentering those of the Haweit, the tribe who were stated by Aboo El Haj and Beshara at Mount Sinai, to spoil their way on the middle road recommended by Aboo Keleh, between Nahkl and Akaba. This tribe occupy ground on either side of the Hajj

route, their country being of no great extent, but running out, a narrow strip, from the Peninsula into the open desert. The Teeaha had an amicable league with these people, and so we passed through their country without any interruption, and saw no one. Had we gone from Mount Sinai by the middle road, we should have joined our present road at this part of the country.

About mid-day we reached Wady Ghureeh, a valley with a few shrubs, as usual, and here the old chief, who was on in front, stopped and told the men leading the dromedaries of the Sitteen, to load their guns. He then halted us all until the baggage camels came up, ordered every man to load, and then led us on in a body. All this ordering of forces and loading of guns was explained to be in expectation of danger from an attack from some other Arabs. What Arabs? 'The Beni Sukhr—the Beni Sukhr tribe are robbers and thieves—they live on the eastern side of the Dead Sea and of Wady Mousa—they possess many horses—they are warlike and fierce, and are armed with swords, and spears, and guns—they are devils to ride, and they come out in bodies over these deserts, and make forays into the territories of distant tribes, and carry off camels and sheep.' 'Which way do these people come from

behind Wady Mousa?' 'They come through the mountains by the Dead Sea, and up the Wady Araba; and if they meet travellers they take all the camels and despoil the travellers of all their goods.' This was the account given us of the people we were preparing to meet.

The halt, the loading of guns on all sides, and then the advance of the party in close order, added to the picture drawn of these horsemen of the Dead Sea, was imposing enough. But was the danger real, or only a creation of Aboo Keleh's brain? The whole thing wore a business-like air and a look of danger somewhere. 'If these people come,' said we, 'how many will their body probably consist of?' 'If they come, they will come three hundred strong, with spears, and on swift horses.' Will they kill any of you Arabs?' 'No; but they will plunder everything—they will take all our camels, and they will leave the travellers without shelter or goods upon the Desert.' 'Will they take the tents?' 'They will be sure to take the tents for their own use in their country.' 'And will they take the dresses of the Sitteen?' 'They always take the Sitteen's dresses, the first thing for their wives at home.'

This was a cheerful picture to us, and we talked over the prospect. Our imaginations helped us to

pourtray our party seated on the stony plain—deprived of much of our personal clothing; the Sitteen in a forlorn and dismantled condition—my friend and myself in our shirt sleeves—the ground strewed with relics of Abbaseh's kitchen, and Yusuf's pantry, and of hacked portmanteaux—a dead camel or two shot in the fray—the Teeaha nowhere—our Egyptians wounded—and the Beni Sukhr horse tails floating on the wind in their departing canter—the Desert before us where to choose. There was a certain romance about the matter, and one such adventure would compensate us for all other tame failures! But still, to people accustomed to count pretty confidently on passing the night in beds, and not altogether careless of the small enjoyments of a change of shoes and stockings, and of a coat, and of a dinner about dusk, the meeting of the Beni Sukhr did not look comfortable. The Sitteen considered the Beni Sukhr eagerness for female dress as a particularly bad trait in them. 'How horrible,' said they.

By degrees we sifted the cause of alarm. It was true that the Beni Sukhr did dwell on the Dead Sea border, and beyond the mountains on its eastern shore, and that they possessed many horses, and were arrant thieves; moreover, that they made occasional marauding expeditions into the

Wady Araba, and even as far as the deserts we were then crossing; it was true also that they did not often do so—very rarely—as far as the Teeaha country; but still they *had* come, and they *might* come again; it was necessary to keep together and be prepared for any emergency; there was always the possibility of our meeting the Beni Sukhr for the three days we had before us up to Petra, and then for the three others up the Wady Araba and among the hills between that valley and the Syrian border. There was just enough in all this to make us feel that there was the bare possibility of an adventure with the Beni Sukhr.

From that time the Arabs kept on the alert and did their best to prevent the feeling of insecurity from dying away, for every day they sent forward lookouts ahead who were to be seen squatting on distant points, watching for the signs of the redoubted horsemen of the Dead sea. And there was always a question as to the place of our encampment for the night—some sheltered spot chosen, in a hollow, or behind some hill, where our lights could not be seen at any great distance in the dreaded direction.

At sunset on this day we reached Wady Kameeleh—one of the roads from Akaba to Dhareeh

passing by our camp—and on the following morning we started in a thick fog—a novelty in the Desert and which set us all talking of a certain dear old foggy island up in the north-west, as we rode along. Wady Kameeleh resembled the bed of a river, lying down low among waving hills — about two hundred yards in breadth — following a winding course and dotted about with small elevated spots covered thickly with shrubs—islands in the bed of white half-dried soil—and with pools of water. It was rather cold and damp in our tents that night, and the Wady looked as if the storm on Jebel Themmed had gone on towards Akaba and had sent some of its waters along this Wady Kameeleh. We got out of the Wady at once, our road lying straight accross it, and directly we left it and were on the stony hills again we found a clear and sunny atmosphere, a fresh air in our faces, and some fine scenery. The long white range, of mountain, Jebel Mukrah — was in front at but a few miles distance, barring our path from right to left, and at a dip in the wall of rock was Nukb Amusba, the pass over Jebel Mukrah.

In half an hour after we had left the fog and the Wady Kameeleh, the old chief, who was in front as usual on foot, hurried back towards us, calling aloud for his gun, which was carried by a

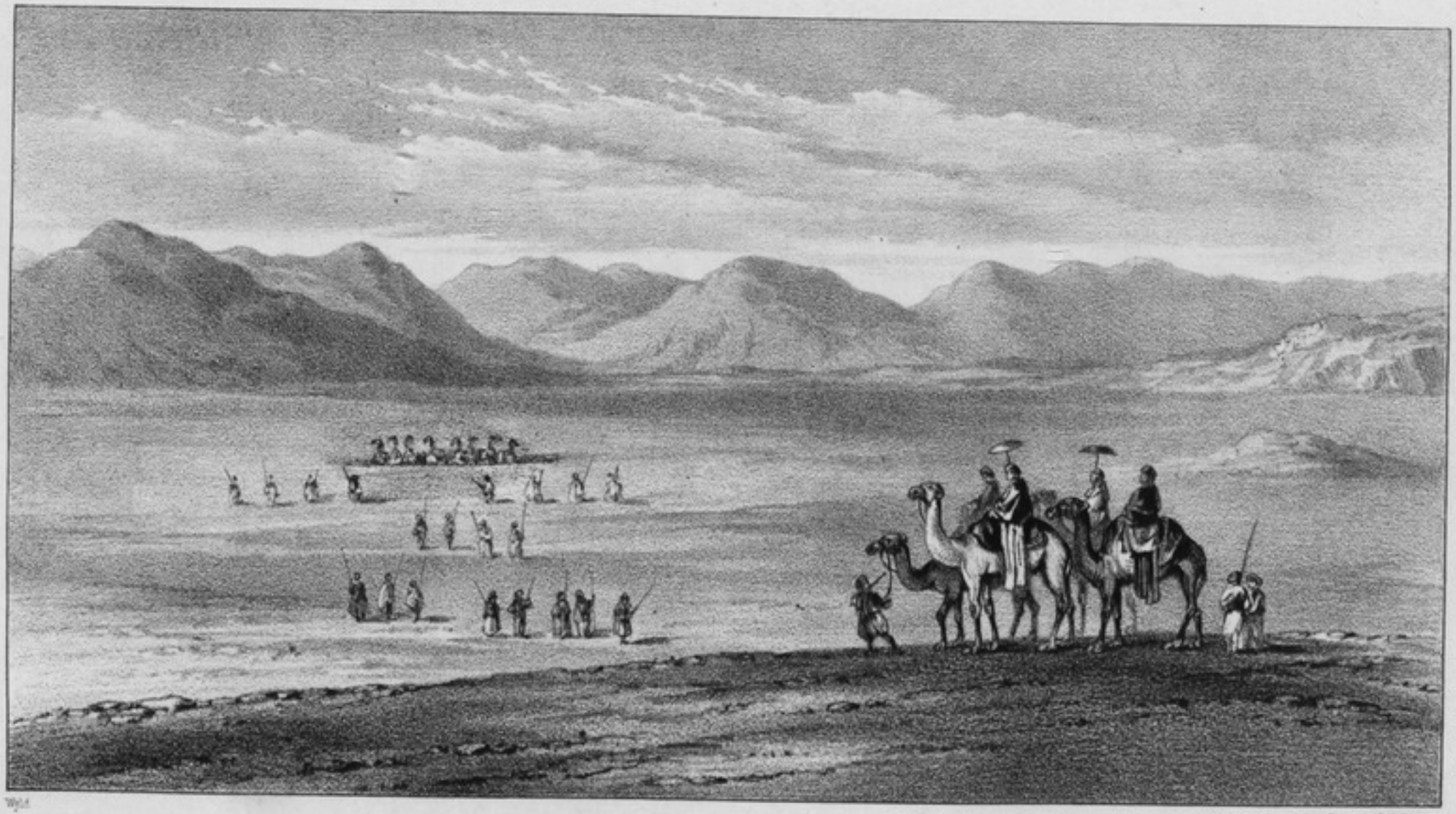
lad. Then two or three more men unslung their long match-locks which they all carried slung across their backs, and hastened up to the front; and sharp words were sent back to the rear. In a few minutes five or six more of the men ran up from behind, and after a few words with Aboo Keleh, all went forward. There was great excitement—some low and earnest talking among the new comers — while others riding scrambled down from their camels, and the two who were leading the dromedaries of the Sitteen, could with difficulty be prevented by the Egyptian servants from leaving their charge and going forward too. What was it all about?— Were the Beni Sukhr really coming—the moment arrived when we were to be despoiled by the horsemen of the Dead Sea?— Where were they? — "What is it all about, Selim?"—"Nukb Amusba."—was the reply, as he pointed to the pass of of the mountain in our front —now about four miles off.—We strained our eyes towards Nukb Amusba, but nothing was visible but the wide waste, still and silent in the morning sun.—"Nukb Amasba — people coming."—he repeated. By degrees, as we kept slowly advancing, we made out some figures, a considerable party moving in a line down the sloping face of the pass, and which the old Sheikh—though his

better sense was failing him rapidly, yet was the Arab eye keen as ever—had detected in the distance.

The occasion became rather exciting. All our camels were hurried up from the rear, and some twelve or fourteen men went on in a body with the old Sheikh, with their matchlocks in their hands and lighting each other's ends of rope in preparation for action. Our guns were unslung, pistols produced by Abbaseh and Yusuf—we were a warlike body and prepared to give the Beni Sukhr a warm reception. In the meanwhile the enemy in the distance gradually descended on to the sloping plain at the foot of the pass, and came more and more into distinctness. They were now made out to be no horsemen—but a party of ten men with fourteen camels. Both parties continued to advance towards each other,—ourselves satisfied that we were not yet meeting with the Beni Sukhr, but the Arabs convinced that there was an enemy in their front, and preparing to act accordingly. Yusuf and Selim, however, spoiled sport, for they told Aboo Keleh and Salâmeh, 'that whoever these people were, if they did not attack us, there must be no fighting; that they, the Sheikhs, were responsible for the travelling party under their care,

and that, Sitteen being present, there must be no firing.'

When we had arrived within about three-quarters of a mile of the enemy, they turned a little northward and halted. They first put all their camels down in a mass, and then they proceeded to arrange their line of defence, for they were the weaker party, they being but ten men, whereas we had more than twenty. They now advanced in front of their camels for about a couple of hundred yards, as well as we could distinguish, and formed a long line—the ten men being stationed at about fifteen or twenty yards apart—some standing, some kneeling—all armed with their long matchlock guns;—and thus they awaited our approach. The effect was good, as we came gradually on them from the rising ground of a long swell of the plain. Aboo Keleh halted our party of travellers at something less than half a mile from the enemy, and then went forward with twelve of his men until he arrived within a couple of hundred yards of the hostile line. Here he left his men, and then went on with only one till there were but a hundred paces between the two parties, and then halted. The following dialogue, as reported to us afterwards by Selim, then took place.



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MEETING WITH THE ROBBER MAAZEH BY JEBEL MUKRAH.

London. Hurst & Blackett, 1856.

"We are Teeaha," shouted the old chief; "who are you?"

"We are Maazeh—our tents are towards El Arish."

"Where are you coming from?"

"From Wady Araba.

"What camels have you there?"

The two centre men of the Maazeh line now came forward to within about forty yards of Aboo Keleh and his party, the rest remaining in their places "We wanted camels, O Teeaha—we have been down towards Wady Mousa, and have taken these."

"From whom have you taken these camels, O Maazeh?"

"The Beni Sukhr were in the Wady Araba—and they had many camels. But, O Teeaha—are the Maazeh and the Teeaha at war? When we left our tribe they were friends, and the Teeaha men sat in the tents of the Maazeh."

"There is no war between the tribes—but are you true Maazeh?"

"We are true Maazeh; and you, O Teeaha, where are you from, and who are those with you?"

"We are from Nakhl—and we have strangers with us travelling to Wady Mousa and Hebron;

have you, O Maazeh, any more camels with you than these?"

"Yes; our men are coming on with more camels —we are going back to our tents."

This was the sense principally of some twenty minutes screaming talk, in the course of which Aboo Keleh's reserve force crept up to him, and Selim, always curious, and liking to have his hand in everything, and seeing that there was to be no fighting—only talking—did the same. Aboo Keleh then went forward alone, and announced himself, and the sheikh of the Maazeeh met him half way:—they touched foreheads—the Teeaha salutation,—and then all Aboo Keleh's men went up, and two or three of the Maazeh joined the body. There was but a short talk now, and after a few minutes there was a general touching of hands; and the two parties separated.

Aboo Keleh and his people joined us in a very bad humour, the reason of which was this:—"The Maazeh," said they, "are a tribe on the Teeaha border towards El-Arish—a friendly tribe—but these Maazeh men are a party of rascals:—They have been down towards Wady Mousa, they say, and have taken these camels from Beni Sukhr in the Wady Araba:—this is not true; the Beni Sukhr do not lose their camels so easily, and they would have

been on the track of them before this:—these Maazeh would not travel so carelessly, divided into two parties, if they had taken Bedaween camels, and if the Beni Sukhr were behind them; no—these men are robbers, and they have been to the Syrian borders, and have stolen these camels from a camel merchant on the Syrian pastures; dogs of Maazeh!—it is fortunate for them we are travelling with Ingleez strangers and with Sitteen among them, or we would quickly have every one of these camels, and send these Maazeh thieves home again as they came, empty handed." "But," said we, "these two tribes are at peace, and the Maazeh men have taken camels where they could—what does it matter if they are Bedaween camels from the Beni Sukhr, or fat ones from the merchant?" "This quite different," said Selim,—"if taking Bedaween camels, Bedaween catching them—then fighting—but if taking merchant camels, then stealing." The Arab distinction was, that if a man stole camels from an unfriendly tribe, he did it at the risk of his life, and this made the act honourable; but if he took them from a merchant, without such risk, this was low and sneaking.

It was amusing to hear our indignant Teeaha abusing the Maazeh for stealing camels from the camel merchant, whereas they were grieving over

the not being allowed to commit a highway robbery, and take them for their own use, upon the plea that these Maazeh must be robbers—because they thought so. All the day long, the Teeaha alternately indulged their rage and bemoaned their hard fate—that they had been deprived on our account of an opportunity of becoming the possessors of the camels of their friends. In an hour afterwards we met the rest of the Maazeh men,—four, with eleven camels—coming loosely along, the camels being large, fat animals, evidently just from rich pasture-ground. Our people had not been able to examine the other camels, the Maazeh keeping them lying on the ground at a distance; but now they could see, and judge of the captured animals; and they exclaimed bitterly—"Dogs of Maazeh!—these are from Syria." It was a sore trial for twenty men of Ishmaelite education to see these fine creatures, sleek and plump, go by, and not put out their hands and take them. Dogs of Maazeh!—I quite felt for our severely tempted Teeaha.

The ground sloped so gradually from the plain up the pass of Nukb Amusba, that there was scarcely any pitch, and now we stood on the top of Jebel Mukrah, that long white wall bounding the plain on which we had passed the last three days. The

view, as we stopped on the summit of the pass, and looked back to the westward, was very fine. From the great waste of sand and stone, apparently bare of a single shrub—the green little winding Wadys being invisible in the immense wilderness—rose up the various mountains, some clear and distinct, others misty and cloud-like—Jebel Achrib in the north-west, the range of Jebel Themmed towards the Sinai Peninsula, and Jebel Areef-el-Naka the prominent feature of the scene. The plain, appearing from that height as one level expanse, could not have been less than fifty miles in length. A long time we remained on the top of that pass, our talk being now of the Holy Land, whose border mountains had been for two days the limit of our vision to the north;—and now of Sinai, lying away there behind the ranges to the south; and we were loath to turn our backs on that grand and, from these three days journeying with these names around us, in some sort familiar piece of Desert scenery. There was, too, the additional interest in the spot—perhaps this plain at our feet was part of the Wilderness of Zin, and on these wastes had encamped the Israelitish host in its wanderings. Near that high mountain, Jebel Areef-el-Naka, some persons have supposed the camp of

Kadesh, whence Moses sent spies forward 'to spy out the land,' although other travellers had placed Kadesh some days journey further to the east, and nearer to the land of Edom. Whichever be right —and the latter position of Kadesh seems the more probable—it was enough for us, that here before us was a scene so impressive and so severely beautiful, that we could not but associate it with the days and the events—the tragic story of the most remarkable of all people—events so more than probably enacted on those very deserts. We peopled again that wilderness with their far and wide extending camps—their flocks and their herds –and pictured to ourselves the Tabernacle in the midst of that host of tents; and we imagined the cloudy pillar standing far up into the sky—into the bright pure air above the sacred place—a tall and glistening column—sign to that wide host of a presence not of human form.

And as you stood there, it seemed as a voice whispered you—"Such a scene was witnessed by human eyes upon that very spot"—and a strange reality passed into the imagined picture. The silence—the stillness—the absence of all movement and of objects of life on the Desert scene—the certainty that that wide waste of plain and mountain was the same, then on this day, as it was on that

when Moses pitched his tent upon it—unchanged by the hand of man, unaffected by the action of ages—the thought, that the same scene could be now enacted in all its details over again this day as then—for there it was, the same—in all its terrible minutiæ of barrenness, the same. These things stirred the depths of your sensations, and begot almost tangible forms of fancy among the body of your thoughts. And the voice whispered—"There comes the head of the column of the leading tribe—the tribe of Judah—with its standard, from behind Jebel Areef-el-Naka; and see—they come on, tribe after tribe, a glorious host, out on to the plain—in the midst are the Levites, and the Ark of the Testimony is among them, and above it is the Pillar of the Cloud, tall, white, and glistening, seen far and near by the marching hosts, standing far aloft into the blue ether; see—the long, broad line advances, and for mile after mile it comes on upon that wide Wilderness of Zin, yet its thousands still pour on from behind Areef-el-Naka—and suddenly the glistening, cloudy column, stops in mid-air—it descends, and it rests upon the ground—and the trumpets sound– hark!—you hear them sound the halt—and behold!—that mighty host confidently pitches its camp upon that foodless

plain—upon that wilderness of death—and there, in the midst of barrenness, it dwells, from year to year, in safety and in plenty—there, on that plain at your feet."

CHAPTER XI.

Jebel Mukrah—Mount Hor—An Oasis—A Distressing Accident—Serious Questions—Benignant Maimouné—The Ugly Dromedary—A Dire Offence—Dangerous Ground—Antar—The Renown of the Tribe of Abs—Rifle Shots for Antar—The Wady Elianeh—A Broad Watercourse—Mount Seir—The Scenes of Divine Judgments—A South-West Storm—Short Commons—Partridges at Petra—Granite Rocks—The Great Highway—Jebel Haroun.

JEBEL MUKRAH was formed very similarly to Jebel El Tih, presenting generally a steep and almost perpendicular face of white rock towards the west and south, while on the east and north it was a high table land for some distance—the ground of a dark colour, with something of the ploughed Hampshire hill appearance—waving and stony; and then it sloped gradually eastwards. From this; as we rode on we commanded a fine view of the whole line of the mountains on the borders of Edom—northwards in the direction of the Dead Sea, and

southwards to Akaba. The heights about Wady Mousa—the Petra we were seeking—were due east, Jebel Haroun—Mount Hor—rising in the front of the long range with its round conical summit and far-stretching jagged sloping sides. At the foot of Jebel Haroun, on its further side to the east, lay Petra. This chain from the Dead Sea to Akaba was of a more imposing character—more lofty and more striking than any part of this country we had yet seen, except only Jebel Serbâl and the interior of the Sinai district; but those latter districts, fine as they were, were limited and wanting in the extent of that which was now before us. This bold range, peak above peak, and boundless to the eye on either hand, looked like the boundary and interposing barrier between two countries.

At noon we reached a shrubby valley where Sayal trees, spreading and shady, and fresh water invited us all to rest for half-an-hour. A storm two days before had fallen heavily here too and had left long and deep pools — some of them two hundred yards long—but narrow, pools of good clear water; and, as on Jebel El-Tih, here by the margin of the pools were long banks of short grass of a brilliant green and with a real sod above the stony surface. The Arabs said that in this valley water is always found for four or five months

in the year and often for even longer. We had not long left this tempting oasis and were riding along the Wady Jerafeh, when an accident happened. The Khawaja and the Sitt, our friends were riding at a short distance in front, when suddenly the dromedary of the Sitt made two or three most ungainly and rapid swerves, and then starting sideways threw its rider. What a confusion and alarm succeeded to our careless ease! — Fortunately the ground was sandy at the spot where the fall took place, though there were rocks and stones in every direction about.—Still a fall from the top of the hump of a dromedary even on sand, is no slight matter for a Sitt.—She was much hurt—but bore her accident with great courage and good humour. —Yet it was necessary to stop our ride for that day. A man was sent forward to halt the baggage camels, which were a short way ahead, the tents were pitched, and the party rested for the remainder of the day.

That was an anxious afternoon and night for all of us; for though the Sitt treated her fall courageously, we could none of us tell whether there was any serious injury or not. If on the morrow it should prove that there was a severe injury, how should we manage without medical assistance in those wilds?—What would in this case become of

our expedition?—Which way should we travel?—Or should we stay there on that spot and send for help?—And where should we send?—Hebron, the nearest city, was at some days journey distance from us even on a fleet dromedary. These were anxious questions for us for some hours, and they gave to the Desert an added dreariness of aspect. It appeared as if with the Towara men at Nahkl had departed from us all the ease of our travel, and each day with the Teeaha was the father of trouble and the mother of misadventure. The condition of things seemed to be much what Selim had, on the way up to Nakhl, assured us would be the case—"With Towara everything being right—but when you come Teeaha, all be different."

However, Maimouné—benignant Maimouné—spread her wings by the camp that night; and she visited the Sitt, and gave her renovating sleep, and healed, with soothing touch, all wounds, and banished pain; and when Khashkhash arrived from the capital of the dominions of the Sultan of Casgar, resolved brutally on hideous mischief to us all upon those deserts, he found the Sitt rising with the laughing morn and eager for the journey. We were relieved from all fears and doubts, and the Wilderness appeared again to blossom as the rose. And now a searching examination was made among

all the dromedaries and camels for a smooth-going animal, the offending one of the previous day being condemned to carry baggage for its sins. Many trials were made, and at length one was brought up to the Khawaja, a camel of huge bulk—black—a monster of ugliness—led forward, by its owner, for trial. Everybody laughed out; but the Arab declared it had a smoother movement than any dromedary in the camp. It was abused on all hands. 'No, no—take it away—bring another—the Sitt cannot ride that monster.' 'Me thinking the Sitt riding one mountain.' said Yusuf—'Lady ride Areef-el-Naka.' 'Him very like Jebel Atâka,' observed Selim. But the Arab, in spite of jests, persuaded the Khawaja to try it; and the monster turned out to be as he had declared—the smoothest animal in the camp. The Sitt rode Areef-el-Naka much to her satisfaction up to the end of the journey.

But the Sitt of the 'Cambria' had also complained of her dromedary's rough motion, and she had come to a private arrangement with Selim and Aboo El Haj, that she would give up the Teeaha dromedary and ride that of Aboo El Haj—a fine powerful white animal. But this was a dire offence to the Teeaha owner of the discarded dromedary. He reproached the Towara sheikh—'That he was

taking away other peoples' business,' and warned him 'that he was out of his own country, and must look to himself if he ever ventured into the Teeaha country again;' to which Aboo El Haj replied in his cool plain manner—'That he went where he pleased, and he could take care of himself.' There was a threatening look about the sturdy and rough Teeaha; but the squabble was terminated by the Sitt appointing the mortified owner of the dismissed dromedary to be her especial esquire, to lead her animal, whichever it was, all the way to Hebron. This very distinguished honour appeased this son of Ishmael; and the accomodating Aboo El Haj was ready to ride anything, or walk, as it suited the Sitt.

Our people now declared that not only were we in danger from the Beni Sukhr, but that we were in the midst of unsettled and marauding tribes—that all this Desert was unsafe. Spies were always sent on in front, and two or three of these men were to be descried all day long at intervals on distant points of the hills in our front and on either side, on the look out—'if there was anybody coming.'—We were told that men of the camp must be on the watch about us all night for fear of small robber parties sneaking up to the tents; and we were warned to push on through all this country and delay as little as possible,—the Horsemen of the Dead Sea—those terror-striking marauders the Beni Suhkr—being the first and foremost on the list of their valiant highwaymen of the Desert. —To listen to their accounts of the deeds of these heroes, and by which they continued diligently to nourish each others alarms, you would think that Antar himself was wandering over these deserts, with Shiboob, in search of Ibla; and that there was imminent danger of our falling in the way of that terrible destroyer of armies—the champion of the tribes of Abs and of Adnan.—Why should he not suddenly emerge from behind that hill,—the terrible hero, Aboolfawaris, mounted on Abjer—and carrying the glittering Dhami armed with death in his hand, and with Shiboob by his side on foot? —Hark to his voice as he shouts to us:—"When I steep not my sword in the blood of my foes, and when the gore trickles not from its lustre, may the lids of my eyes be never aniointed with sleep, and may no harbinger visit me from the phantom of Ibla."—How pleasantly this fond love of carnage would sound in the ears of the quiet pilgrims!—But Antar continues to address us as he advances:—

"O antagonist—that would'st desire a contest with me in the battle, and would'st aim at me in the confusion of spears!—How many armies—how

many camps have I routed, and have assaulted when the water-mills of war were revolving! The lightning of my sword flashes through the dust, and its brilliancy sickens the eyes of all beholders. The barb of my spear falls on the chests of the east and the west till they are all mangled, and I will defend the tribe of Abs for ever till I die and their name through me shall be renowned."—All you could say, as peaceful travellers, would be that you have no kind of objection to the renown of the tribe of Abs, so long as Antar does not consider it necessary thereto that he should water the beautiful plant of its Arabian fame with your particular blood and that of the Sitteen.

We came to the conclusion, after a day or two of alarms, that Aboo Keleh's brain was the chief source of the many dangers hemming us in. Even if the warrior Aboolfawaris had come on, with the tribe of Abs behind him, and with Dhami in his hand, inconveniently thirsty for our blood, his boastings about Ibla would have subsided a little in front of a Westley Richards' rifle. But Ibla's Antar—the very idea of shooting at her Antar—the hero of the Battle of Lions—the rider of Abjer—there was something inexpressibly cowardly in this.

At midday we descended from this high table land into a broad Wady full of large and spreading

sayal trees in full leaf, tarfa, and various shrubs—a green and shade-dotted valley refreshing to the eyes,—the Wady Elianeh, leading down into the Wady Araba. Marks of the rush of waters,—long, deep, sharp clifts in the ground, and water-worn stones, and torn shrubs half uprooted in torrent beds—all these showed where the collected waters of the storms, falling on the uplands we had left, found their way down to the great outlet that runs from the Dead Sea to Akaba—the Wady Araba. We were now rapidly approaching the border of Edom.

The Wady Elianeh contracted again to a narrow pass, between rocks, at its eastern extremity; and just on the western side of the pass, in a secluded corner, we passed the night, our fires out of sight and our lights screened from the eyes of the marauders at a distance. Immediately beyond the pass we entered on a plain of considerable extent, and at the end of this was the Wady Araba, right and left. This plain we were warned was the direct route from the Wady Araba into the deserts we had left, and on this the Beni Suhkr were to be looked for, if on a marauding expedition, or encamped, perhaps, there temporarily, as there was much feeding ground on the plain.

As we descended the long gradual slope, a broad water-course—perhaps a hundred yards wide—now dry and full of shrubs, the sayal, the tarfa, broom, and a kind of willow—thousands of green islands studded the torrent-bed—accompanied us in a serpentine fashion, and crossed our straight path, backwards and forwards. This gave to our road an agreeable variety. Hares and gazelle were told of by the Arabs, to be found on this plain and by the wooded water-course. I took a walk of some hours with my gun among the trees, but found no game. While walking through this woodland —and very good lay there was for game, with pools of water here and there—and surrounded on all sides with thick green coppice-wood and shading trees, it was easy at times to believe that one was not in the midst of the terrible and 'howling wilderness,' but somewhere else; and that the Arabs and the camels, and the desert plain and the Wady Araba, just outside there—with the possible Beni Suhkr capturing the domestic gods—that all this was a mere vision of the brain.—But a few steps and a turn of the head brought the desert vision before one's eyes.

From the moment of entering this plain in the morning we had in front of us the range of Mount Seir rising from the far side of the Wady Araba.

Mount Hor stood finely out in front, its centre of dark rock standing up like a castle with sharp perpendicular walls springing from two long rugged spurs. The continuation of that range of Seir was Moab, and Edom was within our reach. As we now approached near to these remarkable spots and could apply to them the long familiar names, the page and the imagination called up all the wondrous associations of time and circumstance; and we all felt and agreed that these grand scenes of the bible lost nothing in our eyes by a nearer acquaintance with them. All travellers must on occasions have experienced this disappointment—that the grand proportions lent to a celebrated spot by one's own imagination, or given to it by the enthusiasm of others, have dwindled to common-place and meanness on actual inspection. But this was not the case with the desert scenes of the bible. The wild grandeur of that country is ever the same as it was in the time of the relation, and the desolate beauty of these localities is as singularly impressive to-day, as then to the Hebrew wanderers it must have been. There is no disappointment experienced in visiting those scenes of the Divine Judgments, for the imagination has exaggerated nothing. The Ishmaelite is still there—the wild man,—the Wilderness is still the Wilderness,—Sinai is worthy of

its great name, and Edom is equal to the place it occupies in the sublime and graphic story.

We had nearly gained the Wady Araba,—the intention being to push on and cross it that day and encamp among the low hills—the limits of the spurs of Mount Seir,—when dark clouds appeared to gather in the south and west, and it was soon evident that a storm was pursuing us and would probably be upon us before long. I never saw clouds gather for a storm so rapidly as these did. The baggage camels were some little distance behind us, and as we halted for them and the tents to protect us from the coming deluge, by ill-luck the whole body of camels in a dip of the ground took a wrong turn and followed a hollow leading away from us.—But the storm was coming on fast, and nothing could be finer than its advance. The air about us was bright and sunny and still, and at a mile distance through the clear atmosphere was approaching one enormous wall of sand:—from right to left it extended with a wide front, and from earth to heaven, and behind it we heard the storm,—the roll of the thunder and the roar of the wind. It was singularly fine; but the question was—which would be up with us first—the camels or the wall of sand.—Men hurried off across the waving plain to check the camels in their wrong

line, and we prepared to receive the storm. We wrapped ourselves in our cloaks, put down our dromedaries—their bags around us and ourselves under their lee — the monster 'Areef-el-Naka' affording some shelter for his rider, the Sitt—and so we sat on the ground and waited.—Fortunately the wall of sand proved to be a little in advance of the rain, and this and the camels made a race of it —and ran a dead heat. We were half-blinded and choked by the sand as it swept over us in a mass, but the animals straggled in in the midst of it—all hands went to work to get up one small tent—the storm bellowed in our ears,—in our blinded state we could see nothing beyond a few yards—the rain came down, but the tent spread its protecting folds —we huddled under it—and then the storm burst on us in all its fury. The ground was good holding ground, and the two Towara men and the Egyptians looked well to the tent pegs during the first and worst rush of the wind—and the little tent, though it threatened perpetually and loudly to go right away and on into the Wady Araba, did not do so, but stood fast. I never knew heavier rain for twenty minutes, but it did not penetrate the canvass.—The rain continued for about an hour, and then it was fine; but the storm hung on Jebel

Haroun, and the thunder cracked and rolled among the mountains round Petra for the rest of the day.

It was becoming of some importance to procure game. Although there still remained a goodly supply of groceries, enough to last us up to Hebron, yet we were run short of meat in the larder. Hitherto Abbaseh had sustained his credit in the matter of dinners, always sending up soup, two meats, potatoes, and various sweet concoctions; but for the last two days we observed that the two *entrées* consisted but of chickens cooked ostentatiously in various ways—in fact, that butcher's meat no longer existed in the larder, and that we were reduced to poultry. On inquiry, it appeared that this also was sinking rapidly to zero. Selim had counted on our reaching Petra four days earlier than the Fates permitted, and had provided accordingly. This provision was at an end, and we had met with no friendly wanderers, with flocks and herds, by the way, from whom we might have filled our emptiness. Not a human being had we seen from Nakhl all over those deserts, for eight days, except a stray Alaween or two on one day, and the Maazeh camel stealers, and two humble representatives of Antar and Shiboob with one camel; and none of our people knew of dwellers in tents among the hills by our road. In a

wild and hostile country, from Nukb Amusba, who could supply our wants? At Petra we should set up the larder again with honest mutton, and, perhaps, pigeons and even chickens. Mutton was beginning to be an adorable object in our eyes. We comforted ourselves with the thought that under the worst circumstances of destitution there still remained to us the means of existence, according to the laws and customs of conscientious vegetarians, our supply of rice, potatoes, mishmish of Damascus, flour, sugar, and coffee, being yet abundant. Selim, too, had a consoling story at hand about partridges at Petra—that he had once killed eighteen, on one day, among the hills at the foot of Mount Hor, on an occasion of his travelling with an English Khawaja, when their stock of all kinds of provisions had reached a minimum, and the bottom of the pantry was swept clean.

The following morning after the storm was a glorious one, and we started in great spirits, for we were to encamp that night at the foot of Mount Hor and be in Petra on the morrow. These mountains of Seir reminded us of those about Sinai. Since leaving the Wady Kameeleh and the Plain of Ramleh, on the south of Jebel El Tih, we had travelled entirely among white limestone

ranges; but now again we were approaching the granite formation, mingled with porphyry and sandstone—grey, and red, and veined with various colours. On the previous evening, in the setting sun, the crags and peaks of Mount Seir were half concealed by lurid and heavy clouds, relics of the storm; now, in the sunny morning, the light fleecy clouds lay along its rugged brows. Our ride over the remainder of the plain was delightful in the cool air, and then we entered the Wady Araba—the famous valley—the great highway from the interior of Palestine to the Red Sea. It was about six miles broad, the high granite range of Seir bounding it on the east, and the lower country of limestone hills inclosing it on the west. It took us three hours to cross it in an oblique direction, slanting northwards; and not a living figure did we see, from north to south, on all that wide highway. And as you go you cannot help calling to mind the hosts—the armies—the stream of traffic, which must have passed along this now so lifeless way in the great ancient times of the Jews when Solomon was king. Here the hosts of the Israelites, with Moses, must have passed by in all their confidence and hope of entering the Promised Land; and here they must have returned, dejected and humbled, into the terrible and hated Wilderness.

Here must the abounding commerce of the great king have been borne along between Jerusalem and his ships at Ezion Gebir, when all the wealth of Ind poured into the coffers of the Jewish monarch; and here all the frequent communication and traffic between Edom and the West must have been carried on—the busy roadway of the nations. Here, too, must then have arisen, at intervals, buildings for shelter and for food of man and beast, for soldiery and for goods; but now not a vestige of a work, by the hand of man, could we distinguish anywhere; all signs of the temporary labour of man had been blotted out, and the indomitable Desert reigned supreme.

On reaching the other side of the Wady Araba —which was, throughout, waving ground intersected with dips and water courses — we entered a pretty narrow winding valley which led us among brushwood, and sayal, and tarfa trees out upon the plain which slopes up to the foot of the spurs of Mount Hor. On this plain we were reminded of Jebel Dhafra and the plain of Legum, the ground being covered thickly with fragments of granite, grey and red, as well as of red and green and brown porphyry — the débris of the mountain of Seir, washed down by the storms. Late in the after noon we reached the foot of the mountain. It was

rather late to begin the ascent of the pass on that day; and as we could only get up part of it, and the mountain side was voted—we remembered Jebel El Tih and the night passed on its side—to be not so good for the tents as the plain, we halted — our people all in high spirits at reaching Jebel Haroun without meeting the horsemen of the Dead Sea. That evening I shot some partridges — of which there were numbers among the mountain spurs.

CHAPTER XII.

Wady Rubai — Rocks and Rivulets—The Downs of Edom—The Entrance of the City—'Good Family Houses'—Petra Politeness—The Sikh Pass—Petra Gentlemen—The Interior of Petra—Entrance Fees—Women's Gossip—The Veiled Beauties—A Handsome Present—Arab Human Nature—Sheikh Aboo Zeitoun—Ebn Djazeh—The Camp in Disorder—Ebn Djazeh's Interference—The Bedaween and the Petra People—Distinctive Races.

At an earlier hour than usual we left our encampment, the fact of Petra being but six hours ride in front of us making the party more than commonly active. We entered the narrow Wady between the red precipices — the Wady Rubai. A stream of water, a brooklet clear and sparkling, ran down it, crossing from side to side as the winding Wady penetrated deeper and deeper among the hills. The whole way was diversified with green slopes of some of the hill sides and with oleander and juniper

bushes, broom and wild figs, while the ground under our feet was a level and moist sand. This level space from rock to rock varied from twenty to forty yards. Anything more singularly novel and refreshing to all the senses after the silent and arid Deserts cannot be imagined, for added to the pleasant sight of grass and plants, and the fragrant scents from broom, and the general verdure, there was the constant cry of partridges calling to each other from side to side, perched on points of rock above our head, and crossing perpetually from hill to hill. With a bright sunny morning, a cool air, and such sights and sounds about them; the Sitteen declared they had never since the Wady Faran, enjoyed anything so much as that morning ride of two hours up that winding Wady among the blooming bushes. The oleanders were a mass of pink flowers.

A steep climb of half-an-hour then carried us up on to higher ground, and the mountainous region of Seir was around us. Our path lay along the bottom of an upland valley, the rivulet by our side and leaping from rock to rock as we went mounting upward. On our left were the waving hills partially covered with grass, and on our right hand beyond the rivulet rose up precipitously a range of sand stone rock, seven or eight hnndred feet in

height. These were of every colour, the strata of each colour lying in regular horizontal lines. The effect was singular, and so vivid were the hues and so sharp the line of division that it was difficult to believe that the rock was not a fine marble. At two or three hundred feet from the ground the precipitous face of the cliffs broke away in many places, and here were broad openings — slopes of thick grass, green platforms with many shrubs. Green and pleasant was Mount Seir. Streams of water ran through its valleys, and grass grew everywhere over its hill slopes; and the juniper tree, springing bushy and thick — looking at a distance like dwarf pines — sprinkled among the rocks on the steep sides of the mountains where a little soil collected on the sandstone, gave to the the whole district a liveable aspect — or at least a less Desert appearance than anything we had seen on such a scale since Egypt and the Nile bank.

We wound our way up to the top of the pass, Nukb Wady Mousa, over the hills to our left, and which we reached before mid-day, and then entered upon an open country. The hills all around became more and more green, and though when you left the path and walked on the hill-side the grass was but thin and spare—there was no sod—yet there

was enough to give to the whole country a coat which nature had not worn in our eyes for some time. And now we were descending a long gradual slope—a winding dip among the low hills—round the foot of the eastern side of Mount Hor. To our right were downs—not of Hampshire, but palely green—and on our left, from the top of a grass ascent of half a mile, the rocky head of Jebel Haroun towered up, its face dotted with juniper bushes growing on the narrow ledges, to the summit. Where was the desolation of Edom? After the Wady Araba it looked rather habitable.

As we rode on the people of the country came to us by degrees, one or two at a time, from behind 'the downs' on our right, but we saw no tents or signs of habitation. In a distant dell by a brook was a man with two goats. Two women came with eggs of partridges and some kids for sale, and there being no native men present their faces were uncovered. They were rather shy in manner, sallow and by no means pretty. Then small parties of men, two or three at a time, approached us and asked a few questions and left us again—wild-looking young fellows with open daring countenances. At a turn of the path we came in sight of the first excavated dwelling or tomb—it might be either—of Petra, the face of the rock, close to the

path, of a deep red sandstone cut smooth, with a doorway on the ground. A rude cornice ran along the top of the planed face. And now the sloping pastures ceased, and rocks commenced, high and precipitous, on either hand—their fronts honeycombed with doors and windows—houses or tombs—the entrance of Petra. All were of a deep red colour—the colour of raw meat. Some of the rocks were worked as fronts of 'good family houses,' with ornamented windows, pediments and cornices, and with the step pattern of the old Spanish gables—did the eastern people take this into Spain?—running above the whole to represent a pointed roof. This latter ornament was very common. Flights of steps on the face of the precipices led up from one range of excavations to the next one above it, and the whole of this entrance wore the appearance of buildings of taste and of habitableness.—This entrance was rather narrow, but soon the interior widened, and we advanced for about a mile between two perpendicular walls of red rock about a couple of hundred yards apart, all worked for a hundred feet from the base, more or less—irregularly—with separate 'houses'—doors and windows—staircases—Spanish gable ends—cornices. The ground being rocky and bad for camels we got off and went into some of these excavations—small and square, mere

emptiness,—and so we sauntered along, and down deeper into Petra, till we arrived at about the centre of the place.—Here we found our tents pitched on a grassy platform rich with red and yellow flowers—a level platform formed by art in a commanding position, rather elevated and in the middle of the now extensive and broad inclosure. Here Wady Mousa spread out to the breadth of about half a mile, while the whole length of the place from where we entered it to the extremity before us could not be more than two miles. From the platform the ground sank almost perpendicularly for fifty or sixty feet, and the whole of the broad interior of Petra with the long lines of red precipitous walls of three and four hundred feet in height—the inclosing rocky hills—worked throughout to represent temples and buildings, was before us in view at once.

But there have been so many descriptions of Petra by various travellers—so many plans of its extent—and so many drawings made of its remarkable tombs and temples—that everybody knows all about it:—the Greek Theatre, and the Sikh Pass, and the Khasneh, and El Dayr—and all its wonders, —and so, how do you pass your time in Petra?

On reaching our tents, we found only three or four of the natives, and taking two of these as

guides, we set off at once to see the Lions, rejoicing in the idea that before the row began—which we were promised—with these unruly Edomites, we should be able to visit some of the spots in peace and quiet. We went first to the Sikh Pass. Our guides were young men; and as we advanced, the stream of water which flows all along it, in places filled up the narrow way from side to side, and the Sitteen being in trouble thereat, the guides gave them a helping hand as they picked their way from stone to stone through the water. "Why, Selim," said I, "these Petra men are very good men—take good care of the Sitteen." "They very bad, master," he replied—"you not hearing—Sitteen not hearing—they swearing all the time—calling all bad words." It appeared that our polite friends, while doing at our request what they considered a degrading action—helping women—were revenging themselves mentally by swearing perpetual oaths at the whole of us. Selim asked one of them—"if he knew any other words but bad ones?"—for which enquiry relative to Petra education, he got a sharp sample of the same—the words answering to that common British command, 'You go to the devil!'

As we were returning along the Sikh by the Khasneh—that beautiful Greek temple, so surprising

in its wild secluded spot—a considerable party of men descended the staircase,—though partly overgrown with shrubs still so elegant and so uninjured —which leads down into the pass at this point from the hills above, and joined us. The news of our arrival had spread, and the natives—who do not live down in Petra, but up on the green hills above it—were hurrying down from their heights to exact their dues, and generally indulge their natural curiosity about the strangers. For the most part they were powerful men, taller and of a larger build than the Arab, and with strong fierce countenances. One man was a noble fellow, with the manner and gait of a high-bred chief of command, his face handsome and striking, his limbs finely formed, and his frame graceful and of great power. I admired him much, and could not help showing my admiration of him; and we shook hands warmly and muttered friendship smilingly. Another of the party was a square, heavy man, of large proportions, shorter than the former, and with plain features and bad cunning eyes. We shook hands, too, but with cold dislike. He struck me as a great rascal. None were old—the oldest not above forty,—and many of them handsome. They were all clad lightly in an unbleached linen tunic, reaching below the knees, and a small white cap of the

same on their heads, and all were armed with strong clubs or with swords; and most of them wore, besides the leather waistband, a leather belt, passing over the left shoulder and under the right arm, reaching to the hip. This was broad, and generally much ornamented with metal, shells worked on in figures, glass beads and stones. As we walked on my new friend, the chief, pointed out objects to us—tombs of mark, and the Greek Theatre.

After satisfying their first curiosity, they all left us with the exception of our guides, and went off to the great centre of attraction, the tents; and we wandered for hours unmolested about this extraordinary place. It is a place of delusion—and you walk among arches, towers, temple-fronts of exquisite workmanship, dwellings, tombs,—artistic buildings, all fresh and ready for use,—the sandstone rock, or red and warm, or richly variegated as marbles, inviting you; and the many flights of steps leading up—now hidden, now seen again—to the higher excavations a hundred feet above your head, and seducing you to mount and visit the dwellers. You expect to see people look out from those upper windows beneath tho expanding arch, and you would scarcely be surprised if they did so. It

would be so natural—why should they not be at home?

Then you go out into the middle of the city—of that inclosed interior—and you find a stream of water running across it, deep down in a long hollow, much grass everywhere, and the whole surface of the ground very broken and irregular; and in the dips and on the swells are ruins—heaps of stones, remains of substructures, broken columns, scraps of buildings—ruined heaps. And although this interior is considerable when you come to walk over it—about the size of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens—yet so large are the surrounding features, the boundary wall of rock having an irregular elevation of three and four hundred feet, and even more in places, that the space appears small. The air, too, is so bright and transparent, and your eyes have become so accustomed to extensive distances and larger objects out on the deserts, that Petra looks confined and narrow. But how great are the contrasts of the place—for, as you walk on the bank above the rivulet, your steps are among utter desolations,—and in a few minutes you stand at the foot of dwellings where elaborate art is triumphant still, and where decay has scarcely placed its foot.

Of course we had a noisy debate with the chiefs

about the money demanded for our entrance into Petra. But the sums were moderately extortionate—our whole expenses, including guides, sheep, and all, being for the whole party under 1000 piastres—£10. During our hot debate two women had seated themselves at a solitary corner by the rocks, and the Sitt, seeing them, took Abbaseh the cook as interpreter, and paid them a visit. Her object was to see their faces, their dress—learn if they were married—how many children they had—if they loved their husbands—if their husbands possessed other wives—and other matters interesting to the sex. They were dressed in blue cotton gowns, closed at the neck and reaching to the feet, with full sleeves. A part of the dress fastened on the shoulders behind the head was drawn over it and across the face. The Sitt opened the conversation by saying she had come a long way to see them—over seas and mountains—very far. "How far" said they—"farther than the Wady Araba?" "Much farther. Have you ever been across the Wady Araba?" "No—never" (the Petra people are resident folk, and not wandering Bedaween); "but we are great warriors—are you not afraid to come here among us?" We know you are great warriors—but we Ingleez are terrible warriors too.

We Ingleez hear that the women of Petra are beautiful—I am sure you are both beautiful—let me see your faces." There was some tittering under their blue wrappers, and they refused, one of them saying—"My husband would kill me if I uncovered my face." After some coquetting, however, they consented to do so, on condition that Abbaseh was sent away, and that the Sitt would go with them behind a projecting part of the rock, out of sight of the men. Accordingly they went. The Sitt's account was, that from the moment they showed their faces the women grinned preposterously for the remainder of the interview. They had fine white teeth, and the long Eastern eye; but the nose was flat, the face broad, and the skin was of a painfully yellow hue. In their black and oil-saturated hair were many gold and silver coins, the usual ornaments of Eastern women, and in their ears were long gold ear-rings. They might have been really good looking—the German Ida declared they were so—but much blue tattooing on the cheeks effectually spoiled their beauty in the Sitt's eye. They were ready to sell their ear-rings, but asked a high price for them. One was married—she was the only wife of her husband—and had two children, which she promised the Sitt—who has a weakness for children—to bring the

next morning to the camp. The interview terminated in the purchase of some chickens. They did not come again with the children.

In the evening one of the Sheikhs—with whom I had contracted an undying friendship—while standing with others about the tent door, took off his broad leather shoulder belt, richly ornamented and worked with metal and shells, and put it over my shoulder in Petra fashion; he made me a present of it. The difficulty was what I could give my dear friend, the Sheikh, in return for his splendid belt. On consideration, gunpowder seemed to be the thing these people valued the most, after money, for *baroot* was their constant request. I had taken, from Cairo, a good supply of powder for occasions among the Arabs, knowing their propensity to ask for this commodity. On inquiry of Selim, however, I found that these sheikhs estimated very highly these ornamental belts, and I therefore bethought me how it was possible, stingily, to avoid making my friend a rich present in return, and to give back to him his belt without hurting his feelings and our friendship.

On the following morning I sallied forth betimes, with a canister of powder in one pocket and the belt in the other, and soon came on my friend,

sitting on the rocks with two others. We two retired to a concealment, and then I produced my powder as an offering of friendship in return for the belt. He poured it all out on a piece of paper before us, as we lay on the ground. It made a goodly heap. He took some and rubbed it in the palm of his hand, and looked at the heap and then at me. "Teiib," said I "it is right; you have the powder—I have the belt." He smiled good-humouredly, but shook his head. I spread the powder out over the paper with my hand to make the quantity look larger, and giving him a friendly smile in return, assured him it was 'keteer' —very much. Just then the other two men joined us and sat down, and he explained the case to them in a few words. They were most creditably diplomatic, and made no sign of approval or disapproval. And now I took from my pocket the belt, and replaced it on my friend's shoulder, and told him it was better there; and then making the two companions a present each of a portion of the powder, I pushed the goodly heap over to my friend. "Teiib—tei-ib," exclaimed the companions, while we shook hands warmly; and I left them all very happy with their powder.

But late in the evening of our arrival, when all was still in the camp, a gun had been fired on the

hill near us, awakening all the echoes of desolate Petra. This gun announced the arrival of Sheikh Aboo Zeitoun, an important personage, with his attendant Arabs. This man was one of the principal sheikhs of the Alaween, his tents being then near to Petra, and he claimed to take a share in all Petra doings and in all money received from strangers visiting it. His first act in the morning was to blame Sheikh Suleiman on his arrival—the chief having gone home for the night—for taking so little money from us, and for not making us pay more. He now proposed that this extra money should be demanded of us, and came to our tents about it. This we roundly refused, and Selim and Yusuf gave him, in our name, hard words; told the Alaween chief that he was nobody in Petra, and Sheikh Suleiman was chief there—that we had settled with him and cared for nobody else. Aboo Zeitoun flared up at this, but, nobody backing him up, he went off and blew up Suleiman for concluding the bargain before he had arrived—that he had no right to do so—and that he, Aboo Zeitoun, was a sheikh in Petra as well as Suleiman.

The Petra chief in the midst of his people stood up haughtily for his rights. "He was Sheikh of Petra and did as he liked," and so there was much row, and confusion, and hard talking.

The clamour subsiding, Aboo Zeitoun paid me a visit. The air of this Arab chief was high and daring, as he threw up the tent door and walked in, unceremoniously, but with a certain kind of wild courtesy. We shook hands and were highly polite to each other, as though all that had just passed was but a dream, and had never taken place. This Arab chief was taller than the ordinary run of Bedaween, and slight of limb, but he had the muscular and wiry look peculiar to the race in a high degree.—His face was singularly unprepossessing. He looked like a rogue and a savage, and resembled the veiled prophet in ugliness. His nose was smashed upwards, flattened, and the nostrils staring wide, his teeth gone or set in gaps and his skin pitted with small-pox; the eyes, though the expression was bad, were fine, and shone with that liquid brilliancy always seen in the pure Arab. The hair was coal black and the complexion of a rich deep olive; and there was something high-bred and commanding in the manner of the Alaween which attracted one in spite of his repulsiveness of face. He was dressed in a long dark silk robe and wore the usual Kefia on his head. After a short interview, during which he was restless and scarcely spoke, I presented him with some gunpowder, which he said he was much in want of, and he withdrew.

The Alaween was scarcely gone out, when another personage rode his horse into the camp, Ebn Djazeh, the chief of another neighbouring tribe, with a few followers on foot. None but chiefs of tribes can ride a horse into Petra; and Sheikh Hosseyn, the Alaween chief, had set up a pretension to be the only person who had the right to do so, as the protector of Petra. But this had been resisted by Ebn Djazeh, Aboo Zeitoun and other Sheikhs of other tribes.—Ebn Djazeh resembled in face nothing so much as a gentleman born and bred in Marylebone Lane. He was short in stature, long-nosed and thick-lipped, and he wore a flowing silk robe of blue and yellow in stripes, and his feet were cased in a pair of old red leather boots shoved down on the instep and 'a world too wide for his shrunk shanks.'—On his head was the yellow and black Kefia which flapped over his face and down his back.

Our camp in the meanwhile was in a state of utter confusion and disorder. Sheikh Suleiman was sulky at being bullied by Aboo Zeitoun, and sat on the rocks, careless of all things; and Aboo Zeitoun was disgusted at getting no money from us; and both, when called on to do their duty and keep order, interfered but little and to no purpose. The other Petra Sheikhs—my intimate friends—

pointed to Suleiman and said he was the Sheikh. The Petra people to the number of fifty or sixty were spread all over the platform,—among the tents, —talking, calling, shouting, handling everything, peering into the tents, pulling up the pegs, jostling our Egyptian men, and trying to quarrel with them. —When I occasionally went out and pushed them away by the shoulders with friendly violence, three or four at a time, they would go away good humouredly and laughing; but in a few minutes they would sneak back again, and pretend to fall over the ropes, or play some other trick.—One young fellow walked swaggering into the kitchen tent and pulled things about in an impudent manner, and struck Selim when he was interfered with. This was too much for the imperious and irritated Selim, and he in an instant caught the young Edomite by the waist and threw him a back fall. I now expected a real row; but to my surprise the others laughed out and said it was 'teiib,' and the discomfited hero sneaked away.—Another of them picked a quarrel with Aboo El Haj, the Towara man—and told him "he must look to himself—the Towara had no permission to come to Wady Mousa,"—to which Aboo El Haj replied,—"the Towara ask no permission of any one—they go where they like."—All this was troublesome—but the men were not ill-disposed, and

all would have ceased their idle tricks at a word in earnest from Suleiman.

In the midst of this, Ebn Djazeh had arrived, and soon came down to the tents. He was very polite in his manner, quiet, and self possessed, and wished to know if we wanted anything. The disorder of the camp was pointed out to him. He gave us to understand that all these Petra people were dirt—that he would soon set things to rights, and he at once proceeded to show his power. The little man stalked about with his flowing garments and preposterous boots — a ludicrous figure — but with an air of superiority; and between good-humoured violence and a resolute tone of command, he in the course of ten minutes changed the whole aspect of the camp.—He addressed the various knots of people all about us in a loud voice —"Was this the way to treat strangers? — everybody must leave the tents,"—and he pushed with his hands those who objected to move, and ordered all to retire to the rocks on the edge of the platform. They all went slowly and reluctantly, some making a show of resistance for a time; but the little chief evidently possessed some power over them, and he exercised it kindly but firmly. Ebn Djazeh and Aboo Zeitoun alone remained in the camp, and the rest—perhaps a hundred, for stragglers continued to arrive, sat

silently on the rocks. The former gave himself the airs of a great chief—said—"he would suffer no noise and ill-behaviour — that had he known of our arrival last night, he would have saved us all trouble with Sheikh Suleiman, and have kept good order."

It struck you that there was a marked difference between the Bedaween of the Desert and the inhabitants of Petra. The latter were a larger, taller, and a heavier race of men than the former. Many of them had light coloured eyes, white skins, brown hair, and an European expression of face. Their eyes too, were in many instances dry, like those of Europeans, and were wanting in that liquid transparency which is so peculiar to the Arab. It was said that the tribes around do not look on them as true Bedaween, but as a mixed race; and that the Arabs hold them in great contempt. Thus Ebn Djazeh declared, that if his tribe pleased to do so, they could make the whole people of Wady Mousa eat dirt, and could take Petra from them; and that if they ventured to ill-treat travellers who were brought there by the Arab tribes, the Arabs would drown them in a sea of calamities. He said that more than once the Bedaween had been obliged to punish them for ill-conduct, and that the Petra people knew well they

must beware, or they would dig their own graves, and cause their fathers and grandfathers to be burnt.

The inhabitants of Wady Mousa are what may be called permanent residents, and they have flocks, and herds, and pastures, and fields of wheat, and olive trees, upon the hills and among the valleys to the south and east of Petra. They are in the ticklish position of a people possessing property and a valuable stock in trade, and living in the midst of tribes not very particular as to the laws of *meum* and *tuum*. Sheikh Hosseyn puts forward the pretension of being their great friend—their protector —and the Alaween Chief claims certain privileges, and levies a kind of black mail in Petra for his good will. Certainly Ebn Djazeh's commanding treatment of them, and Aboo Zeitoun's bullying of Sheikh Suleiman, seemed to confirm much of this statement of the humbled position of the occupants of Wady Mousa. Various writers speak of these people of Petra as Fellaheen—labouring peasantry. As Petra has been occupied in all modern times by various people, not Arabs—such as the Nabatheans, the Romans, under whose dominion it fell early in the second century—the Turks, and the Christians, in the time of the Latin kings of Jerusalem—it is not to be wondered at that there should be a con-

siderable difference of form and of feature between the Ishmaelite of the Desert, of pure blood, and the Fellah of Petra, descended from various races, mingled of Arabia and of Europe. It would be an object worthy of the efforts of an enquiring traveller and acquainted with the Arabic language, to search out at Petra any remains of European tongues in their dialect—any relics of the existence of Christianity on the rocks, or in the traditions, or in the present habits and modes of worship of Sheikh Suleiman and his people.

Our party had seen all that we desired of Wady Mousa by the afternoon of the second day, and we determined on getting forwards to Hebron. Ebn Djazeh and Aboo Zeitoun wished us very much to remain, promising us all peace and quiet; but we had attained our object, and, to tell the truth, we all secretly wished for the freedom from squabbling, and the stillness and the enjoyment of the Desert. We rode back in the evening to the Wady Araba.

CHAPTER XIII.

Arab Honour—Heroes and their Deeds—Flattery—Wady Araba—The Last Day on the Desert—Cheerful Days Again—The Midday Halt—Aboo Keleh's Dream—The "Hizzeh"—Alaween and Camels—A Family Nest—Joyless Youth—The Battle of the Israelites and the Amalekites—Bible Reminiscences—A Last Look on the Wilderness—Change of Scene—The Hills of Jordan—The Wells of El Nileh—Patriarchal Life—A Merchant from Gaza—The Tecaha Tents.

THE following morning opened with a row in the camp. Sheikh Aboo Keleh went to Yusuf, and declared that he would not move from the encampment until he and his party were paid the whole of the money for the expedition from Nahkl to Hebron. This was an open violation ef his engagement made in the presence of the Governor of Nahkl as we sat in the gate of the castle of that officer. In the course of the night, Aboo Keleh had persuaded Salâmeh, "that we should, perhaps, not pay all the

money agreed on, because of the affair out on the Desert,"—and the foolish little man had consented to refuse also to move in the morning. The camels, instead of being brought to the camp at sunrise, were left feeding dispersed over the plain. The two Towara men, Aboo El Haj and Beshara, now came forward and behaved well. They both offered to the Teeaha Sheikhs their two dromedaries and money, as security for the payment by us at Hebron. Sheikh Salâmeh accepted this for himself from Aboo El Haj;—but the whole thing was so wrong, that Selim and I took him aside out of Aboo Keleh's hearing, and gave him such hard words, and abused him so soundly for his rippish conduct in giving way to the old chief, and behaving so badly in breaking his contract, that the little noodle wavered, and then laid all the blame on Aboo Keleh. Upon this Selim swore an extravagant oath or two at him—"that he would tell everything at Nahkl, and at Cairo and Jerusalem, and advise everyone never to have anything to do with Salâmeh,"—so that all travellers should say—"Beware of the Sheikh without faith, Salâmeh." This was too much for the little fellow, and he gave up the point altogether—"He wanted no security—he would keep his engagement—he would get his

camels in, and be ready to start—Aboo Keleh was mad, and he might do as he liked."

In spite of all his wayward doings, there was still something about the old Teeaha chief in his better moments, and in his appearance, which made me like him. We had had many walks together on the Desert, and we managed to talk to each other intelligibly in a language of our own—a very comical compound of words and signs. There was something venerable in his white hair and aged and bent frame; and when not angry, and crossed by circumstances, the old chief was kindly in his manners. He was still, moreover, in my eyes, the Arab Chief—head of his tribe—a personage of considerable importance in my boy-dreams, when I was immersed in the pages of Arabian story, or journeying to Mount Sinai with the Hebrews, or riding with Noureddin Ali from Cairo towards Arabia, or wandering with Antar upon Abjer over the wilds and the deserts in search of Ibla. The old half-dreamy, half-real sense of these people and things remained. I was vexed, it is true, that the great chief did not maintain the high place he held in my imagination; but, after all—Arab chiefs and Arabian heroes—are they not as other princes and other heroes?—and is it fair to make too close an inspection of heroic men and their deeds?

And so now I went to Aboo Keleh, and tried my most insinuating efforts to bring him to reason, for my friend and myself had resolved we would not pay him a piastre, and the Sheikh had flatly refused Beshara's security—his dromedary and his money. He was standing in the middle of the camp, surrounded by his people, furiously angry, and abusing Salâmeh for giving in and deserting him, while Salâmeh put on the robe of noble honour, and talked big about 'Arab men holding to their engagements with strangers,' and reproached the old Sheikh for his folly. Taking him—my aged and now enraged hero—by his two shoulders, and looking in his face, I told him, in tones of the tenderest regard—but in plain English, where my stock of Arabic fell short—that he was a fine old fellow, and a great Chief, and a sword to his enemies—but, for all that, he was the most consummate old ass I ever saw, and an idiot, and a worn-out bit of humanity, and an everlasting snob, with other flattering and pleasant things. The old Chief's anger gave way, and he was soothed by these delicious words, for he evidently considered them as flowers plucked from the garden of concord, or such words as a lover speaks to his mistress—and he received them 'as the parched earth receives the first of the rain.' However, the

old Chief could not give in at once, but went off to Yusuf's tent, and sat down silent and sulky. "He had sworn," he said, "that he would have the money, and he must keep his oath." It ended in the fumes of tobacco and Yusuf's tongue enveloping the oath till it became invisible, and our starting about two hours later than we ought to have done.

Since our leaving Nahkl each day had produced its incident; but the Sitteen looked on their two last days with more than common satisfaction, regarding them as containing an eventful circumstance in their lives, a visit to Petra. They had seen and walked about Petra, and they were altogether proud of their performance, quite as much so as of their visit to Mount Sinai The difficult part of their journey seemed to be conquered, and the doubtful object attained—and all the rest appeared easy. Thus we rode along the Wady Araba, at our ease and leisure, the whole surface waving, and dotted everywhere with sayal trees and broom and various shrubs, and at one part a thick coppice of these shrubs ran along at our right, looking like an osier bed. Within this, with numbers of camels everywhere, were some Maazeh Arabs, who reported, "that no Beni Sukhr horsemen had been

seen, and all was quiet in Wady Araba." The weather, however, was more hot than usual—there was much glare—and the Arabs began to talk of hot winds being at hand. One fiery blast, similar to the one at Nahkl, met us as we passed the fountain of El-Weibleh—supposed to be the situation of the Kadesh Barnea of the Bible—but the Sitteen were satisfied that on the morrow they would be beyond such things. Their troubles were over, and their talk now was of Hebron, and the Syrian hills, and Jerusalem—all 'fresh fields and pastures new.'

And now our last day of the Desert was come. We were approaching Jebel El Sufar. During all this last morning's ride, it was observed that the Arabs wore a more cheerful countenance than on any day since Nukb Amusba; and now again some of them hummed their little monotonous airs, and the Nile sailor sang once more his old songs of Egypt; no scouts were sent out, to see if there was anybody coming, and Aboo Keleh no longer walked in front, but was among his people in the rear. The feeling of a new security was general.

We introduced again the good old custom, omitted since Nakhl, of stopping at mid-day for an hour. And now the place where we halted was a rocky pass steeply descending to an open plain, our

path leading along the edge of a precipice on our right, and beneath high rocks projecting over it above on the left. There was a broad platform at the top of the pass, and the projecting rocks offered a tempting shade. Here we spread our carpets, and the men who remained, and the old chief, and the Towara Sheikhs, with the dromedaries in their fanciful attire, were scattered in groups about the platform—a wild and picturesque scene. At the bottom of the pass the plain was dotted with trees and shrubs, and beyond it—at four or five miles distance—rose Jebel El Sufar—a high, long boundary of dark-coloured rock, running in a long line of a rather regular altitude right across our front from east to west—shutting out Judæa. As we lay in the shade, with all good things of wine and fruit spread, as of old, Aboo Keleh related his dream of the last night:—"Tens upon tens of horsemen from the Dead Sea had dashed into the camp upon their horses of destiny, and necks of men and of women (the Sitteen) had been trampled on;—annihilation reigned, and all his own five camels had been carried off." There was rather an anti-climax in the old chief's relation. Sheikh Salâmeh—he too had dreamed that night, and dreamed badly:—"Neighing horses, and the

screams of camels, and contests with swords and with spears, had filled his thoughts with blackness." It was clear that the two Teeaha Sheikhs had gone to sleep thinking of the Hizzeh—a robber tribe by the Dead Sea, much talked of during the day, in an awful fear for their camels. The two Towara chiefs, Aboo El Haj and Beshara, when asked for their dreams on that last night, declared that they had not dreamed any dreams at all.

We had scarcely left our rock and descended to the plain, when a horseman appeared on the top of a slope of its waving surface, about half a mile ahead, meeting us, and then came another followed by two or three camels. "Here they come at last!" exclaimed some one; "here are the Hizzeh." "But where are all our camels, then, and the baggage—captured?" said another. Camels upon camels appeared from behind the swell—a long line. 'Tis a drove returning from the Syrian pastures," cried one of the Arabs. "They ought to be rather afraid of us, for they have few men with them," added another. "Suppose we capture the whole lot," exclaimed a third. As we met them, we stopped the leader and had a parley with him. He was an Alaween going to Akaba with camels of his tribe, from the pastures up there beyond Jebel El Sufar. He was a middle-aged

man, and his manner was open and more free than is usual with Arabs, as he replied to our questions, and asked others of the Teeaha in a cheerful tone. He was riding a bay mare, which he said was of the Anezeh breed, and which ranks after the Nedjid—very high blood—with a foal by her side, and was armed only with a long spear. She was a low, long mare, scarcely fifteen hands high, with small clean limbs and great loins, her coat like satin, and the full veins swelling in lines all over her; and the head and eyes were particularly blood-like and fine. The mare and foal carried you back in thought to England forthwith, for they were exactly what you may see any day in our paddocks —of Blacklock or of Gohanna blood. The old father of the Alaween Sheikh was the second horseman, an ancient man, very grey, and equally well mounted. As he rode up to us, the old man dropped something. The son saw it, moved his mare towards the object, examined it with his spear point, and then, letting himself suddenly down head foremost, he picked up the object with his hand, and threw himself with a slight effort back into his seat instantly.—The whole thing was done like lightning—with ease and precision.

The wife and child came by in the string of camels, the former reclining in an immense circular

box, stuffed and padded, covered with red cotton, and dressed with yellow worsted ornaments. This family nest was mounted on a huge camel. It seemed a most commodious and well imagined travelling carriage, and very superior as a mode of camel riding to that which our Sitteen rejoiced in. The Arab wife could change her position at her pleasure, and the child had room to walk about and could not fall out, the sides of the box just reaching to its shoulders. Various jugs, and skins, and articles of domestic use hung suspended about it; and trappings of fringes and finery ornamented the whole turn out. The Sheikh's wife seemed to be a large fat woman, but her face was half enveloped in a black and red silk handkerchief.

What a lot of camels there were. They made one long line—almost the whole of them following in one single file — the number being counted at three hundred — old and young. Some of them were magnificent animals, and all in the highest condition — for eating, fat and sleek. What a splendid prize for the Hizzeh !—Some one has said that camels are never young—that is, in spirit always from the beginning being the same stiff staid solemn animals they are in full age. Accordingly we watched for anything that might contradict

this statement of camels being born old—for anything resembling a gambol among these young things, sometimes fourteen or fifteen in a string — full one half of the number being young ones, from twenty days old up to six months — but they all went by with the same mournful air of the elder ones. They turned their heads towards us with a timid frightened look, like a party of children tamed down into good order by much bullying, and not a game of play was visible from end to end of the long line. These young Alaween camels, whatever others may have, evidently had no fun in them—their education in Syria had been very strict and their manners particularly attended to. Mrs. Mc'Starch, the model governess, would have been highly satisfied, had she seen these delicate white creatures march steadily past the strangers, with their pretty heads held high—examples of propriety. There were but seven men with the whole herd. In another mile we met a second string of the Alaween camels—sixty in number, with three men to look after them. As all these, near four hundred camels, with but ten men to take care of them, were to traverse this country to the Wady Araba and then follow the whole length of that high road to Akaba by easy days' journeys, it appeared to us that, notwithstanding all the alarms of our

Teeaha friends, there must be more security on these Deserts than they were willing to allow.

While looking from the height of Jebel El Sufar, you cannot but acknowledge the strong probability of the battle of the Israelites and the Amalekites having taken place on this line of hill. The lay of the land singularly favours the account given by the Hebrew leader of the circumstances attending the first expedition of the spies—and then the battle on the hill-top. A line of mountain runs east and west, nearly straight across the country, from the southern end of the Dead Sea, towards the south-east corner of the Mediterranean. To the south of this line, which rises abruptly and with much regularity, the country is the Desert, lying down low, burnt and arid—while to the north it is a table-land, high and green—a pastoral region. As we stood 'on the top of the hill,' we could not but be struck with the remarkable accordance of this natural formation of the country with the manner of the events related. And as we looked, we could full well comprehend, as it seemed, the whole circumstance—the arrival of Moses with his people in those Deserts at the foot of the great barrier, in the low country, and his sending of the spies—"get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain, and see the land"—and his

waiting there below encamped; and then the mounting of the armed bodies "to the top of the hill," to fight for the green land upon that high level; and the defeat of them by the inhabitants, who drove them down that steep, and pursued the flying Hebrews along that low ground to Hormah. The coincidence is very striking.

We turned our backs on the Wilderness, after forty days spent in it, with sincere satisfaction and thankfulness that our party had got through all its real risks and half-real dangers in safety and in health. At the same time, we took our last look at the Desert, so remarkable in itself and for all its great associations, with that kind of reluctance that one always feels to quit any spot or object which habit has associated with one's daily life, and which one will, probably, never see again. We turned our faces towards the north, with the feeling —on my own part, of regret—that our way of life was altered—that the wild freedom of the natural man was there, behind us—and the common things of the tamed animal—his shackles and his bonds in houses and in walled cities—awaited us in front. I am not at all sure that my feelings in this latter respect were shared by any of the party, except, of course, the Arabs—and Selim, who, at heart, was a thorough child of Ishmael, and loved the Desert

more than his house at Alexandria, or the boat on the Nile, or the bazaars of Cairo.

Full of a strange novelty—yes, of novelty—was the return to the old accustomed things of nature, and their being there was a surprise. The desert with its hot air at the foot of Jebel El Sufar was suddenly exchanged for the mountain height and the fresh breeze; the stony hill-side was spotted with solitary shrubs, and then the sand under your feet was sprinkled with flowering plants of other and colder climes; then peered out the first thinly scattered blades of grass among the thickening herbs, and in a mile or two more a growing carpet of green was spreading in patches over the still brown floor; in another hour nature was gradually and slowly covering up the holes in her garment—a shrubby coppice appeared—and a slope of tangled creeping plants; and, at a rise of the land, grass took the place of shrubs and plants—all patchwork had ceased—and on your reaching the top of a long swell, the rich pastures of one deep universal green and sprinkled all over with fat camels and their young, burst upon the sight, and solitudes and the waste were no more. The perfumes of flowers, and the bleating of sheep and of goats, and the cries of children to each other by the side of low stone buildings, were about you—and the Sitteen

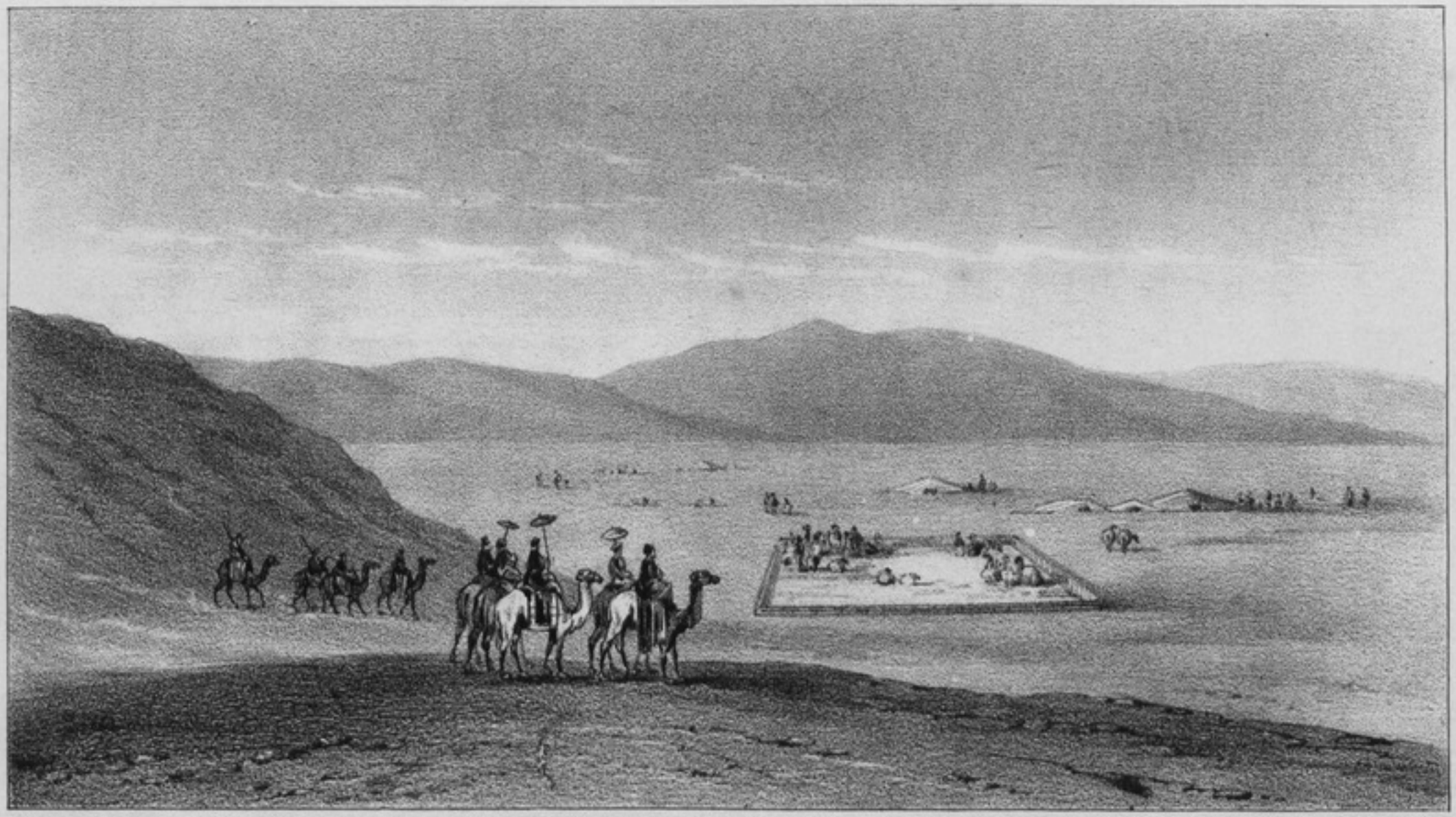
stopped to buy fresh milk and to look at the now unusual things, the children—half-naked urchins at play upon the grass. But this sudden change from the arid to the fertile—from the silent to the voiceful—it seemed scarcely real.

That night our tents were pitched on the grass among the hills of Judæa. The hills of Judæa!—The words, as you spoke them out to each other, seemed to strike on the ear with a tender and affecting sound, and with a sense which appealed to all the sympathies and the memories of the heart.—And as you strolled out that night into the starlight, upon the turf—over the swells, the many associations of your life with those Judæan hills—so far away from you in fact, yet so near to you in spirit—seemed to rise up around you. The brilliant starry world above and the storied name of the ground beneath your feet, reminded you—how vividly—that it might have been just such a night as this when the shepherds were abiding in the field among those hills of Judæa—that there, and not far off, and amid pastures such as those around you, had appeared to those men the angelic messenger, and brought to them the joyful tidings;—and the scene—it almost seemed to realise itself before you on those fields—the unknown light, and the form so full of awe—the

assembled shepherds so alarmed, and the sleeping flocks.

At an early hour of the morning we reached the wells of El Mileh,—two wells, surmounted by a low stone wall round the mouth of each, and situated in a level space about sixty yards square, inclosed also by a low wall, on the edge of the broad plain of El Mileh. This plain extends through the country east and west for a considerable distance, the well of El Seba—Bir-El-Seba—believed to be the spot of the Hebrew Beersheba, lying on it at twenty miles distance from us to the west. As we came over the hills from the south suddenly at the foot of a descent before us were these wells of El Mileh, and beyond them the far-stretching plain; and far and wide was presented to us a rich and ancient pastoral scene—a scene of the patriarchal age, unchanged. The wells were surrounded by flocks and herds and Bedaween of the Teeaha tribe—the same with which we were travelling, and who here possess large pastures.

There was a wall round each well mouth, about two feet high, and built of a coarse kind of white marble. Many watering troughs of the same stone were about, and round which were the flocks. Young men were about, carrying the water to the troughs, and girls brought up and drove away the



Wyld. Stannard & Dixon

THE FLOCKS AND HERDS OF THE TEEAHA BY THE WELLS OF EL-MILJEH.

London Hurst & Blackett 1856.

different flocks in their turn, in and out of the enclosure. And as you looked at Sheikh Aboo Keleh, with his white hair and bent figure—the patriarchal Chief of the Teeaha—as he stood in his long cloak in the midst of his young men and the maidens, daughters of his tribe—the still powerfully-framed and large limbed, but aged Chief, was no unfit representative of the great patriarch—the hale and hoary man, who had dwelt at Beer-sheba, hard by, and had mingled in such a scene as this—how often, and in the same simple manner.

A merchant from Gaza was there, too, buying sheep and goats for the Cairo market. He had brought blue and white cotton stuffs—some of them English—and the Manchester goods he had spread beyond the enclosure on the grass, to catch the eye, as barter. He would take away, the people said, three or four hundred head of cattle, but only the young ones, the Bedaween never selling the breeding sheep, or goat, or camel, or mare.

As we rode on over the grass, numerous flocks of sheep were feeding in all directions over these fine sweeping plains, giving them abounding life—and many hundred camels, too, were pasturing with their young, the property of the Teeaha. In an hour from the wells we reached their encampment. The tents were very large, sometimes one of them

extending over sixty feet of ground in length, by thirty in breadth. Within were divisions by curtains. They were made of a very thick camel-hair stuff, of a dingy white colour, and striped with broad brown lines, and thick enough to keep out much of the sun's heat. Being open from front to rear, with an air blowing through them, they seemed most cool and commodious dwellings for these wild people, pitched irregularly on the sunny and grassy hill-side. In one of these spacious tents I saw dogs, sheep, goats, hens and chickens, donkeys, women and children, besides a quantity of other property. A number of iron and earthen vessels were about, and enormous chests for their wearing apparel, and for the gold and silver ornaments of the women, were ranged round the poles in the centre of the tent, while carpets and mats, bedding and clothing, were heaped on all sides, or spread over the ground.

Nothing could more thoroughly realise the charm and the beauty of the pastoral life than the scene before us—the wide spreading and shading tents, the wealth of flocks and herds, the luxuriant plains, the bright air of heaven. To the denizen of cities —to one remembering the complicated and vexed life of towns, and looking back to the misery and the crimes engendered by hopeless toil and

demoralising want—this specimen of Arab existence seemed the combination of all peace and ample happiness and God-like liberty from ill. By heaven! you did not wonder at the love the Arab feels for his free deserts and his plains—whether you called to mind the shrubby wadys and the boundless expanse beyond Areef-el-Naka, or looked on the luxuriant pastures around you—and you could not blame his hatred of the imprisoning and toil-worn cities. As you rode away you could not help thinking, that though the man of towns leads the highest life—the life of soaring intellect—yet there he also leads the lowest existence, one of deepest ruin both of mind and of body; while the Arab of the Desert, and of the Abrahamic plain, works out a healthier and a simpler life, happy in his ignorance of the dazzling triumphs, as well as of the degrading ruins, of civilisation.

CHAPTER XIV.

Cultivated Land—A Fruitful Valley—Hebron—The Lazaretto—Prison Consolations—Scripture Realised—The Scenery of Scripture—Curtailing the Baksheesh—Farewell to the Arabs—The Sheikh of Hebron—The Government of Palestine—A Ride over the Judæan Hills—A Rough Path—Trained Horses.

On leaving the grass plains for the cultivated country, we lost our way. Nobody seemed to know the way towards Hebron, though Salâmeh and Aboo Keleh pretended to do so. The village of Semooah was the place we wanted to find, and, as the direction of it was known, though not the path, we took a line of our own across country, and reached it in the evening. It must be confessed, that the view of the cultivated lands—the first sight of fields, and a crop of barley in the ear, rich and waving in

the light breeze,—the variety of small hill and valley, the terraced and walled up sides of the green platforms among the rocky places, and shrubs growing thickly in patches in the midst of the large white blocks which crowned all these little swelling hills,—that all this was grateful to the eye. It was the picturesque side of human labour—agriculture in the spring-time. And so we arrived at Semooah, among the hills of Judæa.

The next day, in the afternoon, we entered a fruitful valley, wide and spreading, where cultivation covered the tops of the hills with corn and gardens, and olive-groves filled up the bottom. Our road led us among the gardens; and here, in the midst of this luxuriant vale, and surrounded by a wealth of production, was Hebron. Here was a Lazaretto.

Curiously enough, a three days' quarantine was required of us, because we had come from Egypt, where the cholera was supposed still to be, although it had long ceased: and here we remained for our three days of purification—of purification! of people who had been forty-two days out on the health-abounding Desert! The Lazaretto was empty, and we had our prison to ourselves; and it had its recommendations, for it was lately built, clean, cool, and commodious;

and, after our long ride, latterly rather hot and fatiguing for the Sitteen, it was not an unpleasant thing to be again at rest for a day or two. From the roofs of the buildings we could look out over all the sacred and memorable ground—the Cave of the Field of Macpelah before Mamre—the tomb of the Patriarchs,—and the country around, the undulating plain of Mamre—the scene of some of the earliest events of our known antiquity.

There Abraham had spoken with the angels, and had pleaded with an Emissary from Heaven in favour of Sodom; and, from the spot we were standing on we might have seen the smoke of the burning cities and the country go up into that clear sky. The Patriarch Isaac, too, had dwelt in Mamre—had managed his flocks and herds upon those hills, and sat and rested himself in the door of his tent in the cool of the day; and there his young men must have borne him to his last home, along that valley, to rest beside the honoured dust of his father, 'the friend of God'—the dust still there in that building before us. Along those hills, too, from the threshing floor of Abad, had passed Joseph and his brethren, accompanied by the servants of Pharaoh and the elders of the land of Egypt—by royal officers of the King—by chariots and horsemen, a very goodly company—this great procession had

come up from Egypt to bury Jacob in the Cave of the Field of Macpelah. To read the histories of these events and others—of the acts of David and Absalom—so immensely distant in point of time, and placed in localities hitherto so impossible to realise to the mind of the far-away dweller in other lands, as almost to wear an unsubstantial form—to read the story now on the spot, and see and witness how simply true and real were the geographical parts of the scenes described, was to go back, in imagination, into the night of time—to be bodily present at these patriarchal actions of the elder world, and to feel the impress of the hour and the fact.

And so we passed our three days of quiet in the Lazaretto of Hebron. Here we paid off our Arabs, at the same time administering to the friends of my youth a sharp blowing-up for their ill conduct on the Desert in refusing to travel, and, what was a still sharper pain to them—curtailing their baksheesh. They all declared that Aboo Keleh was the cause of the whole thing—that he was getting a little crazy—and that the other chiefs of the Teeaha were considering the propriety, for the good of the tribe, of deposing their ancient sheikh from his headship. This journey and its consequences would probably settle the matter of deposition,

when related to the tribe. Aboo Keleh was dismissed in disgrace; and he sat on the hill-side—the Arabs performed their quarantine appropriately on the hill outside the building—apart by himself, and devoured his grief, having acknowledged to Yusuf that he had walked in the ways of foolishness, in not listening to his advice on the Desert. Salâmeh and his party confessed to Selim that they had behaved ill, and were rightly punished.

Thus we bade farewell to ye, O Arabians! Farewell to ye, Beshara and Aboo El Haj, good men and true—and to ye, O Teeaha! A regret of my heart went with ye, as I saw you depart; and never did I afterwards, in my ride through Palestine, meet any of you, O cousins of Antar! on the hill side, or in the cities, without a pleasant word of regard—for had not you and I lived together in fellowship on the Desert? Our Desert ride was done.

The Governor—or Sheikh of Hebron, as he is called—is a Syrian, and the Turkish government tolerate a great deal of irregularity on the part of the said Sheikh of Hebron. They are well aware that that part of the country is difficult to manage—as it always has been since the rebellious days of Absalom—and that whoever is ruler there must be a very rough hand to keep the district in any order at all. There is a toleration of a certain rude,

absolute action at the will and pleasure of this governor; and this produces, as may be supposed, the worst effects on both ruler and people. The sheikh, in fact, finds it his interest to keep the country in a state of permanent discontent and violence, as he thereby increases his own personal gains, as well as his own importance, by making it appear that there is a necessity for continuing to maintain him as the manager of such turbulent spirits. If matters go too far, as they do occasionally, and disorders become frequent, and complaints thicken at Jerusalem, and the much-bearing authority there—the pasha—threatens the governor with putting another man in his place if he does not rule better—then the governor turns round, gets his wild supporters to back him in showing a bold front and defying the powers that be.

If ever that country should come into better hands and under a better rule than it is at present, what a different aspect the south of Palestine might easily present. A Government station at Akaba, a second at Petra, and a third at El Weibleh, would hold all the Arabs of that country in hand, and convert the whole of them into an useful and effective body for the carrying trade of the treasures of the East to Jerusalem and Syria. Petra would bear considerable cultivation, and the Fellaheen might

be turned to good account instead of being a community profitable to no one. The whole of these grass plains, from the mountain line of Jebel El Sufar to the cultivated border, and the arable district from thence northwards to the line of Hebron—a habitable country of some thousand square miles in extent, east and west, from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean—would again hold as in ancient times, a large, settled population, one rich in all the fruits of the earth, flocks and herds, and corn and wine and oil. Perhaps the day of such things is even yet to come. What outlets for commerce with the East and with the West would be Akaba on one side on the Red Sea, and Jaffa on the other side on the Mediterranean. Jerusalem and its country—fertile and healthy beyond most of the countries on the earth—in the hands of a power governing according to the European system—commanding the commerce of the East and West—what might it not be?—In the hands of the Turk, what is it?

We left Hebron on horses. It was pleasant enough to find myself in the saddle again, but the change from dromedaries to horses was still more agreeable to the Sitteen, to whom camel-riding, as the weather was becoming daily more warm, had become rather fatiguing. For the first mile or two

the country was cultivated, fine crops of wheat and barley were waving in the fresh morning breeze, the soil looked rich, and the whole land was one of pretty undulating hills. Flocks of sheep and herds of cattle were frequent. But by degrees the cultivation became more rare and poorer, and the hills more high and rocky, and, in some cases, with precipitous sides. No villages were visible after we left the little city; and now no more sheep were to be seen, and only here and there a few straggling people picking up wood, and looking very miserable. The land was empty, and was, for the most part, lying waste. Ruins of buildings were here and there to be seen near the road, or on the slopes, and broken remains of the walled terraces of the hill-sides were everywhere proofs of a former occupation of the now abandoned country. Coppices of dwarf oak and the wild grasses had it all to themselves. What a land, it struck you as you rode along from valley to hill through the rich but neglected fields of Judæa—once resounding to the song of the peasant, and now silent in their desertion—what a land for the colonist! What a soil, and what a climate! and the stone in plenty on the ground everywhere for building and road-making, and the only thing wanting—a government.

At first starting on your Syrian ride you look with some anxiety to the Sitt's safety—there are no roads in the country, only rocky tracks, and you naturally abuse the government and the road committee, and you are rather in doubt about the Sitt's neck; but before you reach Jerusalem your faith in the necessity of good roads is broken down, and you watch the Sitt going straight to her death with the utmost composure. If the horse gets down that place, you say to yourself—'Tis a miracle,—if he makes a false step—Inshallah—may that horse live for ever. Allah Akbar—he is all right at the bottom.

Some of the Syrian horses are broken to get over these places in the most artful way. The generality of the horses drop roughly from one piece of rock, or from one large stone to another, and shake their riders a good deal; but some are trained never to do this. These would be particularly warranted to carry a timid elderly gentleman over the worst road in Syria—which means up and down the sides of ruined houses—without a shake. These are trained to walk out boldly and freely on fair ground, but to crawl down or along the slanting faces of rocks in the most considering and human fashion imaginable. The Sitt had one of these, a chestnut horse, rather well bred, with thin

flanks and deep chest. He had a small head, and was rather handsome, and his temper being fine and his action smooth, he and the Sitt, on a long ride through Syria, became fast friends. It was a pretty sight to see the chestnut—so free and springy on the flat—carry his rider down a really difficult place, which means a twisting, narrow track down the face of a nearly perpendicular rock, where turning round is an impossibility, and where each step is a drop, or a scrape, or a slide, or a scramble, according to the cleverness of the horse. Down this the chestnut would go, with a precision and a smoothness as if he believed himself to be carrying on his back the lady of the glass case, or the beautiful Schems-el-Nahar, who was more than Eastern treasures or the sun itself, to Ali-ebn-becar, Prince of Persia.

CHAPTER XV.

Jerusalem—Importunate Beggars—The Mount of Olives—Monkish Mockery—A Stroll around the Walls—The Latin Monk—Precise Traditions—A Marble Column—The Via Dolorosa—The Church of the Holy Sepulchre—Odium Theologicum—Devotional Tinsel—The Tomb—The Scene and its Associations—Hallowed Ground.

THE only city in the world which produces, on the first sight of it, at all a similar sensation to that caused by the first view of the Jewish city, is Rome; but that impression is not equal to the feeling produced by Jerusalem. Rome possesses a past and a present—an ancient and a modern grandeur of history and of fate superior to any city of the earth, except only Jerusalem. It fills the world's eye, too, in its future destiny, second only to one city. But the associations of Rome

high though they are, are but of the great men of the earth—of men; while those of Jerusalem are of more than man—of angels and of the Deity Himself. As you look, for the first time, on the Holy City, the sensation which you are the most alive to is one of pain—the common effect of intense feeling.

A broad grass road led us over the plain, and a few people met us, at intervals, on foot and on horseback; but though one or two villages lay on the slopes of the hills to the south and west of the plain, and Bethlehem was behind us, and the capital close before us, there was no appearance of life—of the neighbourhood of the busy haunts of men—of the capital city of a country. And yet, it must be said, the quiet and the repose of the scene—the silent land, and the empty road, and the sleeping city—all this struck you as proper to the place, and more becoming to Jerusalem in her desolation than if the way had been noisy with bustling crowds—heralds of a teeming city. When we were within about a mile of the walls, an European gentleman met us, mounted on a good horse, and shortly afterwards another—unusual and welcome sights. The first of these was the Anglican bishop, Dr. Gobat, and the second a gentleman connected with the Protestant Mission

in the city, both riding out to welcome the Khawaja and the Sitt, our travelling friends and companions to Jerusalem.

Thus we approached the city; and when we were near we found that a steep valley—the Valley of Gihon—separated it from the plain we had crossed, and that a rocky and precipitous hill rose up from the other side of the valley, the top of which was crowned by the walls we had seen from a distance. Crossing the valley by the causeway at the lower pool of Gihon, we rode up to the gate by the castle of David. Just outside it, sitting on a low wall were collected about thirty beggars, men and women, loathsome objects. They rose in a body as we rode up the hill, and came near and clamoured loudly for alms. How true a picture, it struck you, did all this present of Jerusalem in her abject condition—trodden down by strangers—the total absence of a busy, active, useful life beyond its heavy wall—stony hills and a half cultivated country—while at her gate sat a band of miserable creatures, deformed and diseased, such as might have lain, a multitude of impotent folk, blind, and halt, and withered, by the Pool of Bethesda, 'waiting for the moving of the water.'

The first place you visit is the Mount of Olives. You go up it. The ground you are on is higher

than any part of the city, and as you look down one slope and up the other, there lies the little town, on that other slope, at your feet and under your eye. You look right into every part of it, and call each building by its name, from the Tower of Hippicus by the Jaffa Gate — and the little Protestant Church—down the slope over the Church of the Selpulchre, to the Castle of Antonia, and to the Mosque of Omar in the midst of the green and grassy inclosure—long and large, the courts of the ancient temple—almost on a level with the top of the city wall, on this side, at your feet. Seen from that hill the little compact town—so white and fresh looking and orderly—sleeping peacefully in the sunlight, was a fair object to gaze on, were it but a common and unstoried town to a passing traveller —but when you whispered to yourself "that is Jerusalem,"— then the fair white buildings and the turretted encircling wall — the strong towers and the long green and grassy garden of the Temple all along the front — these wore a more beautiful, an affecting aspect; and the pitying words of one came into your recollection as He stood on that very hill side and looked into those courts and over those buildings with eyes of sorrow.

It is too commonly the case at Jerusalem that you set off to visit some locality in the right frame

of mind, with a reverential feeling in your heart for the spot and its associations; and you fall on some miserable monkish story which fails utterly to invest the object pointed out for devotion with any robe but that of absurdity — and then there is an end to every better sense, and hard hearted mocking takes its place. This is too bad, for it spoils the strong satisfaction with which you are inclined to regard all things connected with the Holy City. But, happily, there is much which the powers of monkish tradition have failed to injure — the city itself, and the hills and the valleys which hem it in —these are great objects which are consecrate to all hearts; and here are scenes which no mocking thought disfigures, and where there is no habitation for foolish stories of stocks and of stones.

Jerusalem has no suburb—a considerable merit. Directly you are out of the gate of the city, on whichever side you leave it, you are at once in the country and free of the dirt and ruin of that much neglected place—for although when seen only from the outside, from the Mount of Olives, the city is beautiful and orderly, yet inside it is but the abode of uncleanliness and decay. At any time of day you meet but few persons beyond the walls, and thus you can wander at your ease and leisure from place to place.

It is a pleasant thing to stroll all alone about the city, grope your way into strange places—where the lepers—sad spectacle—abide—or where the Jews weep along their temple wall—or round by the Jews burying ground and the valley of Jehoshaphat—and the garden—how quiet and lonely it all is, for you scarcely meet any one—and pick up tradition by the wayside from some solitary passer-by. Now you stroll from the tombs of the kings to the Valley of Gihon; and now by the king's garden and the Pool of Siloam. But the sun declines westward, and it warns you to climb up to the Temple wall, and get homeward by the Turkish Cemetery—before the Turkish guard close St. Stephen's gate at sunset and shut you out for the night. There is no place in the world where the stroll around the walls has so peculiar a charm in that soft spring season, for the air is soft and clear and light as in Egypt; and each spot beneath your eye, go where you will, possesses its story and its place within your memory.

Going one day into the town by the St. Stephen's Gate, I overtook a Latin monk who came out from the little conventual building just opposite the gate of the Governor's residence—the so-called Hall of Pilate. From this point starts the Romish Via Dolorosa; and the monk going that way we walked on together. He was an Italian from near

Naples, and had been twenty-five years in Jerusalem without ever returning to Italy. He said he should like once to go back and see his native country—the place where he was when a boy—but he liked being where he was, and was content. He looked hale and hearty, as most monks do, and was a cheerful man about five and forty years of age. As we walked along I asked him about the stations of the Via Dolorosa, and his manner of naming them and of speaking of the circumstances was so simple and earnest that I could not think the poor monk doubted for a moment of the truth of what he said. At one corner he stopped, and pointing to the entrance of a narrow alley or walk between two walls—very modern walls indeed to my eyes, and very slight, and which could not possibly have survived the Roman sack and devastation of the city—he said earnestly and in a half whisper,—"There the Virgin Mary met our Lord and sighed deeply as he passed by here on the way to Calvary."—"Where did she stand?"—"There in that doorway," said he.—"In that doorway—just as it is now?"—"Yes—just inside it."—And then the monk went on a few paces—"And here is the corner where the Lord fell down with the weight of the cross the first time."—And then he went a little further—the Via follows a sharp angle or two, near each other;

—"And here He fell down the second time."—"Well, but how do you know all these precise localities?"—"How do we know them?—we know them—because it is well-known—and quite true."—"Well, but you know that Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans and all this part was burnt."—"No, not this part—all this part was saved—the Via Dolorosa was saved."—"Well—but was not the whole of the interior knocked all to bits and the streets and houses all tumbled by fire and violence into one undistinguishable mass of ruin?"—"No, not this part."—"And then built up again in all sorts of new directions and streets?"—"No—not this street—nothing was ruined here—nothing changed."—"Well, but——" what was the use of vexing the poor Italian with more ill-natured questions?—He believed, and was quite happy in his simple belief;—he saw the whole procession—the weeping women—the jeering crowd—the falling victim—he saw it all with the eye of faith in his early teaching,—as it moved round those corners and up that dirty narrow street with its broken pavement, and along the squalid bazaar. Let him believe in those localities and their miraculous preservation—the simple monk might do worse.

We passed through the bazaar, and when near

its extremity, on one side, the monk pointed to a marble column, old and stained, and defaced apparently by fire,—once no doubt a handsome pillar of some rich portico of the olden city. It stood half built into the wall of a house, a relic of departed magnificence in the midst of filth and ruin. "Here," said my companion, "was the gate of the city—this column was part of it—and outside this gate was an open space, though it is all built over now—and there was Calvary."—And just up on the left about a hundred yards off or less from the monk's 'Gate of the City' was the church of the Holy Sepulchre. But it strikes you, as you look at the column, that, whether there was a gate there or no, this pillar never formed part of it, and is no guide in the matter, as it is of too rich a kind of marble to have been part of a town gate. However it is a happy circumstance for the Latins and the Via Dolorosa that the pillar is there to countenance the arrangement;—and there it remains—safe from spoliation—probably on that account. Had it stood on some unnecessary spot, the stray and rich relic would in all probability have been captured for the use of the community—set up in the church—or converted into an object of devotion by the magical words—'this is the pillar at which such and such thing was done.'

Of course you soon go to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—and the first time, and every time you enter it, you ask yourself this question: Is this, or is it not, the place of the Crucifixion? And, although this much vexed question is believed by many to have been definitively answered in the negative, yet there always will arise a doubt in one's heart, until something more than argument is produced—some tangible and physical proof—that the spot is elsewhere. Our poor material nature holds on to material objects with a tenacity which fears to let go, and invests with love, and honour, and something more, things that are unworthy—but which time has consecrated,—things that are mean—but which our lowly nature, how rarely equal permanently to high things! clings to, and calls not mean. And so the Protestant, having thrown off some mean things, and honouring others—as how could he help it, being but a man—and with his thoughts on the whole pretty free and easy about the vexed question—on his way to the church argues the matter with himself.

But I shall not argue this matter—but go in. You do not wonder at the scenes of riot which take place in that church, when you see that there are four or five deadly enemies all cooped up in that

narrow space—a hot-bed of all envy and jealousy. Why, the Greeks are in the possession of the large body of the place, while the Latins have but a small side chapel. The very Armenians have a larger space in the church than the Romans. All this must be gall to the followers of the Pope, who consider themselves to be the superiors of the Christian Church throughout the world, and claim universal sovereignty. To be second anywhere is trying to these would-be kings; but to be shoved into a mere side chapel at Jerusalem, in the face of the Christian world, by their inferiors, is a bitter pill to swallow. Then there is a small chapel for the Copts, and another for the native Syrians. The Protestants are well out of it all.

The whole place strikes you as dirty and ill-tended, and over it all there is the fatal air of tawdriness, with which the vulgar-finery ideas of the monkish churches have managed to surround their gold and silver christianity. The Holy Sepulchre, however—the little sepulchre itself—is almost an exception. It is well placed in its fine circular court of large and lofty pillars; and this small and rich, though plain building—beautiful in its form and material—a cream-coloured marble—and resembling a diminutive chapel—is an object, with its situation, worthy of all praise. Its material, and the absence of all ornament except two twisted, slight columns at its entrance, give the sepulchre a chaste appearance. This would be all right, if left so—plain, but rich. But then come those ridiculous lamps and pictures and flowers, dressing up the entrance in atrocious taste, and which make it vulgar and tawdry, and spoil the whole thing. What business have gewgaws there, whether it be true or not that this is the place where lay the Saviour? Even inside—inside, where there should be nothing—nothing whatever—but a sufficiency of light—the monks have dressed it up and lit it up—flowers, and lamps, and tinsel, and snobbishness.

Notwithstanding all this, one could not stand before that remarkable little building—the tomb—and mark the action around it without being affected by the circumstances—the place and its influences. For more than an hour I watched what took place. A single figure stood within—a Greek monk in his long black dress, his head drooped upon his breast, his hands crossed in front—the appointed watcher by the tomb. The church was perfectly silent, a few people only moving at intervals noiselessly about; two men were on their knees on the step outside the entrance of the shrine, and two or three others were sprinkled

singly about near the opening of the Greek body of the church—all kneeling. Occasionally one would get up and slowly enter the shrine—bending low his head and body, or one knee, at every step, with every appearance of the deepest devotion—the most abject humility. He would cast himself on his knees by the side of the marble sepulchre—at the feet of the motionless figure of the watcher—and there remain for two, or three, or five minutes, without a movement; and then impress one long kiss upon the marble, creep out, and fall on his knees again somewhere—and so remain, till he stole noiselessly away. After an interval, another would do the same. Some came out, and sobbed audibly as they knelt. And this went on without ceasing—as each left the church others succeeding, from one quarter or other. Some of these persons were very old monks—some young native Syrians; but they were all men, and not a woman was among them—which was singular enough. They were chiefly monks from different parts of the world—travellers to Jerusalem—Roman, Greek, Armenian—as I learned by enquiring of some of them while wandering about other parts of the church.

It is impossible not to feel the influence of the spot and of the scene moving before your eyes. A

kindly sympathy with these poor monks rises up in your heart, spite of all your prejudices, and your recollections of the fat drones of the Corso, and the swell Greeks you saw yesterday on the terrace by the Upper Pool of Gihon. At all events—you say to yourself—here is no worshipping of saints or of angels, not even of the Virgin,—that is not possible as the tomb of the Saviour. Suppose *some* of this devotion to be but a sham—an unmeaning form, a duty, or a penance—let that pass—still *some* of it must be true, and sincere, and hearty: those sobs bespeak deep feeling; and, perhaps, there is a terrible tale hidden under that wan face, and that bent figure shrouded in the monk's gown. Why not? The heart alone knows its own bitterness; and where in all the wide world can a man more feel the presence and the force of the words of the Man of Pity than here—at Jerusalem?—where more than here—breathing the same air which He breathed? And here especially—kneeling on those stones on the very threshold of that spot, and touching the sepulchre where that poor monk had been all his life long taught that the Divine form had really and actually been laid? Anyhow, the thoughts and the misery of that poor man's heart were laid before the Being who had, in his belief, been here on this stone

under his lips; and there could have been no intervening form of Saint or Virgin between the monk and the crucified one. Forbid it, O our better nature! For sixteen hundred years the pouring out of the sorrows of many thousands of hearts on these stones—and there must have been a good many very sad ones in these precincts since the days of Helena—have made that place a hallowed ground. So let it be, for my part.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Jews at Home—The Idle and Destitute—Consular Protection—Compromising Judaism—The Rabbis—The Jew Tailor—Social Influence of Christianity—The Chosen People—Christian Tact—Dr. Gobat—A Pilgrimage to Bethlehem—Moonlight over the Jordan.

UNTIL of late years the Jews were worse off, and ate the dry bread of affliction more painfully, in their native land, and in their capital city, than anywhere among the European nations. With these latter they found some protection in the laws of the country, and possessed a liberty of trading, more or less narrow, according to the political condition of those among whom they dwelt. They could earn a decent livelihood, if they were industriously inclined, in many countries, and become wealthy in others. But it was otherwise in Jerusalem. The Turkish law scarcely afforded them a

slight protection from violence, and none at all from insult. If anyone should spit in the poor Jew's face, in the public street, there was no one to whom the despised man could appeal to with any chance of redress. There was no generosity to express its disapprobation of coarse brutality, and no charity to throw its cloak around helplessness. He was as much an object of contempt and of detestation to the Romanist, or the Greek monk, as he was to the Mahometan fanatic, Anyone might offer him outrage, for he had no friend. There was so little of any trade carried on, that the young and active men were not there, but were in some European city where money was to be made; and thus the principal part of the Jewish community was composed of old men and women, and of young women and children—Rabbis and their helpless flocks.

It is evident that this do-nothing mass of people, at the least some five or six thousand persons, without productive occupation and destitute of property, must starve if left to itself. No one at Jerusalem cared for them, whether they lived or died—whether they struggled on in their abject destitution or perished away miserably. It was nobody's business to help them, mentally or bodily. What, then, saved these poor creatures

from general starvation? Principally two things; the unusual sums of money poured into the city and dispersed throughout its every channel at the Easter pilgrimage from Europe, and by which they profited in a degree; and more especially the yearly collection made throughout Europe by the Jews and friends of the Jew, for the aid of this poor helpless body resident in the Holy City. This latter was a large sum, and though it was most unfairly distributed by the Rabbis, yet it was a great relief to the body generally. And thus they lived on in their miserable quarter of the city, an idle and helpless population, beneath the rule of people as helpless as themselves. Is it possible to consider any condition more degraded than this—their persons objects of contempt and insult to those they lived amongst—without protection from wrong or outrage—and their life, from day to day, almost, if not entirely, dependent on the charity of others at a distance? Where, in all this condition of debasement, is there one single opportunity afforded for generous effort or industrious energy—for elevating thought of independence or honourable aspiring to usefulness—for improvement of mind or faculties—for any exercise of those powers which the Deity has given to men for the benefit of themselves and of others?

But now a change has come over the condition of this so wretched body. The Jew has protection from outrage and violence, and is no longer subject to be insulted with impunity. The greater number of this people in the Holy City claim from one circumstance or other, from birth or residence in Europe, to be under the protection of one or other of the European Consuls, as subjects of the Power they represent—a claim which is allowed by the Turkish government; and the fear of a collision with a Consul of one of the powerful nations of the West, about protected individuals, has thrown an Ægis over the whole of the rest of the Jewish community. And the same influences that have raised the Jew from his former outcast position at Jerusalem, and admitted him into the social body, are now also at work to raise him still more, and are endeavouring to confer on this hitherto trodden-down and excluded man all the elevating advantages of a more generous social life, and of a more humane civilisation. But the hard nature of the Jew, shown always in his days of prosperity and greatness, as, since his fall, in his dogged and long-enduring support of wrong, exhibits itself—now that he is relieved at Jerusalem of the persecution of his outward enemies—in his hard and tyrannical treatment of his own brethren. The worst enemies

now of the Jew, there, are themselves. In consequence of the increased number of European residents at Jerusalem, and of European and American travellers there annually, there is a demand for workmen to supply the constant wants of these new-comers from the West, and who, in a manner, require new trades and tradespeople. Now there are no persons who can supply these wants, do this work, and carry on these trades, except Europeans; and consequently a number of Jews from the different countries of the West have settled in the Holy City for this purpose.

But these trades have the effect of bringing Europeanised ideas—a less severe and uncompromising Judaism—in many instances into the Rabbinised community; and they also produce a frequent intercourse with the European residents; and so the business of the alarmed Rabbis is to prevent this communication and these ideas having any effect upen the religious principles of the sheep of their flocks. The various establishments, also, which have been set up by Europeans, for the especial advantage and benefit of the Jews—such as the Hospital, the Working School for Jewesses, the School of Industry, the Model Farm, the Schools of the Anglican Bishop for Children, and others—these, too, for the same cause, are a source

of alarm and anger to the Rabbis; for they know that where people can find their worldly advantage —such as money for their labour, and bread for their children, and health for themselves—there they will go, in spite of religious prejudice. To check the growing influence of all such communications, the leaders of the Jews wage a fierce and unceasing war against intercourse—and, in fact, against their own people. They try to prevent their people going to the hospital—to the school—to the farm—from doing work for Christian families; and they interdict tailors, shoemakers, and others from such labour. Sometimes they succeed in this by dint of using, as their instruments, wives or children, or threats of excommunication; and, as the Christians depend on these Jewish tradespeople for all such labour, and are also the only people whose custom supports them, or who hold out to them any such tangible advantages, the Rabbi succeed—when they do succeed—in putting the one party to great inconvenience, by stopping the labour market—and on the other, their own poor Jew, they bring the most complete ruin.

An instance of the above kind happened just on our arrival. There was a Jew, a tailor, who was earning from four to five thousand piastres per

annum; the whole of his earnings, with slight exceptions, coming from European Christians — the Turks and Syrians not requiring his kind of work. He was a married man with children, and managed to live comfortably on his earnings. The Rabbi of his synagogue came to the tailor, and told him he must give up working for Christians. The man remonstrated—that his whole livelihood depended on what he did for them—that no others employed him —and that, if he gave up their custom, he and his family must be totally ruined. The Rabbi, however, persisted in his requirement, and threatened exclusion from the Synagogue, and excommunication, if he refused. The tailor's wife also took in work from European ladies, and likewise went occasionally to work at their houses. All this was commanded to be dropped. The man and his wife applied to some influential Europeans (from whose mouth I received this account) to intercede for them, and which they did, but discreetly. This did not mend matters; and the end of it was — that the Rabbi carried his point, the Jew and his wife giving up their work after an ineffectual struggle to bend the dogged and unyielding Rabbi. And what had they now to live on? What did the religious teacher give these people in exchange for their prosperous little trade? — He promised them five

hundred piastres a year—a sum not quite equal to five pounds of English money — out of the sums collected in Europe for the support of the poor Jews of Jerusalem and distributed by the Rabbis. Five pounds a year!

When this story was told me, the tailor and his family had left their house as too expensive, and were now living in a miserable place—ruined, and with little more than this pittance to look to for subsistence. This is one among numerous similar cases, as I was assured by my informant. But happily tyranny, whether on a large or small scale, always works its own cure one day or other, and brings about the very thing it sought to prevent. In the former days the oppressed Jew knew no one there to help him, and tyranny hedged him in whichever way he turned; but now he finds liberty and protection standing at his door and holding out a hand to him; and this severity of the Rabbis is become a dangerous game to play. With the Turk, and among Greek and Latin Churchmen, the Jew found no friend, nor does he know of one now among those uncharitable and despotic parties; but other people and other Christians have come with their physical power and their moral influence to alter this barbarous state of things — to introduce into this social darkness a

better light, and into this ignorance of humanity a truer knowledge of what is due from man to man. Though the Jew be signally fallen, yet is there something of iron in his organization which still gives to him an unconquerable strength—he may be given over to corruption of mind, yet is there some inherent quality in his nature which maintains him, in spite of all things adverse, in his incomprehensible position. The Jews are a fallen people —but do not they demand—as no other people do — to be raised? Have they not a claim — as no other people have—that Christianity shall attempt to rescue them from their degradation? — Are not the Jews still the chosen people — the prophetic people—the sacred people? — And shall not we people of England, who make it our boast in this day to open to mankind the door of a civilization purer than that of all other times — because a benevolent civilization, and to teach men how to use a liberty more beautiful than of old—because a considerate liberty,—shall we stretch out our hands to aid all the world to know and appreciate a more just, because a more kindly, humanity—all from the highest to the lowest, from the despot to the negro — and shall we not give our hand to the Jew? — Shall we boast to aid all mankind—except the one

people?—Should we do so, then would our boast be but as the noise of the sounding brass or of the tinkling cymbal.

With reference to the above, there are at Jerusalem some very remarkable men the chief business and aim of whose lives it is to aid this work—a work incumbent on the christian world, and how worthy of all its highest efforts.—Where should the place be of men so engaged, but the Holy City itself?—Where should be the theatre of their labours among this people—to improve and to elevate—but in their own ancient capital and in the midst of their strongholds of degradation, and on the scenes of all the great events which surround their history and their fate—their triumphs and their fall—with an interest which is our interest, with a past which is our past, and with a future which is our future? —There is but little need, happily, to mention what all men now know, the large-heartedness and the world-wide benevolence—the excellence of discretion and of ability, as well as the true and pure evangelism—which the chief among these men brings to the furtherance of his great and most christian work. But there is another power which he wields, a power that can scarcely be over-estimated in the position he holds, one natural to the man and which is, it was told me, 'extraordinary,'

—a singular tact in communicating with the races of the east. Among other instances related to me, I will but give the following in proof of the influence of this natural gift It was told me by a German gentleman who had been sent as a missionary by the London Society into Abyssinia. A year or two after Dr. Gobat had left Abyssinia, this German gentleman landed on that coast of the Red Sea, and went into the interior on an expedition to distribute bibles and testaments in the Amharic tongue. He found no difficulty in penetrating some distance into the country of the Gallas tribes; but on approaching Gondar, the capital, he was met by an officer of the king who had sent to stop him and inquire the object of his coming there.—In his reply the missionary mentioned the name of Gobat. The reply was reported to the king; and the royal permission for him to go on to Gondar and to remain in the country, was conveyed to the German missionary in these or similar words,—"If you do as Gobat did, you may remain here as long as you please." The German added, that he found the name of Gobat was of the greatest use to him in his communications with the natives, so entirely had that gentleman known how to gain the good-will of all persons in that uncivilised country, from

the sovereign to the peasant. Of such materials to win hearts, as well of such powers to persuade reason, is the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem.

Of course, you make a pilgrimage to Bethlehem —pretty Bethlehem—and to the Wilderness of St. John, and to other places. And you ride down to the Dead Sea (I drank a gulp of its water, and the only effect was a slight sensation of nausea all that day), and breakfast on the banks of Jordan. It is a stinging hot ride, and you get out of the burning Ghor as fast as you can—not in the scorching sun, but by the moonlight (it was almost as light as day) at midnight. But as you reach the pitch the hill—the margin and limit of the hill country of of the Wilderness of Engedi—the high commanding ground from whence you looked—with what delight! your first view over that plain of the Jordan, spread out like a map at your feet—you stop and take a look back over it again, the last, perhaps, you may ever take from that height over that remarkable scene. In the steady and strong moonlight you can recognise some of the ground you have gone over, and the great features which distinguish it—the Mountains of Moab, and the Sea of the Plain, and the forest ground of Jericho;—and your last thoughts, what are they? They are—what a rich amount of blessed goods is offered in

that plain by Providence to any people who knew how to use them, and what a total waste there is of it all. There is the ground falling gradually all the way from the Lake of Tiberias to the Dead Sea; and there are the rich waters of Jordan, instead of being conducted out into that shelving plain to make millions of inhabitants to abound in all things, flowing along in their deep narrow vale of tangled woodland—useless. And there is that beneficent fountain, the Diamond of the Desert, expending all its full treasures upon a few fields and a profitless though beautiful forest ground, instead of converting the empty land into a scene of wealth, in fruits, and corn, and cattle, and woodlands. "As the land of Egypt—as the garden of the Lord" was, and *might be* again, that plain, teeming with men and cities;—as a wilderness, where the Arab pitches his black tents at will, and where a few straggling Syrians dwell in miserable villages, *is* that wide-extending land. *O ignarum pecus!*

CHAPTER XVII.

Scattered Friends—A Last Look at Jerusalem—The Loneliness of Palestine—A Rural Scene—Colonies for Palestine—Historic Ground—From Nazareth to Tiberias—Nazareth—Bethlehem—The Lake of Gennesareth—Scenes in the Life of Christ—The Blue Sea.

On the 19th May we left Jerusalem in the afternoon, the rule of the road being with the Syrians to halt for the first night at a certain place about three hours' ride from the city. But we were no longer the cheerful party that started from Cairo in March for the Desert ride, composed of the Khawajat and the Sitteen of the 'Fortunata' and the 'Cambria,' and attended by a goodly company of Arabs and camels, and amidst familiar sounds of the bark of dogs and the cries of the farm-yard, All this was of the past. Our friends, after a short stay in Jerusalem, had set out for the Lebanon and

Beyrout by a road different from that we had proposed to follow through Palestine; and thus, to our sincere regret, we lost our excellent and always cheerful companions of the Nile and Desert. They, too, had left us; as had done at Cairo, our friend, the accomplished lady of the 'Antar,' Mrs. Gwynne Holford—how often, while on the Desert, had we remembered the many happy days with her and her family in sunny Egypt—and now our party, our Nile party, was no more—dissolved into thin air. The Arabs, too, and the camels —— my heart goes back to them at this distance of time and place with fresh and warm yearnings towards the wild people and their so storied country—these were now changed for Syrian men and horses and mules—the Sitt's dromedary for the chestnut. And the dogs, and the farm-yard—there was none of all this; for the tenants of the latter could be found each day in the towns and villages as we went along; and the former—where?—did not black Luxor lie at Hebron?—and was not yellow Karnak sleeping his last sleep within those walls we were leaving? We went out of the Damascus Gate, feeling rather lonely without our accustomed travelling party, and in silence.

From the top of Scopas you take a last look back over the Holy City—tell over to each other by

name the various spots far and near—the towers and the now familiar buildings of the place—the mountains and hills of the surrounding country, each and all how linked with the great scenes of the ancient story; and then you ride down the opposite slope, and see Jerusalem no more.

When you are upon the Desert it seems quite natural, and a matter of course, that you see no one—that not a figure crosses your line of sight for days together. You do not think of such things as passing men out there, on the waste; and if one does appear, he is a matter of surprise. Who and what can he be? But when you are in an inhabited country, you do expect to see inhabitants. In Palestine, however, you are nearly as much in the Wilderness as when in Arabia; for, as to inhabitants, they are precisely the things which do not exist for all you can tell, except in the towns and villages you pass through. You ride on, day after day, and you rise over each hill and you sink into each valley, and, except an occasional solitary traveller with his servant and his muleteer, or a Turkish official with his party, rarely does a moving object appear upon the landscape. No cattle are on the land, and no passengers are on the highways. How lonely it is;—and this loneliness strikes you more than that of the Desert, for it seems unnatural—

because, here there should be life, and here there is none. Sometimes you may make out at a distance on the hill-side a single figure—a man upon a donkey. It is the only moving thing your eye can detect all round, and this one is but stealing down across that valley from the still village, with its few olive-trees near it, on the one rise to another hamlet, as motionless and as dead upon the other. And so you go on through this desolate land. From Jerusalem to Beyrout you scarcely light upon one single scene of rural industry—not one single scene of life that can be compared with those on the Arab pastures from the top of Jebel El Sufar to the Wells of El Mileh. There, in places, the country was full of people and children, and flocks and herds—a rejoicing picture of pastoral existence in all its abounding wealth; while here, in the country of tillage and towns and villages, the whole land seemed to lie under a spell.

But there were slight exceptions to this general rule. Here and there your road would lie by groves of olive trees, and then along a broad valley where partial crops of corn were already waving in the light breeze—it is true among extensive growths of thistles—and then you passed by some grounds, carefully enclosed with a solid wall—most rare instances—the land inside tilled

and clean, and looking rich and ready for seed between the lines of olive trees. There was one peculiar exception. Just after our leaving Beera, and at about fifteen miles from Jerusalem, we came upon a scene of labour, the only one of the kind throughout the whole of our journey of eleven days through the country. On a hill side, at some little distance from the road, was a plot of land, of some ten or twelve acres in extent, and inclosed by a wall, and in this plot were at work twenty-two men, ploughing and hoeing, in various knots and parties. One man, standing alone on the field, was evidently the overlooker, and the labourers worked well and vigorously as we stopped to watch the unusual and pleasant sight. The whole country round was under a poor and very partial cultivation, much of it lying waste, while large stones, or rather blocks of rock, dotted the land everywhere, and interfered with the course of the plough at every few yards—that is, where the plough, for a wonder, had been used. But how different was the field before us. Scarcely a block of stone was to be seen upon its surface; all had been removed except a few, and these were being broken up by parties of men with instruments, for removal. The colour of the whole of the cleaned and ploughed ground was a yellowish red,

looking rich and promising an abundant repayment to the enterprising agriculturist who was thus creating a smiling oasis in the midst of the mourning country. It was a cheering sight, and made you heartily wish the good man luck—that his healing work upon the sick land might spread from hill to hill—as you rode on, your talk running on farms—a Palestine farm—and colonising farmers from the energetic West, who might, with the intelligence, and skill, and revivifying science, which they are daily carrying away from their homes to other hemispheres, convert these suffering and deserted, though rich, hills and vallies into a land of plenty and of health, and make it again to be as it was in the ancient times. Why should it not be so? For there is still the warmly coloured and the fertile soil, and all that is wanted is the knowledge how to use it. If the owner of that field we had left, could find his profit in employing all this unwonted labour of men and of horses to rescue that plot from the general waste, why should not others come and find the same? How many millions of acres are there in that country, where wealth sleeps beneath the surface till the hand arrives to draw it forth.

The heat of the weather had rather subsided, so that we could ride all through the day; and as the

road lay all along the higher ridge of the country midway between the Mediterranean and the Valley of the Jordan, there was generally an air upon the hills, and the early mornings and evenings were fresh. The scenery, though it was but that of a hilly and rocky country without wood, not very striking in its features, yet possessed its own peculiar charm—for was it not the Holy Land? and had not almost every rocky hill and every woodless plain its storied name? Thus, as we went on, the names of Bethel and of Shiloh sounded in our ears—and of Shechem, where the 'parcel of ground' of Jacob was now, as then, a fertile valley waving with the growing corn—and Samaria, a ruin and a spectacle. Our road lay over the Plain of Jezreel to Nazareth.

The ride from Nazareth to Tiberias is perhaps that which offers a greater interest to the traveller than almost any other in Palestine. As you approach it from Jenin, the very external situation of Nazareth has about it something more than usually striking to the eye—something more than common in that country so mingled of picturesque seclusion and desolate exposure. Is not the little village town lying on the slope of the hill, with olive groves upon the rise of ground above it on one side, and the pretty valley with its dells and swelling hills—

partly cultivated and partly wild—and rocky, and sprinkled with trees, on the other—is it not a charming spot of natural beauty?—and has not this scene of rural peacefulness its own influence upon you, as you cross the last hill and it opens upon you? Yes—but there is another influence upon you.

You enter Nazareth, and a small house is shown you as the shop of the carpenter—the dwelling of the humble artisan—and you picture to yourself the time of its use and the persons of its tenants. You walk about the little village town with a peculiar feeling about your heart—you do not much attempt to analyse it, but there it is—a feeling of sympathy and almost of companionship with all the young years—the boyhood, with its truthfulness and graceful simplicity, and the early manhood with its expanding powers and profound impulses—of the most wonderful being that ever lived and moved upon the earth. And as from the olive grove beyond the buildings, where your tents are pitched near the fountain, you can look along the village street, and also up the valley, and by the margin of the houses all along its brink, you cannot help imagining a certain young boyish figure as it passes up that narrow way, occupied dutifully and humbly as a child in its present childish doings.

Again in its less boyish days you seem to see it as it strays around those grassy places by the fountain or by the grove below, its mind full of divine thoughts, yet incomprehensible to the world—knowing well and looking forward into its human career, so astounding to that world—so easy to him, and now so near commencement

From Nazareth, too, you look back and think of Bethlehem. The situation of Bethlehem upon the high exposed hill and looking eastward over the bare and repulsive wastes of the Desert of Engedi, how less attractive it seems to you that than of Nazareth, sheltering in its quiet valley among embowering olive groves. And the facts which connect you with the former town, although appealing so powerfully, as they do, to all the tenderer feelings of humanity, yet even these—as the child is less than the youth, and the youth less than the man—even these facts, great as they are, appear almost second to those that surround the Galilean village-town and its neighbourhood with their effulgent light—with the light of events and circumstances which grow in grandeur and in moment, from event to event, as they exercise a wider influence on the reason and on the action of the future of mankind.

From Nazareth you start at early dawn for

Tiberias: and how striking is the contrast of your descent now to the Lake of Gennesareth, with your journey from Jerusalem down to the Sea of the Plain—their waters lying deep down in the same gorge, the barrier eastward of the holy country. There your way was as the way to destruction, here it was to life—there among arid and repelling wastes, here over green and inviting hills—there through burning winds death-laden, here through varying airs from Hermon and its snowy heights, or the cool Mediterranean. But as you leave Nazareth—secluded Nazareth—a figure seems to you to lead you along that very road it must so often have traversed—that figure now grown from youth to manly strength. It leads you to Cana of Galilee—scene of its first essay of superhuman power over the common matter of the earth; and, as you pass among the now ruined places so humble, you naturally imagine the event—the marriage feast.

As you advance along that road, you seem to follow that form as it goes on, as yet alone and unattended, step by step, among the corn-fields and down that long green slope, where the Mount of Thabor—teeming with ancient story—is on your right hand, and that hill, the scene of the all-astonishing address—that new light to man's reason

—is on your left,—till you reach the pitch of the hill that falls sharply to the sea border.—The figure is before you—and the beautiful and tranquil sea of Tiberias is lying down in its basin of mountain at your feet. From here you seem to watch that solitary form as it slowly descends the steep path to where it stops by the rude fishers at their daily toil upon the water. Do you not mark his simple address to them?—And then the doubt—the assent to his wish—the astounding consequence?—And now, that he is no longer alone—no longer the solitary man—but accompanied, as he goes, by followers all struck with sudden faith in his powers?—Do you not mark him, as your eye sweeps the shore all round from place to place—from Tiberias, at the foot of the hill below you on the water's edge, to Capernaum at the head of the blue lake far away there to the left,—from the country of the Gadarenes, on the steep opposite shore, to the grassy hill on your right where you see the thousands sit before him—fed they know not how?—Do you not mark all this?—Do you not see that unassuming figure, and those crowds of people listening to the deep-voiced man, so all-amazing and yet so gladdening with his new and thrilling words, as he stands on the deck of the little vessel lying just off the land and speaks to their charmed ears?—Do you not

mark him, now here, now there,—now walking in sociable converse with his humble but earnest admirers along that shore,—and now going out alone upon that water, treading the obedient element as though it were the grassy plain?

'It is with a sensation of awe, mingled with a softer feeling, that you stand upon the brink of that hill above Tiberias and look down over that blue sea shut in on all sides in its mountain basin; and as you look, you give, for you cannot help it, your picture-drawing imagination the rein. You have often tried to realise from the text, so graphic, these scenes—the place—the sea—the people—the one form so distinct—but you have never done so as you do now, standing on the very ground, with all the beautiful story, as it were, spread out before you. Seen through the transparent air—that lake and its encircling mountains and grassy hills—as a piece of scenery they are a lovely bit of nature; but when you add to this all the associations of the scene, so sublime and so affecting,—that from here the fame of the powerful being first went abroad—ruling all matter and its laws at his will, and declaring the road open to the glories of another world—and that here he did all gentle things to poor sad broken-down humanity—was the loving man

of stricken men—you feel in your heart, that the scenery of that lake of Gennesareth wears an aspect which your memory clings to with a never-diminishing tenderness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Busy Beyrout—A Change of Fortune—The Slopes of Lebanon—The Syrian Fever—The Hakem of the 'Cambria'—A Tahterwan—Bethuni—The Rear Mule—The Sitt's Ride—Dr. Dobrowolski—The Air of Lebanon—Beit-Meri—The Mountain Roads—The Mecca Pilgrimage—The Cedars of Lebanon—By the Walnut Trees.

We left Tiberias, and rode back to Nazareth; and then, skirting the hot plain of Jezreel, crossed the river Kishon by the foot of wooded Carmel, to Kaifa, and so by the breezy sea-shore towards the north, to Beyrout — busy Beyrout — growing, trading, flourishing Beyrout—commercial capital of Syria.

Hitherto, our expedition had been one of entire success. But now arrived the moment when this long-unequal turn of the balance in our favour was to be redressed—when the scales were to be rudely

changed; and so sharp a misfortune was to be thrown into the yet light and empty scale of ill, that it would sink heavily downwards, and the other—so full but of late—go up with a jerk, and well nigh kick the beam.

After a week's rest at Beyrout, and the Sitt had quite recovered from the fatigue of her ride from Jerusalem—nine hours a day for eleven days, even on the chestnut, were something—on the sixth of June we broke up our encampment in a garden by the sea-side at Beyrout, and started for Damascus. Our plan was to go along the sea-shore, at the foot of Lebanon, to Tripoli, and there to turn up the mountain-side, by Ehden, to the Cedars, and, crossing the ridge at Jebel Makmel, to ride by Baalbec to Damascus. But the fates ruled it otherwise. We rode by a succession of gardens and plantations and villas to the foot of the mountain, and turning along its base northward, went by Nahr-el-Kelb—where the hand of once conquering Egypt is yet seen upon the rocks—and so by Djouni and Djebail to Batrun, reaching the latter place at the end of the second day—above forty miles from Beyrout.

But a storm had passed over Beyrout a short time previously—an almost unknown occurrence at this time of the year—and much vapour had remained hanging about Lebanon, which occasionally

fell in heavy and sudden showers. In one of these I was unfortunate enough, by a mischance, to get wet through; and, as there were no means at hand of obtaining dry clothing, the mules and the baggage being out of reach at some miles' distance in our front, I was reduced to stripping myself to the light dress of a cricketer, and drying myself as best I could in the sun and the wind as we rode along. This is not a good plan of proceeding in a hot climate; but I felt no ill effects from it on that day—the first of our journey—nor did I throughout the following day; but on reaching Batrun in the evening, scarcely had I got off my horse when a sensation of cold suddenly passed through me. I was struck with the intermittent fever of the country—the Syrian fever.

And now, as I lay here by Batrun in my tent for six days, the skill of the Sitt—the Hakem of the 'Cambria'—came out with considerable effect, and a very happy thing it was for the Khawaja that the Sitt had a genial and natural turn for doctoring. There was no medical aid within reach—none nearer than Beyrout, a two days' journey—although there might have been some monkish pretender to medicine in one or other of the many monasteries on the mountain slopes. The doctor of Beyrout was sent for, but was unable to come so far; and

thus the Khawaja, unable to ride back to the town, or to proceed, lay in his tent in a critical state; and the skill and courage of the Sitt, left to her own resources, were exposed to a sharp trial.

For six days the Hakem fought a good battle, and, under Providence, she won it—and the enemy was conquered. By dint of pouring into the patient quinine with judicious hand and at due intervals, and port wine at the critical turn of the malady, the Sitt cut down the fever, and set the Khawaja on his legs again—shrunk though they were. In the meanwhile, Bethuni,—the active head muleteer—had gone to Beyrout, and returned in the night of the sixth day of the misfortune, bringing with him a tahterwan—a very primitive carriage—a box, with windows and a bed therein, fixed upon shafts. These shafts project both in front and behind, and two mules between these carry the box through the country over those most atrocious of rocky tracks, called in Palestine by extreme courtesy—roads. After the mules had rested for a few hours, I got into the tahterwan, a mere tottering and wasted spectre, but humbly thankful to Providence to be alive,—as well as happy to leave the hot plain of Batrun—which, we afterwards heard, was a capital and favourite abode of this fever—and started for Beyrout. We left Batrun

about two hours before sunrise, and, with the exception of an hour's halt at Djebail at mid-day, we did not stop till we reached Nahr-el-Kelb at sunset.

Bethuni, who was the most active and willing of muleteers, had ridden from Batrun to Beyrout in one day, forty and some miles—no great feat in a country of roads, but a considerable effort in one of no roads—and brought back the tahterwan in sixteen hours—a great performance. After but three hours' rest, the mules had started again homewards, and now, when they reached Nahr-el-Kelb, we halted them again for two hours—the Sitt, and the mules, all wanted a rest. These mules were two very handsome creatures of their kind, large and powerful and of considerable value, the one which went in the rear being declared to be a very rare beast, and worth a large sum of money. All the safety of the tahterwan, indeed, depends on the cleverness and power of the rear mule, as this animal, placed just behind the vehicle, can see nothing in front of it, and is obliged to follow the leading mule almost, in a manner, blindfold. As the track is always varying, from tolerably level strips of pathway on the edge of cultivated land or on the sea shore sands, to ledges of rock with a path of mere holes worn for each particular step,—or from jagged and ragged places—warranted, one

would imagine, to prevent the passage of any animals but goats—to zig-zags, up and down crags, bad at any time, but to all appearance utterly impracticable for animals with a tahterwan on their backs, the attention of the rear mule is kept always on the stretch, for he cannot tell what the next half-dozen steps may bring him to. My rear mule—a mare—went generally with her head down and her nose close to the ground, by which means she could see under the carriage a little way before her, and her driver—continually by her side—was always talking to her, and telling her what was coming; and he varied the pace for her according to circumstances. When he urged the leader forward by a few sharp words to his companion driver, then she knew the road was good and raised her head, and the pace increased; but the moment he called to his leader to take care—"Oa, oa!"—her head went down, and she was ready for the worst. When the place was bad—more than commonly bad—I could hear the pretty creature snort, and could feel all her careful objections to advance,—and her clever scramblings and narrow escapes as she struggled desperately over it. More than once we came to a stand still, and there was a question if we could get over the place at all. At these, the leading mule was kept carefully in hand, and my

poor rear one was now snorting and hanging back, —and now struggling and skating about the rocks, amidst lots of coaxing and encouraging from her driver—and so, urged by shrill exclamations, and despairing entreaties that she would do her best to get us all out of the scrape, she would make a lurch, and get us down over the apparently impracticable place—nobody knew how, nor how we were at the bottom—everybody taking breath after our escape, and the pretty creature trembling all over from the fright and the exertion. We reached Beyrout before dawn, having been twenty-three hours on the road, and the Sitt—and the German Jungfer as well—having ridden gallantly through the night as well as the day—a great feat for them both.

There is a quiet and a clean little hotel—kept in those days by one Demetri, a Greek, and the most attentive of hosts to a sick man—just outside the town and on the sea-shore; and here we found rest from our trouble. Of course not many hours passed before I was consigned to the care of a doctor, and it was no small satisfaction to the Sitt to be told by this gentleman—Dr. Dobrowolski, a Pole, and held in high repute by the European community at Beyrout as a very skilful practitioner

to be told that she had done her work ably at Batrun,—that she had cut the fever down by her

vigorous measures, and that all that was now left to be done by him was to get the patient strong again. In fact, on a description being given to the said Dr. Dobrowolski of the symptoms and course of the fever at Batrun, it was declared by him, that on the fourth day of the attack things had looked serious. It was clear that, on that day, one scale of the balance of the Khawaja's affairs was rather nearer the beam than was altogether advantageous to a traveller, who had some mundane schemes in hand. Thus did the reputation of the Hakem of the 'Cambria' nobly maintain itself.

At the end of fifteen days the air of Lebanon was recommended as the best restorative of strength, and so, on the last day of June, at dawn, we started a second time for the Lebanon. In an hour or two we began to feel the difference of the mountain air, as we went gradually up. In four hours we reached a Khan, a solitary place on the mountain side, and spread our carpets in the porch, and enjoyed that delightfullest of delightful things after heat and illness, the cool breeze from the Mediterranean and the expanding view over the first slopes of Lebanon. To the north was a long ridge with pine clumps and villages on its summits, among them Beit-meri, a favourite resort of Europeans from the town below, in the summer and

autumn, for the luxuries of mountain air and fresh water. Pretty Beit-meri! To the south was Abeh, a similar place of European retreat from summer heats; and near this was pointed out Hawara, the property of Colonel Churchill. But the scenery of Lebanon somewhat disappoints you. It is very peculiar and scarcely grand, and is unlike any mountain ground of Alps, or Apennines, or Pyrenees. Its common surface, even of the lower ridges, as well as of the higher levels, is, for the most part, of a grey stone and rock lying above the soil; and thus the general aspect of the mountain is cold, and bleak, and repulsive.

Our road lay to the south-east, the scenery sometimes charming, where we looked down into secluded valleys, where villages, amid pine trees, were surrounded by a general cultivation of corn and vines. At other times the scene was one universal bleakness, cold and grey. It strikes you, that there is a resemblance between the face of the mountain and the face of the southern parts of the hill country of Judæ. There is the same cold, still, desolate, stony look. Judæ wears a deserted air, and Lebanon is as though it were a shattered mountain. Did the same Hand which raised up the rock from below, and checked the rains of heaven, and thus condemned the one to barrenness,–

did it strike the other, and blast its heights, that thus its forests have ceased, and its cedars—so that a child may count them?

The roads of the mountain are everywhere execrable. It was said that the people of Lebanon do not wish for better roads—in fact, that they are opposed to any improvement of them—the badness of the communication conducing to the maintenance of their quasi independence; good roads—so it was reasoned—would facilitate the entrance of troops into their hills, and of course bring in their train various innovations—perhaps military stations, and other abominable things of civilised lands. For some years now there has been a firman of the government of Constantinople actually in existence—in the hands of certain authorities at Damascus—a firman ordering a road, a real road for wheeled carriages, to be made between Damascus and Beyrout, through the Lebanon. But the firman exists, and that is all. When the carrying it into execution is called for by those interested—the merchants of the city and of the port on the two sides of the mountain—then comes the difficulty—where is the money? The money—£50,000 sterling is the estimated cost of this road—has for years, and every year since the issuing of the firman, been promised to be forthcoming—next

year. Next year arrives, and then this exact sum of fifty thousand pounds is always wanted in the nick of time for the Mecca pilgrimage; and as this great religious expedition must be provided for before everything else, and as the pilgrimage gulps down its holy throat the entire sum, the road must wait till—next year. Each year this same little game is played, much to the satisfaction of the mountain, as well as of the vested interests—such as muleteers, owners of donkeys, and all the race of worthies who profit by primitive inconvenience.

We descended into the Vale of Bekaa—partially cultivated, here and there—but what a scene of agricultural wealth might be this valley, broad and well watered, in western hands!—and, turning sharp up it to the north by its western side, at the foot of Lebanon, we rode through Maalaga to Ain-el-Teen, at the foot of Jebel Makmel—the snow-covered ridge of Lebanon. Here we pitched our tents by the walnut trees and the flowing stream, and in the morning rode up to the top of the ridge. How fine is the view from that height! You command the whole circuit from the Mediterranean on the west, and Palestine and Mount Hermon—snow-capped—to the south, over the whole range of the Anti-Lebanon to the east and north. You ask for Damascus—and you strain your eyes in the direc-

tion of Palmyra—and then you say—"Where are the cedars?" "There the cedars," replies Selim. "Where?" "There, the trees." And he points to a little black spot—about as big as your hand—right down below you at a mile or two distance—out in the middle of the white, stony, barren ground, a great level place almost enclosed in an amphitheatre of the ridges of the mountain. What a disappointment! You expect an upland grass-grown vale of Lebanon—a glen such as those you rode through the day before, and you picture to yourself the trees—the noble and far-spreading and patriarchal trees—standing scattered on the green turf, and covering an extended space of country—and, behold! you find a few trees in a clump, on a bare white plain.

But you are paid for your disappointment when you get down to the cedars, and ride into the clump. You are, at one moment, on the barren and stony desert, where the glare of the sun is painful to your eyes—and, in the next, you are suddenly transported—Home. You are no longer in the burning east—amid deserts and on arid mountain tops—but your foot is on soft turf, short and mossy—and chequered shades are all around you — and the scent of the cedar fills the air and your charmed sense with old familiar odours. More than all these, there is a

breathing in your ears—the sigh of the fir woods—that peculiar and rather mournful sound which is heard in no other wood or place, and it carries all your thoughts away to old remembered haunts far off. How soothing it is. There is no song of birds about you, and not a cry of animal—not a murmur of living thing, — nothing except the sighing of the melancholy air among the trees. But you do not wish it otherwise—for as you sit by one of the great trees, so ancient, in some secluded dell, the breathing whisper is as the voice of the Unseen, who ever dwells there—in the now long repose of the sacred retreat—the Unseen of the elder days.

So you spend some hours of the day within that small remnant of the glories of the forest of Lebanon; and you forget within its shades, and in its dell—whence you cannot see its limited border—how very circumcribed the little circle is. You pass all the mid-day at your ease, and untormented—if you are in luck—by monks from the convent of the village on the mountain side below—for there was only one old man there to open the door of the rustic chapel—and then, in the evening, you ride back up over the ridge of Jebel Makmel and the snow, and down to Ain-el-teen, and your tents in that romantic glen by the walnut trees.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Syrian Season—Baalbec—The Anti-Lebanon—The Ride to Damascus—The Outskirts of Zebdeni—Selimand Mook-el Deen—Justice in Syria—Damascus.

THERE is serious inconvenience and even loss to the traveller in Syria, who attempts to get through that country later in the season than May. Even in that month the heat is sometimes such that his day's work is cut up and spoiled by it, and he is forced to travel by fits and starts, late and early, to the utter destruction of all the beautiful virtues, so dear to the English bosom, of regularity and precision. But if he tries to ride through it in the leafy month of June, or in fruitful July, his day is turned into night, for the sun orders him to stay at home and sleep, or cuts him down without much ceremony if he disobeys orders. And here is his loss, and a

considerable loss it is. Being no longer able to ride during the hours of the sun, the traveller lies all day long idly, existing as well as he can in the motionless and oppressive air of his tent — his only chance of varying the noon-tide hours of torpor being the neighbourhood of some village town of interest wherein he can find cool shade and occupation. When evening comes he revives, and the restored man emerges as a snail from its shell; his tents are packed — he gets on his horse—the sun sets quickly, and he pushes forward through the cool night.

It is pleasant to pitch your tent by the walnut trees at Baalbec—nothing but the moat and the rivulet separate you from the temple of the sun—and to rest at your leisure and free from care for forty-eight hours after four or five days of pretty sharp work for a convalescent. It is pleasant to talk in the heat of the day in the door of your tent with the native men, who stroll about your camp and who tell you of Ibrahim Pasha, the warrior, when he stationed his troops of Egypt in their fortress encampment at Baalbec; or with the women, who come by you on their way from the town up on the mountain slope on your right hand down to the Arab village on the plain on your left,—for

your tents are by the public pathway, and the Sitt invites the women in that she may look at their dark eyes and fine teeth, and enquire about their children—so many of them but young children themselves, scarcely in their teens and yet mothers—young, without youth and and its freshness. It is pleasant, as the sun sinks, to cross that moat and the brook in your front, and stroll along the noble portico and majestic colonnade, which time and the fatal earthquake have pityingly spared,—and to enter the elaborately sculptured portal of the temple, and try with the aid of other men's wits to penetrate the mystery that hangs round those buildings and the names of the builders—how much did Solomon do?—or did he do any of this work at all?—and how much did the Emperors of Rome? —It is pleasant to wander along the edge of the bounding moat, and give up your mind to astonishment at the titanic substructions of the fortress temple—colossal works stupendous, and which force upon you thoughts of Egypt and recollections of the masses of the Amunoph and Remeses statues at Thebes—the comparison making you think, that only the times and the minds which conceived and brought forth such stupendous works in the one country could have inspired the giant work in the other. And you ask yourself—if such great things

are ever done twice by man—so rarely capable of greatness?—It is pleasant too when the moon shines, to go round about all this place of spectral grandeur—to tell the stones thereof—and to walk over its silent and deserted courts, and mark the long shadows of the giant columns—and then, your thoughts filled with all its mystery and all its beauty, to go home to your tent and sleep—and dream of Titans.

We started for Zebdeni and Damascus at sunrise, and rode into the Anti-Lebanon. But this mountain range is of a much lower elevation than that of the Lebanon, and our road lying along ground not much raised above the plain of Bekaa, the heat in a short time became intense—too severe for the Sitt.—Some large and shady trees appearing a little way off our road, and a well of fresh water being near them where some shepherds were watering their flocks, we pulled up for the rest of the day, and towards evening set forward for a night ride to Zebdeni. The country was not striking, and indeed was very inferior to that of the Lebanon in scenery, but it was much more generally cultivated. We rode for six hours, there being an early moon; and as long as this lasted we did very well, our road lying at first over low sweeping hills, and then

descending into a green and wooded valley and following this for some miles along the bank of the noisy and rushing Barrada—the Pharpar of story. But about midnight the moon went down, and we were left to get along as we could.

On this our second start for a ride to Damascus, Selim had engaged, as our chief muleteer and guide and manager, a man called Mook-el-deen—Bethuni, alas! during my illness, had gone back to Jerusalem. Now, Mook-el-deen, on our leaving Beyrout, rode a small horse, much too slight for his great limbs and bulky body, and he, notwithstanding many hints on the matter, considered that his proper place was in our front, and that there he ought to ride. But this man and horse were a painful sight to me as we rode up the mountain-side. The little dun mare he was mounted on went rolling about, stumbling and scrambling over the rocks and staircases and varied impracticabilities of the way, loudly and coarsely sworn at by her burly rider, and beaten perpetually—savagely punished for what she could not help—her weakness. This was a bad beginning of Mook-el-deen, and during some hours there arose and grew in my heart a wish—that the little dun mare would fall down one of the staircases, and break just so much of Mook-el-deen's neck as would insure him a safe

passage over the Styx under the careful management of our old friend Charon. But at last—as this kind of wish is considered, in these days, to be very blameable, and much to be condemned, and also to be injurious to the better nature of the man—Mook el-deen—his conduct not altering on our mild suggestions, and the dun mare not sufficiently falling—was ordered to ride behind us, where his oaths and his blows made the countenance of Selim angry and more dark than usual. Subsequently, as we were approaching Ain-el-teen, the glen of romance, Mook-el-deen added to his sins by personal rudeness to the Khawaja; and now, on this night of our ride from Baalbec to Zebdeni, this man, as usual our leader and guide, did not reduce the amount of his offences by improved conduct. The other men were all gone on in front with the baggage; and when, after midnight, the moon went down, we were obliged to trust to Mook-el-deen for our road in the dim light. He rode in our front, and in the bad light the little dun mare seemed less able to get along than by day. Her rider was in a worse temper than usual, and so he loitered along, deaf to all our entreaties to get forward, and replying to Selim's reproaches only with growls. At last, at nearly three hours after midnight, we reached a grass common, on the out-

skirts of Zebdeni, where the tents were ready for us.

Now I had frequently desired that the mules should be picketed at a certain distance from the tents, so that the sleep of the weary should not be robbed, as was sometimes the case, by the sharp chorus of the mule's bells at all kinds of untimely hours. On reaching Zebdeni, I found the animals all roped in a line in the forbidden vicinity of the tents, and so told Selim to order them all back a good distance. Sitting by the tent door, I heard him speak to Mook-el-deen, and the big muleteer reply angrily, as he stood in a group of figures in the dusky light—it was just beginning to dawn. Then followed Selim's imperious tone of command, and then Mook-el-deen's defiance—"Who are you to order me?" A heavy blow succeeded to this in an instant, and then two or three more—and then I could distinguish much scrambling and confusion—heavy blows—a fight. One of the men came running up to me from the screaming group, praying that the Khawaja would come and stop the fight; and from the tent behind came some one else, to ask the same. But the Khawaja did not move. To tell the truth, I was much pleased with the state of things; I felt quite sure that Selim, who was a powerful and muscular man, and, more-

over, fond of fighting, would lick Mook-el-deen soundly, the latter, although a larger and heavier man, being loutish and not active. This was my first consideration. And the next was, that the little dun mare and I owed Mook-el-deen a long score of bad treatment—she, poor thing, a sum untold of savage and unceasing ill-usage—and I—did I not owe to him all those evil wishes about his neck, and the mental pain of his blows and brutality—his acts of rudeness, and the loitering journey that very night? Did the mare and I not owe him all this?—and was not Selim our paymaster?

"But Selim will be hurt," said the Sitt. "Well," (and here was the Khawaja's third consideration)—"well, and if Selim is hurt—if he does get from Mook-el-deen a sharp facer or a heavy body blow—what then? Did I not warn the Egyptian at Beyrout against this Mook-el-deen?—and did he not take him, against my wish and advice, and out of his own pride?—and has Selim not brought all this trouble on me, and on himself?—and must not pride have a fall?—and must not I have some compensation for all this?" I looked at the matter in the light of a primitive court of justice, in which I was the injured person, and the two combatants were, each in turn, the wielders of the avenging sword. When Selim struck in handsomely and the

burly Mook-el-deen reeled, were not the dun mare and I recompensed for our mutual wrongs? If Mook-el-deen planted on Selim a staggering blow and the Egyptian tottered, was not the muleteer my avenger for scorned opinions and hours of suffering?

It did not take half the time which has been expended in recording these impartial reflections, to bring the contest to an end. To a sharp struggle, and much vociferation, and some dull heavy blows succeeded the sound of a fall of ponderous bodies—and then the confusion of raging voices was great. Whichever was undermost, clearly there was a judicial act performed in my favour, and the fall was a fall inflicted by the hand of justice. There was justice in Syria. Presently Selim—his dress in much disorder and dirty with mud, his embroidered jacket torn, one foot minus a shoe, and his turban all awry—hurried up to us, breathless, but trying to smooth the ruffled plumes of his dignity. "Well, Selim, have you licked him?" "I putting him in the ditch, master." "Well done!" "I beating him well—Mook-el-deen bad man." "So I told you at Beyrout." "He better man now when come beating." "It would have served you right for bringing such a fellow, if he had beaten you." So we walked

towards the place of the fight, and met Mook-el-deen coming with his men. The big muleteer was without his head-dress—his clothes all rent and muddy—his face begrimed—a despoiled man. On seeing me he began a loud lamentation and charge against Selim,—"Selim was a very bad man, and had beaten him." "Teiib, I am glad of it." "He threw me into the ditch—all water—look, what he has done." "It served you right; I hope he will do it again the next time you behave so ill (growls of distress from the disgraced Mook-el-deen). Now go to your mules, and mind you put them far away from the tents." Selim interpreted these consoling sentences to the muleteer, who went away, beaten and humbled, to his mules, followed by his abashed men; while the Egyptian went to hunt for his shoe, somewhere in the wet ditch into which the combatants had fallen in a close embrace, the muleteer undermost. Mook-el-deen was a better man on the next day, and all things went better, and everybody in the camp was more cheerful and happier than usual—all which, does it not show that the doctrines of the never-to-be-broken-Peace party are fallacious, and that occasional war—between persons or peoples—*parvis componere magna*—is a part of the natural course of human affairs—a beneficial act, and productive of virtuous happi-

ness? Does it not show, that whenever the world shall submit to the tame ruling of the men of uninterruptable peace, we shall fall—helpless and without resource—in the national and private highways of life—perpetually into the hands of imperious Selims or of brutal Mook-el-deens?

We left Zebdeni in the afternoon,—Zebdeni, rich in gardens of every fruit, lying in its valley of abounding wealth of various produce and watered by the rushing Barrada; we rode through the night, and in the morning reached the bare hills at the brink of the mountain line of the Anti-Lebanon—the pitch of Jebel Salhieh. Behold—Damascus!—suddenly and unexpectedly—Damascus, the City of Praise—lay at our feet. We arrived at the verge of the slope at the moment the sun was rising above the plains behind the city, and all the minarets and domes were glittering in the first rays. That scene—what a splendid scene it was, and never to be forgotten—the sun just rising in that pure and cloudless sky, and sending his beams, yet soft and tender—not fierce and terrible, as in a few hours more—upon that lovely city lying at the mountain-foot, and stretching out—an oasis—a brilliant spot of minarets and trees and gardens—for a mile or two upon that immense, that boundless plain of sand. The line of Lebanon ran sharply

along to our right and left; and all away in our front—north and east, and south—was the Wilderness. And as we looked down towards the south—right away towards Mecca, over that white and still Desert—how familiar to us seemed the Arabian waste, and how it invited us to renew the past days of travel. Did it not tell us of Aboo El Haj and Beshara, and of the ancient chief, Aboo Keleh—of Sinai and Petra—and of the Sitt and the Khawaja, companions of our Desert life? To the left of the rising sun, in the north-east, lay Palmyra, where the shades of Zenobia and Longinus yet linger round the ruined places of their greatness; and northward, far beyond, was Babylon.

CHAPTER XX.

The Eastern City—The Derveesh—Bedridden Hassan—Banking at Damascus—Three Thousand Piastres—Simple Arithmetic—Houses of the Jews—Maimouné in the Bath—A Vision of Beauty—The Universal Language—Charming Esther.

DAMASCUS! How is the City of Praise the Eastern City! Here nothing breaks in upon your Arabian dream as you stroll from bazaar to bazaar, so shaded and yet so brilliant with all the many-hued goods of the colour-loving people,—and from street to street, so still; and you think what gardens of the Peri there are concealed from Giaour eye within those long, high, dead, all-unrevealing walls. Here the Derveesh sits, utterly bare of clothing, on the shop-front of the trim Damascene in the straight street, fondled by the owner of the shop, and kissed by the brilliant passers by—a fanatic in all the

license of honoured fanaticism. Here is the shop of Bedridden Hassan, the pastrycook; and you stop with the Sitt and eat cream-tart, and as you eat you expect the little Agib and Schaban to walk in, and eat too. Here you stand in the shady gallery of the great Khan of Assad Pasha, and watch, by the hour, the quaint figures just come in over the Deserts from the far East; and are half inclined to ask that merchant, just arrived from Bagdad—"Is all well at Bagdad?—and the great Haroun—does he reign still?—and Giafier—is he yet Visier?—and the house you live in—is it not the young man of Mossoul, who entertained the two unknown ladies, and had his hand cut off for the supposed murder of one of them?

The banking business is carried on at Damascus in a primitive way. Of course it is. Would any one have money matters, or any other matters, transacted in that Oriental city as in some dull, plodding, methodical, cheque-ridden, book-bridled, and routine-saddled house of business of Rome or Paris, or ledger-loving London? One day I had occasion to ask for a small sum of money on a letter of credit on a banker of Beyrout. I was directed first to the Vice-Consul of an European power. This gentleman read the letter, and gave me an order on a merchant in a certain khan. In a small

and empty bare closet, in a corner of the gallery of the said khan, I found the merchant. He read the order, but he did not pay me the money; but he took from his desk—a desk and a chair composed the furniture of the closet—a little clean slip of paper, and on this he wrote half-a-dozen Arabic words, and directed my guide to take me to a certain man in a certain quarter. My guide led me to another khan, and here, in the middle of the court—people and bales of goods were here and there—sat a grey-bearded man, alone, at a diminutive table. His dress was a grey cloak and a white turban. "This man will pay you the money," said my guide." "This man? Is this man the banker?" "If you give him the bit of paper, he will give you the money."

I gave him the slip of paper, when he at once opened his drawer in the table, took out a bag, and turned out on the table a heap of small thin pieces of copper silvered over—piastres of Damascus, worth about twopence each. The order was for three thousand piastres, and the grey man commenced counting them. "Two—four—six—tamanyat—aashrat—athnaashar." "But," said I, "have you no pieces of ten and twenty piastres—have you no medjidis?" "None—twenty-six—twenty-eight ——" "Stop—stop," I cried, "for

heaven's sake, stop; why, we shall never get through these three thousand piastres in a day." "I have nothing else," said the grey man, leaning back in his chair, and looking placidly at me, but with a look which expressed plainly enough—"Allah kerim—God is merciful—this is money—what would you have?" There was no help for it; so I sat down on a bale of goods by the table, while the old man went on—"Thalateen, athneyn—wa—thalateen, arbaa—wa—thalateen"—and so on.

Here, methought, is a curious way of receiving thirty pounds; here I must sit by this greybeard, listening to his arbaaeen—khamseen—and so on, for heaven knows how long, while he counts over all that heap—three thousand twopences: besides how am I to know that he counts right? I must count too; so I struck in before he got to a hundred. My guide, who was the clerk to the said European vice consul, and who had been charged to see that I had the money all right, he looked over the man and pretended to see to his counting correctly. But the thing was beyond and utterly past all human patience. The clerk and I did very well, as far as attention went, till we came to five hundred; but then he began to flag, as well he might. I held on up to six hundred steadily, but as the grey man counted in Arabic and I counted in English, his

counting did not help me a bit, but rather put me out; and so when he pushed over the sixth little heap of a hundred twopences, and stroked his beard, and took breath, I was fairly out of the reckoning and had not arrived at the six hundred. But how was it possible for me to say so? If I had said, that's wrong, by Jove—there are only five hundred and ninety-two—why, we should have had to go over the whole thing again from the beginning. Mashallah—God forbid!

On he went again with fresh vigour—Athneyn—arbaa—setat—thamanyeh—aashrat—his beard we stroked, and himself much recruited thereby. The clerk started afresh too, following him in a low tone, and I went on in English. But, by degrees, the little thin pieces, as they slipped out on the table from the handful of coin in his left hand through the fingers of his right, became more and more difficult to follow; and the monotony of the Arabic numerals and that of the clerk's low voice mumbling after him, and the fact of they and I getting more and more wide apart in our several countings every minute, all this made the thing so absurd, that I gave in before we reached the first thousand, quite beaten and out of breath. So did the clerk, and went off to look about him; and thus we left the grey man to go on by himself with

his labour of Hercules. Of course he will cheat me like anything, I thought to myself; and how am I to count over all those heaps of twopences to find him out? I shall make the clerk of the vice-consul do it; but of course the clerk, if he's a sharp fellow, will count about half the sum and then swear it's all right—and I shall be just where I was.

But, after all, is not this a novelty, methought, in the way of giving cash on a letter of credit? And must not a traveller lay his account with novelties? What else does he travel for, except to see novelties, and to learn curious things, and to make bed-fellows of strange people and their ways? And must not a man put by his own ways for their ways? Besides, what have I to do? Here is a man who does not care for time—then why should I? This was a soothing reflection to one of the everlastingly hurrying and jostling race of the west; —nobody in Damascus cared for time — then why should I?—and was it not in the regular course of things that in this city where such strange events had been enacted in all times—where Danhasch and Maimouné had played their nightly pranks, perhaps with the ancestors of that very grey beard before me—where men of the elder world had dwelt,

prophets and sages, men of the days of the magicians of Egypt—was it not natural that there should be a different way among these people of doing things—of living their life and of paying their money—from those of any other place? Perhaps this was the way of conducting business in the days of the Sultans of Bagdad—or when Sennacherib ruled over Damascus—or when Remeses the great was king. Had not Damascus earned the right of eldership among the cities of the world, to do as she liked and have ways of her own? Was she—the ancient of ancients—was she, who had gone on for ages and ages, thoughtless of time and ignorant of the cares of precision and unmoved by the troubles of speed—was she, the elder of days, now to submit to these new things, to the miserable rules of hurrying strangers of young-customed and presuming giaours?—Mashallah — God forbid!—Let us stand upon the ancient ways when we can!

These reflections were very comforting, as I sat there on the bale of goods in the Khan for an hour or two with this old grey man counting away with unabated perseverence and going on regularly up to the hundred, all through, every time—not counting by tens or twenties—but working steadily on from two, four, six, up to ninety-six, ninety-eight—a hundred—and then moving off the little heap,

checking it off on a bit of paper, refreshing himself with a stroke of his beard—and then on again. At last he came to an end; and tied up my three-thousand piastres in a bag, much to the relief of all three of us. When, on my way home, I hinted to the clerk that I thought the grey man had counted wrong, he quietly and orientally assented—"Perhaps he has." Having a curiosity to know how much I had lost by this early Assyrian mode of doing money business, I poured out my heap that night on a table and counted it over carefully with the aid of the Sitt, and found it short by forty five piastres. But how could I go and declare this to the Vice Consul and the exhausted clerk, and have it all counted over again? Besides this consideration, I came to the conclusion that the old man was very good-natured, and very moderate not to take more, even supposing that he had not, as was possible, done his best to give me honestly all the money, and had not erred, against his will, in that everlasting fingering of those slippery little thin two-penny pieces, called piastres.

We were told that the houses of the Jews were among the most beautiful and the most richly-ornamented in Damascus; and, accordingly, one afternoon we went to see one or two of the most re-

markable. The usual low small door from the street was pierced in the high dead wall—the wall might, perhaps, have been of Lebanon marble beneath, as many are, but the coat of customary mud-wash covered the whole face—and we were invited by a woman, on our knocking at the little door, to enter. Two or three female servants were in the first small court within, and one of them led us across another small court to a door. Opening this, she told us to enter and see the house at our leisure, and walked away back to her fellows. We went through, and were in the large and beautiful court—perhaps forty yards long by twenty in breadth—paved with various marbles, from among which sprang, here and there, dwarf acacias, and enclosed by handsome buildings, painted gaily in broad lines of various colours. In the centre was a large, oblong, white marble basin, its sides rising some three feet high above the pavement, and filled with water—a basin thirty feet long.

We entered—but, as we entered this delicious paradise—this interior of the Palace of the Genii—lo! a figure was in the water in the marble basin. Was it sweet Maimouné in her bath?—or was it the Lady of Beauty? No—it was the figure of a large man with a black head; and in a moment—without a word—before we surprised gazers could

turn and fly this vision of the bather, he leaped over the low side of the basin, and catching at a diminutive towel that lay there—the most diminutive of imaginable towels—he cast it—how ineffectually—round his bulky person, and fled swiftly; and without looking back, the natural man fled up the long court to the elevated place, the Leewan, at its extremity, and disappeared through a door.

But shocked at this our untimely intrusion on the family privacy, we, recovering from our surprise, went out again; but the woman, seeing this, cried out—"No, no—go in—it is nothing—the master taking a bath." We went in—as how could we do otherwise?—on this assurance—that it was nothing thus to disturb the good man of the house as he was taking his afternoon swim at his ease, in the court of his house, in the cool of the day. Of a certainty, the Hebrew gentleman had shown us great politeness by his conduct, and if we now went away he might condemn us as wanting in politeness towards him, and, moreover, as ignorant of the customs of Damascus. We stayed—and as we walked along the side of the beautiful court, in admiration of the charmed place, the Sitt doubtful all the while whether a vision from the Leewan might not startle us again, we passed an open door, and, looking in, behold!—in a handsome room, a

lady lying on a carpet among many cushions, and playing with her children, one of them two years old, and the other in her arms, an infant. She rose directly, and invited us in with a few words and a smiling face. She was singularly beautiful—of course she was—for was not this lady the Jewess Esther—the loveliest woman in Damascus—whose praises we had often heard, and whom we had thus come on by surprise and by accident?

Esther deserved her fame. Her face was oval and the features fine and delicate, the nose rather long and the mouth and chin slightly retiring, but the eyes were brilliantly fine and dark, while the complexion was red and white. She was rather above the middle height, her figure full and well-formed, and on her head and worked in among the luxuriant brown hair she wore a fanciful dress imitating ivy leaves and fruit, with clusters of pearls and clusters of diamonds hanging among the leaves and fruit. Was Esther dressed thus to receive company and expecting them?—No, this was scarcely the case, as her husband in the basin was something less than prepared to bid friends welcome. Probably it was Esther's daily pleasure to adorn that fine person richly, and to decorate that beautiful head according to her fantastic fancy, as a part of her usual and daily life. This day she

had done but as on other days, and had chosen a white and gold-spangled robe of gauzy texture, and over it she wore an open tunic of yellow silk, all easy and unconfining and yet so tell-tale of the form beneath.

The heart of the Sitt always warms towards a child, and so when the smiling woman gave her infant into the hands of a female attendant, and came forward to meet us,—the sturdy little Hebrew boy standing there in nothing but his spare white cotton shirtee, almost as nature made him, and staring with his great dark eyes at the strangers,—and the first exchange of words in Italian had passed between the ladies,—the Sitt was soon, amid caresses of the children and the smiles of the mother, earnestly engaged in talk with both the one and the other. Esther and the Sitt were soon fairly within the boundaries of that charmed world of airy and yet important nothings, where woman alone can enter in and where she finds other beautiful and loving spirits, and is at home. Esther's command of Italian was but limited; but there is a language which never fails, and in this the mother and the children and the Sitt found free and eloquent communings. But soon we took our leave, and Esther winningly invited us to see her house at our leisure. We

wandered about unattended from one handsome apartment to another, all opening on to the noble court and all richly ornamented with various inlaying of marbles, and with stalactite stone-work, and with rare and perfumed woods—but we carefully avoided a certain door on the Leewan at the extremity of the court. And as we returned from these places so worthy, in their richness of ornament and their beauty, of their brilliant mistress, and came to thank Esther for all her courtesies, we found her with coffee and sugar-plums ready for us, and with smiles on her beaming face, and musical words in her broken Italian. Charming Esther! She was a noble specimen of the Hebrew woman—of that most ancient and storied race.

We left Damascus at midnight by the Bab Ganyat, and rode through the Anti-Lebanon on that and the following night to the Plain of Bekaa. Crossing this, we went over the heights by Jebel Far-Silwan, and by the villages of Metan and Korneyl-Ebzebdan, to the pretty mountain village of Beit-Meri, on the westernmost ridge of Lebanon, looking down on Beyrout and the blue Mediterranean. Here we pitched our tents beneath the shade of fir-trees, and hard by the house where the British Consul-General, Mr. Moore, with

his family, our most kind friends, were residing, far above the heats of Beyrout. Here we enjoyed their pleasant society, and the *dolce far niénte* after our travel.

CHAPTER XXI.

It would appear to be a presumption, and something more, in a mere writer of travel to attempt—where so many and such powerful writers are daily giving to the public their able comments on what is passing in Turkey, and their matured opinions on the meaning and the objects of the war—to say anything new, or worthy of attention, on such great subjects as the political present and the political future of that country, and the contest in which we are engaged. Yet, at the same time, it does appear, also, as if to complete a book on the East without some little word, some little expression, about the meaning of this war, its causes, and the prospect of its action on the East, would be an

omission. What a traveller may have to say on these subjects may be worth reading, or it may not; but the following is only offered—as a sort of duty to the book—to avoid an omission. When I was in Syria in 1851, there was, it was said by Europeans resident there, a general feeling among the native populations, that a change of some kind was at hand—a great political change. Some said, that the English were coming to take Syria; some, that the Sultan would soon have but a choice of action—to become a Christian, or lose his throne; others, again, that Mahometanism was exhausted—its day of influence over the higher classes past and gone—that its power over the populations was going too, and its fall was at hand. There was certainly an expectation that something momentous was about to happen. It is not pretended to say that the coming event of the war cast its shadow before; but a very cursory glance at the state of Turkey just before this war, would be sufficient to show that there was ground for a general uneasy feeling—for an expectation of something momentous to Turkey, and especially to Syria.

It is scarcely needed to tell plain men, that when a state, or an interest, which is side by side with other states, or other interests, ceases to act in accordance and harmony with its neighbours, one

of two things must happen—either it must sway them, or they will sway it. If it is strong enough, it influences their action,—if not, they bend its movement. Thus, whenever the neighbouring interests become the stronger, they begin by attacking the weaker interests in their path, first indirectly, and then directly—after each step, advancing a step,—and after each victory, going on to another. By degrees, the alarm of the coming attack and coming defeat spreads among the weaker party—an alarm of greater things to come—and thus 'coming events cast their shadows before.' The fear of some event is in peoples' minds.

So it was with Turkey before the war. Turkey had for many years been a state lying on the border of states stronger than herself. Her interests and their interests had continually clashed, and by degrees the stronger had influenced the weaker. But the day arrived that Turkey became of more concern to Europe than she had been, and then the opposing interests came into still stronger collision, and these or those must succumb. Turkey had lately lost, bit by bit, portions of her empire,—Algiers, Greece, Egypt in a degree, the Caucasus the same, the Principalities the same; and her hold over other provinces, such as Montenegro, Tunis, and part of Syria—the Lebanon—had become but

a slight one; and she seemed to have no power to resist any attempt of these latter provinces, or others, to throw off her yoke by revolt, or of other powers, to take them from her. Her mode of tenure was such, that it inspired no confidence,—but, on the contrary, a disposition to revolt.

In the midst of this general weakness,—the result of the hostile interests of the East and the West clashing more and more, and the stronger overcoming the weaker by the common law of human affairs—in the midst of this state of things, England, the great commercial nation of the world, found that Egypt was the most convenient highway for her commerce with India, and therefore her necessary highway. The date of the Indian transit through Egypt was the shadow of Turkey's coming event. Up to this time, Turkey, generally, and Egypt and Syria, in particular, had been but little visited by Europeans. Turkey was not yet one of the family of nations, and her interests had been but partially of western concern. But now all this was to change.

No Englishman will deny, what I have frequently heard foreigners of ability declare, that England carries with her in her enterprises, political and social, a greater moral and material power than any other nation now existing, and even than

any other nation that ever did exist. Indeed, where is the nation that has ever carried into a country the moral force that England can—the absolute liberty of thought—the freedom and light of Christianity—the amount of practical science—the cultivated learning—the political knowledge—the love of industry;—and this combined with her material strength—her wealth, her teeming commerce, her military force,—and, last but not least—her never yet equalled navy?—And was it possible then, that a power such as this should use her highway to India through Egypt without making her influence felt by the nations by the wayside?—Was it possible that her spirit of liberty, her press, her unsuperstitious religion, her commerce, her wealth and science, could pass and repass daily through Egypt and tread in the ways of Syria and Palestine,—these great old countries, till now dark and silent—without penetrating their darkness, and illuming them with her light—without bursting into their silent places, and making her voice to resound in them?

Thus it has been in Turkey. The moral and material power of England support each other there, as elsewhere, in a manner that the world has never yet seen hitherto—for where her missionary penetrates, with the open Bible in his hand—symbol

of liberty to the nations—there follows soon her press, with the voice that proclaims man's freedom; and in their train come her riches, and her want-supplying trade, and her countless ships, in proof of her supporting power; and thus the missionary is in the East, and the strength of Mahometanism is breaking down; the merchants of England are there, and the old commercial habits of Egypt are undergoing a change. In Syria, in Jerusalem and the cities of Palestine, the people are no longer sitting, hopeless, in darkness and among false gods. The light of the Bible is there, and the whole country is looking to that land and that people whence the light has shone out for them—to that people, too, whose shipping is on all their coasts, whose children pass annually by thousands among them, laden with a wealth that is a marvel—whose children penetrate, as travellers in search of knowledge into every corner of their land—and, lastly, who show, by their use of their power and their riches, that with them Liberty is not a mere word—that Religion is not with them a cloak to all mean designs—and that their wealth and their power are used nobly, as God intended they should be used, for the benefit of the wide world. All these were the shadows of the coming event, and all this was taking place when the war opened.

Even to-day there are persons in England who declare that it is not known what is the real object of the war, and who lay the cause of it sometimes on one thing, and sometimes on another — on Prussia, on Austria, on the British Ministry,—and who affirm it could have been stopped at Vienna last summer, and can be stopped now any day, as we are fighting for nothing tangible. All this is not equal to the occasion. This war is one between the great conflicting interests of mankind, to be fought out on the soil of Turkey—one of the great wars of the world—one of opinion; and no one act of this or that Minister, or of this or that King, could have prevented a conflict arising out of the struggle between the ideas of the West and the East. Russia has for years proposed to herself to impose on the East her ideas and her system of government, solely for her own advantage, and for purposes of her own sole aggrandisement;—and England has also for some years used all her great indirect powers of the Bible and the press to impress upon this same East her opinions and her views of government—but not for her own sole advantage, and not for any purposes of her own aggrandisement—for England is only the pioneer and the agent of the social and political interests of mankind—but for the increase of the social happi-

ness of the world. Russia has wished to give to Turkey a sealed Bible and a superstition for her religion,—and a cruel despotism with all deception, for a government; and England has desired to give to Turkey an open Bible and a real Christianity for a religion,—and to introduce among that people a better civilisation, a higher sentiment of life, and a knowledge of the uses of liberty;—and these two great conflicting interests have come into collision on the soil of Turkey. Where both these Powers were so great—for Russia is one of the great Powers of the earth—and both were resolute in pushing forward their own views and their own objects, boldly and perseveringly, it was not possible but that the day must come, when a struggle for mastery should take place.

It would seem scarcely possible that a man could be found in England to wish that the scheme of Russia should succeed, and that the object of England should fail—that Russian despotism should extend itself over some of the finest countries in the world, and shut out and quench all the growing light of civil and religious freedom shining out on them from England—shining out from her on those great old countries which have a stronger and a deeper interest for the world, in the hearts of man-

kind, than all others,—the Holy Land, and Arabia, and Egypt. Yet there would seem to be such men even in England, if a plain man may judge of the frequent arguments put forward to try and persuade our country that this war is an unjust war on our part, a war without an object—and that our statesmen could have put an end to it last year, and that they ought to put an end to it now. These men would seem but little to understand, or to feel, the meaning of this contest, or the great interests concerned in it. Let them and the people of England be sure of this—that England is looked on by the eastern nations as their great salvation—that should she now abate her efforts to destroy the scheme of Russia — should she be prepared to terminate this war before she has secured, as far as, with the help of Providence, she can secure the future—the future inability of Russia to carry out her fatal plans — the future ability of England to proceed with her beneficent objects, — she will retreat from the noblest position that any country in all time has ever held upon the earth, and will disappoint all mankind and do it an universal injury.

There are persons who have a strong feeling for Russia in this contest: "Russia must not be injured;" and others who exclaim—"What is to become of Turkey?" We, Englishmen, can only look at these two questions from one point of view. England, whatever may be said by her opponents, is the great leading and improving power of the world. Her pure light of religion — her free action in politics—her free and able press—her wealth of commerce—her spirit of enterprise—her unswerving force of character—her science—her military and naval strength—these, added to her possession of territory in every part of the globe, give her an influence in and over the world which no other power has any pretension to; and she can only look at Russia and Turkey as two great states, which are in a bad social and political condition, and which want reformation. This war is their reformation—and when it is done, there will be a new state of things for both of them. Russia, beaten back from her schemes of aggrandisement, and taught by adversity that she is not so great or so mighty as she thought she was, will do—as men do under such circumstances—she will turn her attention—where it will be soon very imperatively demanded—to her own internal condition, and be a better neighbour to other countries, because more open to their better influences. And Turkey—

saved only from utter ruin by the Western Powers, and unable to maintain herself in her weakened position but by the aid and the presence of Western forces—she, in her state of transition from old dead Eastern things to new living Western conditions of existence, must become, more and more, one of the Western family of nations; in her social habits at home, and in her political relations with them abroad,—whatever the Koran may say to the contrary. Will this be to injure, or to improve Russia and Turkey?

THE END.

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ERRATA.

VOL. I.

Page 132—line 9 from bottom—*for* "Neith's" *read* "Kneph's."

Page 173—line 9—*for* "Siboon" *read* "Siboon."

Page 195—Supply to paragraph "O Eygpt! &c.," line 12, foot note—"Egypte par Champollion-Figeac."

Page 273—line 9 from bottom—*for* "warm, hard stone" *read* "warm sand-stone."

Page 291—line 3 from bottom—there is no stop after "toil," but a semicolon after "life," in the following line.

Page 292—foot note—*for* "Lowth's translation, &c." *read* "Notes to Lowth's translation, &c."

VOL. II.

Page 4—line 4—*for* "ever" *read* "even."

Page 29—line 4—*for* "on the tent near the sand" *read* "on the sand near the tent."

Page 60—line 3—*for* "Nabathoans" *read* "Nabatheans."

Page 128—line 9 from bottom—*for* "El Herr Ramleth" *read* "El Ramleh."

Page 219—line 8 from bottom—*for* "anionted" *read* "antimonied."

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