



THE

DESERT AND THE  
HOLY LAND.



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From the Workers of  
the Minutes of the  
Sabbath afternoon  
Church Service  
to W. John Cunningham  
a Memoir of the  
visit to Dundee -  
5 July 1884



The Desert and the Holy Land.



THE DESERT  
AND  
THE HOLY LAND.

(Second Edition.)

BY  
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AUTHOR OF  
"CLOUDS OF THE BIBLE," "THE MODEL LIFE," "ONE FROM  
THE RANKS," ETC., ETC.



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1882.





To  
SIR PETER COATS,  
AUCHENDRANE,

IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF HIS GENEROUS  
KINDNESS, AND IN PLEASANT REMEMBRANCE OF THE HAPPY AND  
INTENSELY-INTERESTING DAYS SPENT TOGETHER IN  
*THE DESERT AND THE HOLY LAND,*

*This Volume*

IS MOST CORDIALLY INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.



## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.



IN the following pages all controversy as to disputed sites, or about the ancient and modern topography of Jerusalem, has been studiously avoided. Discussions upon these points may be left to the Exploration Committee, whose important labours have been already attended with very gratifying results. I have not attempted to pass beyond the domain of simple narrative and description. Humorous incidents have not been withheld when they tend to illustrate Eastern life and manners, or give variety and interest to the narrative. To some minds this may seem scarcely in keeping with the sacred character attached to certain localities. My object, however, has been to state what I *saw* and how I *felt*, so that this book is nothing more than a record of impressions received and incidents that took place, in the midst of scenes teeming with the most hallowed associations that can appeal to the human heart.

It would be presumptuous for almost any writer on the

East to imagine that he could throw any degree of originality or novelty into his descriptions, further than what may be expected from his own peculiar way of looking at things, and of stating his impressions. I claim nothing more than this for the present volume; and if any apology is needed for its appearance, when so many books exist on the same subject, I can at least refer to the unanimous request for publication made by a large meeting at the close of a series of lectures which I lately delivered on the East.

The journey was quite an era in my life, and afforded me intense delight. The writing out of my Journal for the press has given me almost as much pleasure, for this labour of love has led me again amongst the old and fondly-cherished scenes, though in a somewhat different way. I can truly say with the poet that these sacred localities—

“Have not been to me  
As is a landscape to a blind man’s eye :  
But oft in lonely rooms, and ’mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
And passing even into my purer mind,  
With tranquil restoration.”

The route taken to Palestine was not what may be termed the easy and ordinary one, by sea to Jaffa and thence to Jerusalem, but across the Gulf of Suez, through the Sinaitic Peninsula to the Covenant Altar at Sinai,

and from that by Nakhul to Gaza, on the borders of ancient Philistia; then along the coast to Askelon, and the old seaport formed out of a bit of rugged reef at Jaffa. The route from this embraced the usual places of interest in the Holy Land, with the addition, perhaps, of a few days spent on Mount Carmel.

Prominence has been given to the Desert, and this is a part of the journey which may still possess some features of special interest, even for those who have dipped largely into books of Eastern travel.

GLASGOW, *26th November, 1867.*



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# THE DESERT AND THE HOLY LAND.



## CHAPTER I.

A Rapid Run. Marseilles. Our Fellow Passengers. Sir Moses Montefiore. Caprera. Garibaldi. Malta. Maltese Divers. Sunrise on the Mediterranean. Ships Saluting at Night. Stirring Scene at Landing. Ramleh. Ruins. Sights of Alexandria. Impressions of the Delta.

**T** was towards the end of February, on a bright morning of keen frost, when the Campsie Hills were still streaked with snow, that we left behind us the smoke of the city, and set out to visit the sacred scenes of the East. A few words will carry us over the first stages of our journey. On to London—across the channel to Paris—night train to Lyons, which we pass in the grey dawn—sweep along the vine-clad banks of the Rhone, which every now and then flashes upon our view in winding curves or in long stretches, made glad with fruit-trees already in blossom, till at last we reach the noble maritime city of Marseilles, the gate of the “Great Sea.”

A neighbouring height commands a fine view of the city, its old forts, its spacious harbours, its vast shipping; its grey houses with their red tiles; the mountains that enclose it with their bare chalk cliffs; its six thousand villas, beautifully situated in the well-wooded suburbs; the rocky islands in front that guard this great sea-gate like so many sentinels; the flags of all nations floating in the breeze, which, by the by, is as soft and genial at the commencement of March as the breath of June is at home. These are but a few touches of memory that give only a very faint idea of this splendid panorama. A

prominent feature in it is the new and magnificent palace of the Emperor, a well-merited gift from the citizens; for next to the Capital there is no city in France in which the imperial genius and enterprise for new and spacious streets and magnificent buildings have been of late more strikingly displayed. This glorious view, the fine weather, and the prospect of Eastern travel, send us on board the *Poonah*, one of the Peninsular and Oriental Company's fine steamers, in excellent spirits.

Our ship is a little world in itself; and we are not long on board till we find a great variety amongst the passengers as to social position, profession, history, and character. Some are Indian officers who have been home on furlough, and are now returning to their regiments; some, young men going out to fill important commercial situations in India; some, newly-married couples, and these most sacredly keep by themselves, not collectively, but in single pairs—make no new acquaintances, why should they?—pace the deck most lovingly, and are, of course, as they ought to be, during the honeymoon at least, all the world to each other. God bless them! Their faces are still before us—their confiding looks all sunshine, love, and bright hopes. Not much more than twelve months have passed; what and where are they now? We felt specially drawn towards an old and very venerable-looking gentleman, who was accompanied by a select party of friends. This was the celebrated Jewish philanthropist, Sir Moses Montefiore,\*

\* The following particulars, gleaned from a paragraph that has lately appeared in several newspapers, will be interesting to our readers:—Sir Moses Montefiore, whose Mission to Roumania has just been crowned with success, is upwards of eighty years of age, having been born in 1784. This venerable and honoured Hebrew, who has acquired a world-wide reputation for philanthropy, and his many journeys to distant countries on behalf of the oppressed of his race, has thus crowned the achievements of a noble life. In his eightieth year he undertook a similar mission to Morocco, and was equally successful. His wife Judith died in 1862, without issue, so that Sir Moses has no child to succeed him in his title; but the name of "Montefiore" will always be honoured and respected in England, while his philanthropic labours will be admired by all nations.

who has done so much for the land of his fathers, and who was now on his way to it for the sixth or seventh time. Seldom have we met with a finer specimen of a good old man; and the evening talks we had together on deck about Palestine and the present condition and prospects of the Jews, gave a special charm to that voyage, which will ever be a pleasant memory. He was so liberal and tolerant in his views that controversy was kept at a distance; and had we not heard him addressed at first by his title, when one of his friends spoke to him, we might have taken him for a worthy old Secession minister from the country. He was scarcely ever seen without a Hebrew psalter in his hand, or a book of prayer in that language; and he spoke with great delight of the growing interest that was felt throughout Christendom in his fatherland. Often did he express an earnest desire to improve the condition of his brethren who had found their way to Jerusalem. He was the centre of attraction to all on board, especially to those who were going to that city; and on one occasion, when we were all gathered around him, it was truly affecting to see his old, kindly face glowing with delight as he quoted the words of the prophet from his Hebrew Bible: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. viii. 23).

We had also pleasant intercourse with the friends who accompanied the venerable knight, especially with Dr. Løwe, an excellent Arabic scholar, and with Dr. Hodgkin, an eminent physician. It was with great surprise and sorrow that we heard, on reaching Jaffa, after leaving the Desert, that the latter had died of diarrhœa in that town, and was buried in the cemetery there. This sad event was so trying to Sir Moses that he was obliged to cut short his visit and return home. The good doctor had a fatherly care over our own health; and on parting with him at Alexandria, he gave us

many excellent advices as to the caution that is needed in an Eastern climate ; but we little thought that he was to succumb so soon to that disease about which he warned us with so much characteristic kindness. Sir Moses, in his own printed journal, has borne testimony to the worth of his friend ; and we, too, wish in this passing tribute of respect to add our own stone to the cairn of grateful memories cherished in many quarters in connection with the name of this "beloved physician."

On the day after we left Marseilles we were steaming through the Straits of Bonifacio, with Corsica on the one side and Sardinia on the other. The very name of the former brought up vividly the wondrous career of Bonaparte, that stirred the world to its depths. In the narrowest part of the Straits we seemed to be completely landlocked. It reminded us of the Kyles of Bute, with this great difference, that the scenery in the Straits is much more wild and rugged, and on a grander scale. It was a lovely sail. All eyes were turned towards a small island with shattered peaks, that looked bare and desolate as seen from the deck. On a rising ground, at no great distance from the shore, there is a range of buildings like a farm stead-ing, with extended wings, and more than the usual supply of outhouses. That rocky island is Caprera, and that house is the dwelling of the illustrious patriot, Garibaldi. The excitement of many became intense as the house of the General was pointed out. Several, with glass in hand, rushed to the captain's gangway, although this was understood to be forbidden. The boatswain stood at the extreme bow of the ship, surrounded by a group of passengers. With much enthusiasm he pointed out the house, and spoke in glowing terms of its distinguished occupant. All hearts were touched, and if there was not a loud British cheer, a silent "God bless him !" at least, was breathed by not a few. Next day, when passing a lonely, bare, and rugged island, the boatswain pointed to it as one of the prisons where the late King of Naples had confined political offenders ; and here again our weather-beaten friend referred with honest



pride to the General: "Ay, he smashed the prison doors! That island now looks beautiful. I never passed it without a shudder when the poor fellows were there!"

At midnight our ship's guns were fired and blue lights thrown up. We had reached Malta, made famous by the shipwreck of Paul, and in later times by the history of the Crusades and the Knights. The *Poonah* was to sail early next morning, but surely we might see St. Paul's Bay, some twelve miles off. There was beautiful moonlight to back our resolution, and this in Malta has peculiar charms; but it was after midnight, and there were sundry head-shakings and shruggings of the shoulders, and looks that were far on the other side of persuasive, and hints about banditti and "barbarous people," so the charms of a full moon, added to all the attractions of history, only succeeded with two of the passengers, the writer and his friend.

Having landed, we passed through one massive arched gateway after another, leading to the strong fortifications for which the island is famous. After considerable difficulty we succeeded in getting a conveyance at one of the hotels, and set out for the bay shortly after one o'clock. The fortifications seemed to be endless, but at last we gained the open country, shining all over with white rocks and countless lines of white stone dykes, so that the whole island, gleaming in the moonlight, seemed to be covered with snow. The chill of such a thought was but for a moment; for although it was in March, there was a genial softness in the midnight air, and several clumps of orange trees in front of the hotel were bright with luscious fruit. Any one with time and means at his command might very easily cut the winter out of his year by repairing to this island in cuckoo fashion. The poet sings of that mysterious bird—

"Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,  
No winter in thy year."

As to the "no sorrow" part of that bird's life, man cannot expect to find this anywhere; but if the dreaded winter of the

north is left behind, Malta will welcome the human "bird of passage" to its genial summer clime.

But yonder is the bay. We dismounted, and sat down on the silent shore; and it required no effort of imagination vividly to recall the whole scene of the shipwreck, and the closing crisis of it, connected with this spot, and described in the following words:—"And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the fore part stuck fast and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken by the violence of the waves" (Acts xxvii. 41). Mr. Smith's admirable treatise on the voyage and shipwreck of St. Paul—a treatise remarkable for its profound learning, ingenuity and research—has finally settled the question of the scene of the shipwreck. Confident of this, we sat down on the silent shore and picked up a few pebbles and shells as memorials of our visit. The bay lay calm and like a sheet of silver before us, presenting a striking contrast to the storm which drove Paul and his companions into its boisterous waters. While thus engaged, a half-naked and most uncouth-looking Caliban—for such he appeared to be by moonlight, which made him all the more wildly grotesque and savage-looking—dropped suddenly upon us with noiseless tread, for his feet were bare. Our first thought was of the scriptural expression, "the barbarous people." This specimen, we concluded, must be a descendant. We could not make out a single word of his strange tongue, but by his signs we soon discovered that his great anxiety was to get us to follow him to his wretched cabin at hand, where he wished to do a little stroke of business in his own way. Even at St. Paul's Bay, at three o'clock in the morning, we were not permitted to enjoy in quietness our own thoughts, or to stroll about on the shore, without being importuned and annoyed by a native merchant of a most sinister aspect. We went with him into his hovel, and felt relieved when he offered us some fish teeth, shells and other relics for sale. He was a beauty compared with his wife, and a few rapid purchases

brought us out of their clutches. We felt thankful even for the hurried look we had got of the scene of Paul's shipwreck by moonlight.

On returning, we drove up to a magnificent church with a large dome, all built of beautiful white stone, a few miles from Valetta. This building had the appearance of a mass of silver in the moon's pale beams. It never occurred to us that we could get in to see it at such an early hour—not yet five o'clock—but as we stood in front admiring its fine proportions, several figures, wrapped in the Maltese *faldetto*, came up and glided in at one of the side doors. We followed, and were greatly astonished to find the vast area of the church dimly lighted, priests at the altar, many men and women kneeling on the floor at their morning devotions. The glimmering lights, the early hour, the murmur of many voices at prayer, the black covering worn by the women, had a very striking and, we must confess, an impressive effect. There seemed to be an element of earnestness worthy of a purer faith.

We got into Valetta by six o'clock, and proceeded to examine the immense fortifications, many of them cut out of the solid rock. The lions of Malta would require a volume. The most of our spare time was given to the church of St. John and a few other very interesting buildings. From a high rampart we had a most magnificent view of the harbour and the town, the island stretching all round in dazzling whiteness. The balmy air, the orange-trees laden with their golden fruit, the deep blue sky, without a film of mist or a cloud over-arching this bright gem on the bosom of the sea, formed a very striking contrast to the biting east winds, the smoke, the raw and murky atmosphere, and to what Christopher North used to call the "cut-throat *haar*" of our northern land. Valetta swarms with priests, and some of them have a most forbidding look. On passing through the streets, the language and the dress of the people, the style of the houses, and the delicious climate, announced to us that we were on the threshold of

oriental life, in the transition city between the Eastern and the Western World.

On reaching our ship, shortly before the anchor was raised, we were much amused at the amphibious nature of some Maltese boys, who were all but naked, and who kept paddling about in little boats. They were excellent divers, and with most imploring looks and earnest entreaties they besought the passengers who were looking over the bulwarks to throw pieces of money into the sea. The moment a coin was dropped into the deep blue waters, one of these boys would plunge down head foremost, and in a few seconds bring it up in his mouth. A sea bird could not go down into the depths more gracefully than these young divers. No sooner was the piece of money which they had fished up from the bottom taken from their mouths than they were instantly clamouring for more. There is many a way of earning a penny, but we had never seen it *dived for* before. Whatever amusement, however, this might furnish the passengers, it was a matter of life or death earnestness—a very hard struggle for daily bread—on the part of the poor boys, who really looked half-starved.

After leaving Malta we had some very beautiful sunsets. How rapidly the sun seemed to sink in the ocean, leaving a wide-spread golden radiance, over which the curtain of night was speedily drawn, and the bright stars came out, flashing on the forehead of the sky above the masts and shrouds! Sunrise was still more glorious. In the east the sea was a vast plain of brightly burnished gold, which changed by and by into a dark red. Here and there, on this background of shimmering splendour, lay small clouds that seemed like crimson islands resting on the bosom of this ocean of blood. Then came the golden rim of the great globe of fire, its quivering rays shooting upwards from the deep. By and by a greater breadth of this world of sparkling sapphires shot upwards, and in a little the whole mass of the flaming orb appeared, all sharply cut and clearly seen in the myriad-darting rays of dazzling brightness,

the lower edge still dipping on the wide waste of waters, now made exceeding glorious by such a presence. What was the far-famed "Field of the Cloth of Gold" compared with this? The scene was in some respects even more striking to us than the glorious sunrise which we once witnessed from the summit of the Righi; for although there was the entire absence of the Oberland peaks, the sun seemed to be lifted out of a sea of liquid gold, and drawn up by some invisible hand into the floating clouds above, which looked like so many crimson islands. The god which multitudes of our race had worshipped stood revealed in all his glory. If any form of idolatry is more excusable than another, it is surely the worship of the sun.

When standing on the gangway, in company with a few of the passengers, admiring this sublime spectacle, we made a remark somewhat similar to this, but it seemed to shock one of them as something profane, and the look he gave us was such as he might have bestowed in pity and contempt upon some ignorant and benighted fire-worshipper. His ideas of this grand sight may be gathered from the following ejaculations, which were frequently repeated, and which compelled us at last to give him as wide a berth as we could. We leave out several slang phrases: "Well, 'pon my word, he's doing it in fine style!" "He's a-taking of his Sunday bath!" (it was Sabbath morning). "He's a famous old salt!" "He's well washed, but he's spoiled his complexion!" etc., etc.—Such a sight should either be seen entirely alone, or in company only with kindred spirits.

On the third night after we left Malta, our good ship received a very friendly recognition from another that was passing in an opposite direction, and at a considerable distance. This cordial greeting was made by a fine display of rockets and blue lights on board a return ship belonging to the same company as our own. There must have been a little rivalry, too, as well as kindly salutation, for the ship in the distance continued to

throw up rockets and burn blue lights long after the *Poonah* was exhausted.

All this was very pleasing and suggestive on the wide waste of waters, and made us think of those who were returning home from the far East, and of the friends who were anxiously waiting for their arrival. Many miles lay between the two ships, but neither darkness nor distance prevented the mutual expression of good wishes. By means of our signals we stretched out to one another a long arm to shake hands and to say, "God bless your voyage!" The two ships were soon lost to each other in the darkness, but the feelings which this mode of recognition awakened would continue to throb in many hearts long after the signal disappeared. It was such a touch of genuine feeling as makes the world kin, whether by sea or by land. A chord was struck in the great common heart, which would vibrate for a long time. It does so in our own at this moment as we write these words, and think of the seemingly trifling incident which brought the two ships together in feeling, though actually far apart. God grant that it may be so when this feverish, fitful life is quenched in darkness! May some be left to feel that our feeble light and brief life have not been in vain!

The low-lying coast of Egypt, with its undulating mounds of yellow sand, crept slowly into view. The pilot, who came on board at Malta, now took charge of the ship, and soundings were frequently made, the sailor boys taking great delight in running out and pulling in the line. The site of the old lighthouse of Pharos—the palace of the Viceroy—the fortifications here and there—the minarets and the mosques—the shipping in the harbour—and now and again Pompey's Pillar, seen through openings in the masts, were conspicuous objects. But all our interest in them for the time was lost in a scene of hubbub and confusion, into the midst of which we were thrown all at once, when our ship was fairly over the bar and the anchor dropped. A crowd of canoe-shaped boats came along-

side, everyone containing two or more bearded and bare-legged boatmen, dressed in the picturesque garb of the East, which took not a little management on the part of the wearer to make it behave itself in the presence of foreigners. All these boatmen were jabbering in Arabic, or in some other unknown tongue, at a terrible rate, and using every possible gesture of which the human body is capable, even in such a loose garb, to induce us to employ them to carry the luggage ashore. Take all the verbs in any language you can muster in connection with human uproar, and all these put together and shouted with the greatest emphasis, and by the most stentorian voice, could convey no idea of the Babel strife of this extraordinary scene. A writer, when recently describing the roar of London, made use of the following emphatic words: "hubbub, row, shindy, clatter, rumble, jingle, hammer, bang, clash, howl, squeak, screech, yell, rattle, whistle, gurgle, rush, hullabaloo!" and something like all these sounds intensified and rolled into one great Arabic guttural, accompanied with the prodigious power of oriental gesticulation, assailed us the moment the crowd of boats reached the side of the ship. When the boatmen came on board and seized the luggage to carry it off; and when they commenced to fight, and sprawl, and bawl, and howl, and roar, and shout, and struggle, and dance, and scream, and jump, and yell, and pull, and push, and tug, and rush about like furies, throwing their arms wildly around, and all but coming to hard blows; and when—as victory seemed to tremble in the balance—the screaming became still more discordant, baffling any achievement of human lungs since the dispersion at Babel, the scene was one which set all description at defiance. It was our first taste of Eastern life, at which we stood for a time thoroughly bewildered.

There was even a fiercer renewal of hostilities when our luggage reached the shore. The combatants rushed on pell-mell, and wildly fought for the bags, portmanteaus, and boxes, as if these had been their own. All this was a matter of course

to them ; it was needless to get angry ; it was far better to let them fight it out in their own way, although we feared our hapless luggage would be torn to pieces when so many hands were pulling at this strap and the other ; so we sat down on a stone and laughed outright at the strange *melée* of arms, and legs, and turbaned heads, and Rembrandt-looking faces, all wrought up into a wild frenzy. The scene became even more ludicrous when one of our party rushed into the midst of the tumult and shouted a few emphatic words in Gaelic, or what was intended to represent that language. The effect was similar to that which was said to take place when Neptune raised his head above the angry waves. The Arabs looked first amazed, and then broke out into laughter. The storm gradually subsided, and our luggage at last was got safely off. No, not yet. We were stopped in a little by some officials connected with the Customs, but a baksheesh soon got over this difficulty. Off we went, congratulating ourselves that it was all smooth sailing now. We were mistaken. An Italian, the commissionaire of a party on board, accompanied us, and as he was subjected to a rather strict examination, even to his pockets and the small bag slung round his neck, he swore most dreadfully, wrought himself up into frantic rage, and threatened to shoot or stab the officials. They imagined he was employed by us ; and after bearing all his rage and fury with the most imperturbable gravity, they would have detained us probably for the night, had we not succeeded in making them understand that we had nothing to do with the commissionnaire, who was still raving like a maniac. At last we got safely off, and in a few minutes more found ourselves in the "Prince of Wales' Hotel."

Bad as Cologne is said to be for smells, we never found it nearly so offensive as Alexandria during our short visit. It was very pleasant to get out to Ramleh, near the shore, and enjoy the pure air of the desert and the bracing breezes from the sea. Here we found a pleasant group of happy home circles from our own country, and made the acquaintance of



the Rev. Mr. Yuille, the excellent missionary at Alexandria in connection with the Church of Scotland. He took us to see the ruins of a temple recently uncovered when an excavation was made near the beach. The pillars are in a remarkable state of preservation. The sea has been gaining so much upon the land in this neighbourhood that a portion of the outworks is under water.

We also visited another ancient ruin, called by the name of Caesar's Camp, where there is a piece of tessellated pavement, kept under lock and key in a house built over it, for the purpose of preserving this ancient relic. It was here that we picked up, for the first time, a Bedouin for a guide. His black tent of goat's hair was but a short way off. Under his guidance we reached a little station-house on the Ramleh railway. The heat was oppressive, and the only official we could see about the place was another son of the desert, who was lying outside, stretched all his length before the door, in a profound sleep! Our Ishmael woke him up without much ceremony. This was a railway station, and this was the station-master! Notwithstanding his Rip Van Winkle appearance, it was truly pleasant to see the telegraphic wires stretching from post to post, and the long lines of iron rails shooting into the desert, and gleaming in the sun. Is not this the highway spoken of by the prophet that would be made through the desert? The prophetic announcement, at least, was very forcibly suggested to our mind.

Of course we visited the lions of Alexandria, such as Pompey's Pillar, Cleopatra's Needle, the bazaars, and the palace built by Mehemet Ali. In the large open space near this building, several wretched-looking men were chained to large blocks of wood. They were criminals, but were permitted to clamour for baksheesh, which they did most importunately. A Maltese dragoman acted as our commissionnaire during our stay in the city; and one day, as we were walking through the bazaars, we paused for a little to hear an Arab merchant reading the

Koran, as he sat cross-legged at the front of his shop, which was not much larger than a good-sized bed. He raised his head and muttered a few words, which so enraged our guide that we feared there would be a fight at once. When we urged the Maltese to move on, he explained the reason of his anger by saying, "He call you and me Christian dog!" The reader resumed his see-saw motion over his book, but all the threats and curses of our guide could not force him to speak again.

We were frequently amused at night, when walking the streets, to see the watchmen coiled up in a rough cloak, and dozing away near the property which they were set to guard! Some were following out the same plan of vigilance in boxes not unlike bathing machines. This style of watching reminded us of the words of the prophet, "His watchmen are all dumb dogs; they cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber." We looked in at one of these boxes, and found a strange-looking Dogberry coiled up in his cloak. He was not so sleepy as he seemed, for he did growl and bark with such fury that we were glad to get quickly off.

Several funerals passed us in the streets during our brief stay. There was no coffin, the body being placed in a wooden frame, not unlike a small truckle-bed. A covering was thrown over it, and some ornament, consisting of cloth wrought into the form of a turban, was placed at the head. This bier or bed was borne to the grave by several persons, and the whole funeral procession joined now and then in repeating, in melancholy tones, some sentences from the Koran. We once heard a young sceptic trying to raise what he thought an insuperable objection to the miracle of our Lord restoring the widow's son to life, because the body, as he said, was enclosed in a coffin fastened by so many screws! The objection was pitiful and paltry in the extreme. Even had there been anything like our coffin, there could have been no difficulty to Almighty power; but the body of the widow's son lay open on the bier, as is the custom still in the East, and there was no wood enclosure

between him and the life-giving words or touch of the Prince of Life.

We visited all the mission schools in connection with our own country and America, and were delighted at the signs of progress we witnessed. On one form sat two jet black boys from Ethiopia, amongst others belonging to Greek, Moham-medan, and Jewish parents. Their presence brought up the passage, "Ethiopia unto God shall stretch out her hands." In the sewing-schools for the girls it was specially pleasing to see the progress made in industrial habits, and the excellent use they were making of their needles.

On leaving Alexandria by railway we seem to be shooting through the water, for the line is formed on a long embankment on the Lake Mareotis. By and by as we rush on we get quit of the "lake district" and the embankment, and out into the real soil of the country, the general features of which we now try to group together in few words. Villages of mud huts, with their grey heavy bulging walls, like a large boiler built in clay, which rain might easily wash down, but which stand long in this dry climate; women and children squatted at every door, the former looking actually hideous in their frightful face-trappings; towns here and there of considerable size, with narrow and populous streets; great crowds at every station, most of them pilgrims, and carrying their beds and provisions, on their way to some Moslem festival; mosques and minarets, white-washed dome-shaped tombs sacred to the memory of some saint or another, and looking like a mass of chalk.

Start again:—pass more collections of mud huts not unlike dung heaps, with holes run into them for human beings to enter; on through mud-flats, and swamps and marshes dotted over with buffaloes feeding; long stretches of meadows made amazingly fruitful by the sun-quickenened slime which the river leaves behind after its annual rise, richer far than all the bone-dust and all the guano-fields in the world;

browsing cattle half-buried in the rich pastures; camels with mountain loads of green crops; fat kine, as in the days of Pharaoh, feeding on the river's brink, or standing in it up to the knees, very dreamy-looking, like the river itself flowing lazily through this vast dream-land, as if dozing and dreaming all the way. The fact is, you begin to wonder if you are not dreaming yourself as you look upon that old calm river; upon these heavy oxen, with their eyes standing out in fatness, a striking contrast to the lean ragged peasants or *fellaheen* in the fields; upon these graceful palms shooting up like so many obelisks, and throwing out at the top a beautiful crown of leaves, through which you see a sky of peerless blue; upon these Nile boats, with their lateen sails, moving slowly along, as if afraid they would come too soon to the end of the river. It seems all a dream—a dreaminess in the air, and earth, and sky—till the scream of the railway whistle startles you from your reverie, and you find yourself at another station, and amongst another floating mass of turbaned heads of various colours.

Off once more:—Cairo the next station. Steam-plough turning up the rich soil; the very land for steam-ploughs; what a contrast to the old primitive-looking stick, also at work, and drawn by oxen! the *shadoof* and the *sakia* everywhere raising water from the river to irrigate the land, the exceeding greenness of which is becoming even greener; the former with its swinging pole, and stone, and bucket—the latter with its wheel, and pitchers, and plodding oxen, going round and round as in a dream; more mud huts, rich meadows, fat cattle, and graceful palms: luxuriant greenness that reminds us of Goshen, or of Robert Hall's saying when he described the scenery around Cambridge as "a well-filled meal tub;"—all this was repeated again and again during our journey of some six hours; but the above impressions of the scene are about as much as we can now recall from the kaleidoscope of memory, as we think of our first railway drive in the land of the Pharaohs.

## CHAPTER II.

Shepherd's Hotel. Hangers-on. Donkey Boys. Streets and Sights of Cairo.  
Donkey Rides. Bazaars. Places of Interest. Mosques. Moslem Zeal. Coptic  
Service. Promising Youths. Number of Copts. Coptic Quarter.



ON entering Shepherd's Hotel at Cairo, the first thing that will probably strike a stranger is the large number of "hangers-on." At every corner, passage, and door, you are met with some bronzed or black face, some turbaned head, some representative of the guide, dragoman, or commissionnaire tribe, from the large boned Albanian, dressed in his gayest attire, and with scrupulous care (a costume which plainly says that he is determined to take no denial in his application for employment—in short, that you must take *him*, and no other), down to the little donkey boy, in his dusty shirt of calico. They have all this in common, that they are most anxious to serve you, do anything for you, in their own way, which, in the most of cases, is to confuse and pester you beyond all endurance. But you are in the East, and you must make up your mind to stand any amount of fretting work, and see all you can. The sights are so new—so entirely different from all your former experiences, that you are prepared not only to endure a great deal of irritation, but actually to laugh at it and enjoy it as part and parcel of the East; in short, it would not be the East without it. Having settled this in your mind, you are greatly taken with the donkey boys, whose acquaintance you make the moment you appear in front of the hotel. As to age, they may be some years out of their "teens," or they may be just entering them, or even somewhat younger. We liked the junior specimens best. Large numbers are collected in the space in

front of the hotel, with their donkeys, which, with their soft saddles covered with red cloth and flashy trappings, have a fine appearance. The donkeys are, on the whole, well kept, and have a great deal of humour in their own way. For antic drollery of a most demonstrative character the boys have no equals. They are as sharp and keen as they are playful and waggish. And yet these same boys become very dull and stupid as they advance in life. This may be accounted for from the want of education, or from the absence of some higher kind of employment. We have heard the government of the country blamed, and also the evil influences to which they are exposed. They have all picked up some few words of English; and the twinkle of their eyes, and the grin of humour on their faces, and, above all, their pronunciation, are exquisitely droll. "This be one berry good jackass!" "Mine good donkey!" and then follows a list of names, such as "Billy Button," "Tom Jones," "Prince of Wales," "This be Prince of Wales' donkey!" and if they "guess" you to be an American, the donkey's name is at once changed into "Yankee doodle!" which is pronounced with the greatest emphasis. You can call a cab in Cairo if you like, and get a lithe Deerfoot of a Nubian to run before you in Eastern fashion—a custom which, by the by, we often saw on the streets, where a cab or a carriage was almost in every case preceded by a forerunner, dressed in a very light garb, and with a white rod in his hand—but we preferred to patronise the donkey institution. We can conceive of nothing that can so thoroughly lift a man out of the rut of all his former experience, ideas, and feelings—out of the worry of his work-a-day life—than a donkey ride through the streets and bazaars of Cairo. This is the very thing for any one overwrought with brain work, or weary and worn out with the dull, plodding, jog-trot routine of life at home. If this does not give him a new sensation, and turn him completely out of the "even tenor of his way," out of all his former self, nothing will.

Instead of calling a cab you engage a donkey, and sally forth

to the bazaars, or anywhere else you please. A word about the streets before taking our ride. These are so narrow that, without anything like the length of Rob Roy's arm, you may shake hands across them; and you are reminded of Burns' description of the auld brig of Ayr, "where twa wheel-barrows tremble when they meet." These narrow crooked streets are so numerous, and cross each other so frequently, that a large honeycomb cut at random, and in every possible direction, by a blind man, would be no inapt illustration of them in miniature. In the most of the houses a room in the upper storey is thrust out half way across the streets from either side. These are very quaint-looking projections, the wooden frames being in many cases most elaborately carved, and presenting fine specimens of lattice-work. One of the most frequent shouts in the streets is that of the donkey boy when he sings out in prolonged accents "*Reglak!*"—"mind your feet there!" but we found our heads, when riding, more frequently in danger from these projecting apartments. They serve, however, to shut out the fierce heat of the sun; and they have withal a most antique appearance. These needle-eye streets have never known the art of Macadam, nor the torturing processes of the pavier, with his recent additions of boiling layers of asphalt. They are literally swarming with crowds of people, and yet, for the most part, they are kept wonderfully cool and moist, and in a much better sanitary condition than you would expect to find them. The fierce glare of the sun is to a great extent shut out by the narrowness of the streets and the projecting upper storeys. The water-carrier lays the dust with his goatskin slung across his shoulders, and troops of hungry dogs act as scavengers by picking up all the offal they can find.

And now you select your donkey from a crowd of most importunate and clamorous boys, each good-naturedly, and with great drollery, praising his own with all the English adjectives of commendation he has at his command. Thwack! and off you go at a merry canter, with your donkey-boy shouting

behind, and bringing his stick at intervals thwack! thwack! over the flanks of the poor beast, and uttering every now and then a repetition of rather rough and emphatic epithets regarding its pedigree. It was just as well we did not understand them at the time. You are not aware when the blow is to fall from behind; but the donkey, from long experience, seems to know, for it makes a sudden spurt to evade it, and ten to one gets away from between your legs altogether. A more serious danger arises, however, from the crowds in the narrow streets. No one deems it his duty to keep out of the way of another; he holds on; you must keep out of the way, and take care of yourself. Very likely, before you know where you are, you get thrown between the legs of a camel bearing a most awkward burden of projecting stones and sticks; from which, in the effort to back out, you are upset into a couple of panniers swung on the back of a mule; or you nearly capsize that lady who is riding Adam fashion on a donkey; or you get jammed against a bullock or a cart; or you run tilt against another rider; or graze your shins on some rude vehicle; or you get hopelessly entangled in a dead lock, surrounded by mules, donkeys, oxen, camels, men, and women, who struggle out of the dire entanglement; and then, such a shouting, screaming, pulling, and thwacking, all mingled with the most ludicrous appeals to the Prophet!

Amusing collisions are very frequent at those places where the narrow streets cross each other. One morning, when proceeding to the bazaars, our guide Basheia was riding before us with a swaggering and dread-nought air, when all at once we saw him knocked over as if shot. He was going at a quick canter when, just at the point of intersection in the narrow street, another rider came up as fast at right angles. They pitched into one another with a crash, Basheia suddenly coming to grief. But this is such a common thing that it is only a stranger who laughs at it. There was something very exciting in the whole of that morning's ride. Everything was so



entirely new—the quaint old bazaars; the strange style of buying and selling; the queer-looking band-box appearance of all the little shops or stalls; the merchants sitting cross-legged on a mat in front of them smoking their *tchibouk* or drinking coffee, and taking business with true Mohammedan coolness and gravity; the various artificers at work in the quarters appropriated to their respective trades; water-carriers, donkeys, mules; crowds of people with turbaned heads (these turbans had always a peculiar charm for us); women waddling about in their great yellow or red slippers, or riding upon donkeys, and appearing like great unshapely bundles of silk or cotton, many of them in white, and with their faces closely veiled—all these and other phases of Eastern life in the narrow streets not only reminded us of the “Thousand and One Nights,” but actually formed a living representation.

The bazaars are truly marvellous places in the East. Often did we select a corner in one of them, and stand, when we could get standing room, and let the stream of life flow past. Every now and then some venerable old man passes on his ass, and as you look at his thoroughly oriental dress, his long white beard and massive wrinkled brow, you are reminded of Abraham or some of the old patriarchs, and you cannot help saying, “There goes Abraham!” Time and all its changes have affected but very little the manners, customs, and dress of the East. We look back with great pleasure to the bright mornings and the donkey rides we had through the strange old streets and crowded bazaars of Cairo, presenting everywhere the most striking features of Eastern life. These morning rides were the source of great enjoyment, and even had the finest carriage in Egypt been placed at our service, with a Nubian forerunner and a black eunuch and all, we certainly would have preferred this famous institution of the jackass.

We visited all the places and objects of interest that are usually seen by strangers, such as the island of Rhoda, where tradition affirms the infant Moses was found by Pharaoh's

daughter and her companions; the Nilometer, a graduated pillar, on the same island, for measuring the rise of the Nile, one of the most ancient relics of a remote age; Boulac, the government foundry and museum there—the latter containing a rich collection of Egyptian antiquities. A simple lad, who offered to be a guide—whose complacency and slowness of movement were most provoking—took us to see Joseph's granaries, which, he assured us, still existed; but he never found them, and, in vexation at his own stupidity, and under pretence that he himself had been led astray, took to beating the donkey boy who accompanied us, as if he were to blame because Joseph's granaries could not be discovered! We also went to the tombs of the Caliphs and of the Mamelukes; to the gardens of Shoobra, and the beautiful kiosk there, the elysium of Mehemet Ali; to a farm that bears the name of Goshen, most appropriately given, for it seemed to be in the best part of the land. Here we spent a pleasant afternoon at a friend's house, in company with Mr. Palgrave, the celebrated traveller in central Arabia. We returned to the city by the Shoobra road, through a blinding sand drift, which made us cease to wonder that ophthalmia was so painfully frequent. Total or partial blindness is very common; and redness of eyes is everywhere in this country, not from "tarrying long at the wine," but from exposure to the hot sun and sand. We often pitied the children sitting in the narrow streets, or on their mothers' shoulders (the Eastern mode of carrying a child), for the eyes of the poor creatures actually seemed to be eaten out by the flies. We seldom saw one without a swarm of these tormentors all but closing up the sight. The child naturally puts up his hands to defend himself, and as they are generally glutinous with some adhesive sweetmeat or another, a portion of the tempting stuff is left about the socket; and thus it is often black with flies, the eyelashes gone, and the sight in many cases rapidly following.

We went several times to the citadel, and were always more

than delighted with this never-to-be-forgotten view of Cairo, with its countless minarets, some of them the perfection of lightness and grace; in the background the desert and the pyramids, lifting up their hoary heads, the giant sentinels of an old world. We spent some time in the famous mosque built by Mehemet Ali, whose tomb is near the entrance. Innumerable lamps are suspended throughout this immense building. The whole space seemed to be about as large as St. Paul's in London. Like all the other mosques which we afterwards saw, there is not a single seat or bench, but straw or rush mats are spread upon the floor, and on these the faithful go through their devotions. There was only one Moslem in the whole building when we entered, and he was lying in a corner profoundly asleep. Another, like a labouring man, came in, and he began a great variety of bowings, kneelings, and prostrations at the back of a large pillar. It is a magnificent building, but notwithstanding all that has been done to produce a striking effect (and for this no cost has been spared), we could not help thinking it had a melancholy look about it. All the mosques had the same dull, negative appearance, and in this respect they resemble the religion which they represent.

We went to all the principal mosques in Cairo, and they seemed to be as much used for the purpose of a siesta as for devotion. In all of these we found sleepers coiled up on the mats, and were reminded of what the German peasant said to Doctor Büchsell, his pastor, who was delighted to find his parishioner amongst the handful of worshippers, "There are too many flies in the house for me to get rest, but in the church it is fine and cool. In the winter there's never any need why I should come!"

Before entering the mosques we were, of course, obliged either to appear in our stocking-soles or to draw a large pair of slippers over our shoes. These slippers are generally provided at the entrance. To the Mohammedan the command is still as binding as ever, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the

place whereon thou standest is holy ground." In no mosque were we in the least degree subjected to any unpleasantness but in the Azhar, which is the college of Cairo, and where the Koran is particularly studied. It is a large building, supported by numerous columns, which run along the sides of the interior. At almost each of these columns we found a professor seated, and expounding the Koran to a group of youths and others more advanced in years. Many were lying asleep here and there on the floor—many idlers were lounging about. We had scarcely entered when we were followed by a crowd, who left their teachers, not from mere curiosity, but evidently for the purpose of making our visit unpleasant and very brief. The scowling looks and muttered threats of not a few were a clear indication of this. The official, however, who took us in charge, did his best to keep the crowd at a respectful distance, but not without using the white rod which he carried. We had a government order and a janizary, and had, therefore, nothing to fear; but the old fanatical spirit has not yet died out. We were told by a friend who has long been resident in Egypt, that when he visited this same mosque a few years ago, two Imáms were standing at the entrance, and not for a moment thinking that he understood this language, the one said to the other, loud enough to be heard, "Had I my will, that Frank would not come out with his life."

Strange to say, our janizary, or police official, was guilty of a great indiscretion, which very nearly brought us into trouble. He was proceeding to enter one of the mosques smoking a cigar, when several servants of the place, with indignant shouts, sprang upon him and knocked it from his mouth. On inquiry, we learned the janizary was a Greek, and this indecorum was more likely the result of inadvertence at the moment; but it raised a storm about our ears, and made us objects of suspicion during the whole of our visit to that mosque. He was certainly guilty of a gross outrage upon the feelings of the faithful, and they were not backward to resent it.

One thing we could not fail to notice on the part of the Mohammedans was the conscientiousness with which they observed the stated times for prayer. It does not matter where they are—on the deck of a steamer, in the field, or in the foundry—they will take their bearing towards Mecca, spread their *seggādeh* or prayer carpet before them, and proceed at once to go through their formula of prostrations, some of which are very expressive. We have seen a couple of Moslems playing at chess on the deck of a steamer, where not a few unbelievers were looking on, but neither this nor the urgency of the game was regarded as an excuse for neglect of duty; for when the hour of prayer came, they would interrupt their play for a few moments, rise and look towards the Kaabah, spread their bit of carpet, no matter who was looking on, go through their bowings, muttering at the same time the usual words, roll up the carpet, light their *nargilehs*, and resume the game.

We went one Sabbath morning, about six o'clock, to the Patriarch Coptic Church. Early though it was, the service had already begun. The female part of the congregation occupied a back part of the building, separated from the rest of the church by a partition of lattice work. All who were present, with the exception of the officiating monks or priests, sat cross-legged upon mats that were spread upon the floor. The patriarch occupied, during the greater part of the service, a sort of sedan chair, with a great deal of rude upholstery work and gilding about it. He seemed to be "well stricken in years," although we could not very well judge of this from the way in which he was muffled up. He had a very dusty appearance, like the most of things in Egypt. We had the impression that if his garments had been shaken, there would have been quite a cloud of dust, such as is sometimes raised by a Boanerges in a country pulpit. His vestments were rich, and oppressively heavy for such a hot day. Everything was covered all over with dust; and the Coptic form of Christianity, we could not help thinking, was pretty much in the same condition.

During the service, one of the priests came forward and poured water upon the patriarch's hands, which stood very much in need of this cooling and cleansing process. There was no solemnity about the service; there was even a great lack of ordinary decorum. The chanting, reading, bowing, and waving of incense, which continued for a long time, became very tiresome. The service, we were told, generally lasts four hours. There was a great deal of reading in the ancient Coptic language, which the people do not understand, nor the priests themselves. Our dragoman professed to be a Coptic Christian, and he said he did not understand a single word of what was read in the old language, and he affirmed that this was the case with the priests and the people. The congregation uttered responses now and then, and occasionally made free-and-easy sort of remarks to one another. We sat down on the mats amongst the audience, many of whom would have been much improved by a visit to the bath. Several, who were rather near us for comfort or edification, were very busily engaged in making sundry attempts to rid themselves of what is still, to this day, a grievous plague in Egypt!

Three or four smart-looking boys were employed at various parts of the service in reading from an Arabic Bible. They were frequently corrected by the priests, and sometimes by the patriarch himself. Altogether, it seemed a very chatty, familiar kind of affair, accompanied, we were sorry to see, with a great number of Popish mummeries, but these were not so artistically managed as such things are in the Romish church.

A number of round cakes, about the size of Abernethy biscuits, were brought on a silver plate by one of the priests to the patriarch. He examined them all, and selected a few for the purpose of celebrating the mass. Several of these cakes were afterwards presented to us by one of the priests, as a token of friendly recognition. These had not been blessed or set apart for what they regard as the sacrifice of the mass. In the centre is the figure of a Jerusalem cross, designed to represent our

Saviour, and around this are twelve smaller crosses for the twelve apostles : there are also five small holes, in memory of the five wounds of our Lord. Round the edge is the passage in Coptic, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." The cakes selected by the patriarch were carried to the altar in an inner room, called the Holy of Holies, in imitation of the Jewish tabernacle, and were there subjected to a series of manipulations, during which the reading and chanting were continued, and incense was burned. We sat in our uneasy posture till we could sit no longer ; the truth is, the plague to which we have already referred made devotion impossible, so that notwithstanding all our anxiety to see the conclusion of the service, we were obliged to get up and make for the door.

We had no sooner got out of the church than, to our surprise, one of the boys whom we had heard read part of the lessons came up to us, and addressed us in very good English. We invited him to come to Shepherd's Hotel in the afternoon, and bring his Arabic Bible with him. He was delighted with the invitation, and asked permission to bring other two boys. He came at the appointed hour, accompanied by his two young friends, and carrying his large Arabic Bible under his arm. During our conversation, we asked him if he had ever read the words, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son," etc., etc. He turned at once in his Bible to John iii. 16, and read the verse to his companions, whilst his eyes were beaming with delight. On learning that the two boys were orphans, we quoted the words in Jer. iii. 4, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" He turned this passage up, too, and read it with great feeling to the other boys, and suiting the action to the words, he pointed to heaven, evidently referring to God as the Father who speaks in the text. Altogether, we were greatly pleased with the intelligence of those Coptic boys. They were intensely eager. Poor Youseff, who spoke to us

first at the church, was nervously so. We promised to go and see them next day at the school where they were taught. They showed considerable Bible knowledge, and expressed a very earnest desire to acquire English, with the view of making themselves useful in the future. Nothing could exceed the anxiety of Youseff to get to England for this purpose. He had the idea that his whole future destiny depended upon this, but his mother would not listen to any proposal on the subject. Poor fellow ! we often think of that eager face of his, and his earnest guttural pronunciation, uttering every word with a life or death earnestness. He and his companions got several presents, with which they went away quite delighted. We visited the Coptic school next day, and were agreeably surprised to find a large class of boys learning English : they could read it pretty well. At the request of the teacher, we examined them in Bible history, and their answers were, on the whole, very satisfactory. The teacher was a young man, who had been taught when a boy at one of the American schools ; but the temptation of a higher salary had induced him to withdraw. He would have been glad, he said, to introduce us to the patriarch, but he was enjoying his siesta after dinner. While it is to be regretted that this young man did not remain in connection with the American schools, still it is very evident he is doing a good work in his present position, and he is but one of the many testimonies that might be adduced of the benefit which that mission has accomplished. One of his pupils, a very promising youth, somewhat older than Youseff, was anxious to join the American mission, and prepare himself to be a preacher of the gospel to his countrymen. His object has been happily attained.

However imperfect the Coptic Church may be, it has been the means of preserving, to some extent at least, a knowledge of Christian truth in Egypt ; and there are hopeful signs of an awakening, the result of which is, that not a few of the people and the priests have connected themselves with various



Protestant missions. At the communion service, which was held in the little mission chapel at Cairo during our visit, there were several Coptic monks from different parts of the country, who partook of the sacred rite. The Copts have suffered severe persecutions, and have had a hard struggle to maintain their separate existence as a church. Were they brought back to the purity of the Christian faith, they would yet prove as "life from the dead" to the land of the Pharaohs. They were the first natives of Egypt who received the gospel, it is said, through the preaching of the evangelist Mark. Various estimates have been made of their number. Some make it as low as 80,000; Mr. Lane, who is an authority on modern Egypt, reckons them about 150,000. It is said that there are about 10,000 in Cairo. They are scattered all over the country from Nubia down to Alexandria. The remains of ruined churches and convents show that they must have been far more numerous at one time than at present.

One of the most strangely interesting places to us, of an ecclesiastical kind, was the ancient Coptic church and quarter. The narrow passages are so numerous and so intricate, that a stranger, once in, would have great difficulty in getting out. It is indeed a queer human burrow, like a rabbit warren turned inside out. It would do admirably for the game of "Hide and Seek." No children were playing about, but many old people were sitting at their doors; several of these were monks and priests. Soap and water must be very scarce in that quarter. We were truly sorry that we could not make out another visit to this curious old labyrinth. Our impression at the time was that we would meet with nothing like it in the East, but in this we were mistaken: we had not yet seen any Syrian village, nor the convent of Mount Sinai.

### CHAPTER III.

Hassanaine Effendi. Our Dahabyeh. Sail on the Nile. Tombs of Sakharra.  
Memphis. Visit to the Pyramids. Strange Scene in the King's Chamber.  
Onset for Baksheesh. Heliopolis. The Virgin's Tree. Maharajah Dhuleep-  
Singh and his Bride. Our Contract. Scene at the Railway Station, Cairo. Off  
to Suez.

**B**EFORE leaving for the East, we had made the acquaintance of Hassanaine Effendi, who had been resident in Glasgow for some time superintending the building of a fine yacht for the Viceroy. Poor Hassanaine! he died suddenly ere it was completed. He was a warm-hearted, generous friend, of a noble nature. How often we used to talk of Egypt, and how earnestly he urged us to visit his native land, promising to do everything in his power for our comfort. It is with peculiar interest that we now look upon his handwriting at the commencement of a splendid copy of the "Thousand and One Nights," which he presented to us shortly before his death. We feel certain that the inscription, coming from a native Egyptian, will prove interesting to our readers:—

"Permit me to lay at your feet this magnificent book, describing a state of society that is giving way to the flow of Western civilization, in literature, arts, and the sciences. I beg you to accept this book as an expression of the esteem and friendship with which I remain,

"Your affectionate

HASSANAINE."

His widow, whom we found residing at Cairo with her young family, kindly placed a beautiful *dahabyeh*, or Nile boat, the property of her late husband, at our disposal. The season was too far advanced to make much use of it; and as we intended

to proceed through the desert to Palestine, we had very little time to spend in Egypt. This was matter of deep regret when we saw such a splendid boat, containing every convenience. We were struck with the number of apartments, and the handsome manner in which every one of them was fitted up. Nothing could be better adapted for securing comfort during a long voyage on the Nile. We resolved to go to Sakharra, and inspect some of the ruins there. A captain and crew, including a first-rate cook, were got together on short notice. That sail is one of our most pleasant memories in connection with our visit. It was towards evening when we glided out of Boulac, crowded with river craft, and spread our sails to catch a favouring breeze, which soon died away. One of our companions\* in that delightful sail died shortly afterwards, in the prime of life, and in the midst of bright prospects. As we moved out into the open river, it was with honest pride that he pointed to some fine steamers which had been built in his own yard on the Clyde. He named them one after another as he passed them. We, too, felt proud of that spirit of enterprise which has carried the name of our river to the ends of the earth. The whole scene was entirely new, suggestive, and most exciting. What a glorious sunset! what a bright sky! And then, how the palms stood out all along the right bank of the river, till, in the fading light, they actually seemed a part of the sky itself, wrought into it, and the whole looked like one of Turner's beautiful pictures! We never saw the pyramids to such advantage as on that clear night from the deck of our Nile boat. We stood and gazed at them, till as the vessel glided on, the triangular space between the two became less and less, and they no longer stood out separately, but seemed to blend into one, and to form a part of the body of heaven itself. What a wondrous beauty was in that night! And then we were on the Nile—that old world river of mystery, tradition, and song, whose waters had reflected the

\* The late William Tod, Esq., Ayton.

ruins of a period prior to the birth of history! The voices of the far past gathered around us in the sigh of the midnight wind, and we yielded ourselves to the dreamy enchantment of the hour. The magicians of Egypt were again at work, but these were now the strange elements which made up the scene that lay before us, and which we can never forget. It was with difficulty we could persuade ourselves to turn into bed.

Next morning, on getting on deck, we found several of our men walking on the bank and dragging the boat. Our high notions of the previous evening were somewhat taken down, for this seemed to us rather an ignoble mode of proceeding on the Nile. The slight breeze had completely died away, and we were utterly becalmed. It was no great distance to Sakharra, but the sail would be a very tedious one; and as our time was limited, we were obliged, most reluctantly, after several hours' dragging, to return, but not till we had enjoyed a long swim in the "sweet waters." On ascending the bank, we were much struck to find what appeared to be a natural ridge or embankment sloping up from the river, and rising considerably higher than the wide-spreading plain on the other side; so that during an inundation, when the waters subside, they cannot flow back, but must remain to irrigate the land. On our return to Boulac, the sailors amused us by singing several of their songs, to which they kept beating the *darabuka*, or little drum. The melody was plaintive and monotonous, like all the music we heard in the East. Poor fellows! they did their best to make our short sail agreeable. They seemed to be simple, good-natured, and obliging, and not overtroublesome about baksheesh.

Our next visit to Sakharra was more fortunate. We took a carriage to Tor, on the side of the river, and having sent on our donkeys the previous night, we found them waiting our arrival on the opposite side. The pleasure of that day's excursion was greatly enhanced by the excellent company of Dr. Lansing, the superintendent of the American mission at Cairo. The pyramids of Sakharra, and the mummy pits containing the remains of the

sacred Ibis in numberless pots of baked clay, resembling a sugar loaf, are objects of great interest; but the chief recent attractions of this place are the Serapeum, or Temple of Apis, and the tombs connected with it, in which the sacred bulls were buried. The temple and the tombs were discovered by M. Mariette, a Frenchman of great enterprise, who spent two whole years in his researches for these wonderful relics of antiquity. Upwards of thirty of these immense stone coffins, or sarcophagi, have been uncovered, all in a remarkably good state of preservation. Having provided ourselves with an excellent supply of tapers, we fortunately saw the whole of these ancient tombs to great advantage. They are contained in two rock-hewn galleries like railway tunnels, the one leading into the other. These galleries formed the ancient cemetery for the bulls that were worshipped in the adjoining Temple of Apis. Recesses, like side chapels, have been cut into the rock, and in each of these is an immense stone coffin, fifteen feet in length, by eight in breadth, and fully seven feet in height. Each coffin has been formed of a single block of black porphyry. The high polish, the elaborate workmanship, and the clean cut edges of the hieroglyphics, as if but recently finished, are truly wonderful. In two or three instances the figures are only traced, but not cut, as if the work at a certain point had been abruptly left off. Had the people begun to lose faith in this system of worship? A very heavy lid of the same material lies on the top of the coffins. Many of these lids have been pushed back a few feet (by a great effort doubtless), so that you can descend with a light and examine the interior. How strange it was to sit with a long lighted taper in the stone coffin of a sacred bull! For a time, the ludicrous was uppermost in our mind. What a humiliating thought it is, that a people so distinguished for wisdom, who had made such advancement in the arts and sciences, who have left behind them ruins that are still the admiration of the world, should have sunk so low in their religious ideas, as to worship fourfooted beasts, birds,

and creeping things, and spend the highest efforts of their genius on stone coffins to preserve the remains of their bestial gods! These tombs, the elaborate workmanship of which is something beyond all our modern conceptions, are striking proofs at once of the glory and the shame of this ancient race. "These be thy gods, O Egypt!" What is the highest art, the greatest civilization, without the knowledge of the one living and true God! The gods are all gone: for these coffins, on which such a prodigious amount of time, labour, and money must have been expended, are all empty. How superior the workman was to the god he worshipped! His work is as fresh and as highly polished at this distant date as if it had come from his hand but yesterday—the gods for whom all his genius was consecrated are dust at the bottom of these coffins! When the sides of these tombs were struck by the hand, they gave out a clear, bell-like sound. A friend suggested that all the notes of the scale could be sounded in this way. This may be fancy; and we must leave others to decide as to this theory of musical notation. Near the entrance, and under the shadow of one of the tombs, we took our lunch, surrounded by a lot of hungry Bedouins, who eagerly picked up any scrap.

We rode over the desert to Mitrahenny, a collection of mud huts. This group of hovels occupies a portion of the site of Memphis, the once great capital of ancient Egypt—the city from which Pharaoh, it is supposed, led forth the chivalry of the land in pursuit of the hosts of Israel on their march for freedom. A beautiful palm forest now stands on another portion of that site, a noble burial place even for such a city. Often did we feel as if treading on yielding moss, or as if the ground were hollow beneath our feet, which is very likely to be the case; and we have a strong impression that were excavations made in these mounds, many ruins would be found to attest the greatness of ancient Memphis. Everything seems to have been formed on a most gigantic scale in this land. Several statues were lying prone upon the ground. One of

these was of immense size, and was evidently designed to represent some mighty king. It has all the marks of royalty. The expression of the face is one of pensive sorrow, and is in harmony with the desolate aspect of the whole place. The largest statue—certainly a most interesting relic of antiquity—was presented to our government, but no effort, so far as we are aware, has as yet been made to remove it. It is better lying where it is, for we can conceive of nothing that speaks so expressively to the heart of what this land must once have been—of the grandeur of its achievements, and of the desolations that have swept over it in fulfilment of God's word, than that statue of Rameses, lying amid the buried ruins of his capital. We would rather think of it in its present position, and retain the impression the sight made on our mind, than meet with it at any time in the British Museum. Care, however, should be taken that in its exposed condition it should not be mutilated, or, what is much to be dreaded, burnt by the Turks for lime, as it is formed out of a white silicious limestone, very hard, and capable of taking a high polish, which it still retains to a wonderful degree.

Our visit to the pyramids of Geezeh was delayed till we could be favoured with the company of a friend who has been long a resident in Egypt. He presented himself one morning armed with a stout stick, which, he assured us, would be needed before the day was done. Off we started, and got to the side of the river. The scene of hubbub and confusion at crossing was nearly as great as that which we witnessed on landing at Alexandria. What a struggle took place between the boatmen as to which of them should take our party across! Our friend's use of his stick made us a little squeamish at first, but it stood us in good stead more than once that day. He could speak the language like a native; but in the opinion of some there is no argument like a stick in the East, and he held by this. Not to speak of time, it saved a great deal of din, and happily there were no bones broken that we could see. We got across after a

great deal of screaming, shouting, scolding, shaking of fists, and pulling of the donkeys by the heads, the tails, and the legs. An Arab held on most persistently by both hands to our boat, as he had been one of the rejected, and it was only another plaguy application of the stick that forced him to let go his hold. His gesticulations, as we glided out into the river, were of the most frantic and ludicrous character. Poor fellow! we hope he has now no painful recollection of the scene. Mounting our donkeys, we had a fine ride, the way sometimes lying along a soft, mossy embankment, as if laid down on purpose for a railway; sometimes through a magnificent palm forest, where the trees are from fifty to sixty feet in height; sometimes skirting the sides of barley and lentil fields; and at last coming out upon a long fringe of dry, sandy bent, where there was a struggle between the desert and the cultivated land. For a long time the pyramids were right before us, and they seemed actually to diminish the nearer we approached them. Standing almost on the dead level surface of an immense plain, and under such a cloudless sky, and where there are very few objects around them to bring out the contrast, their enormous magnitude does not at first lay hold of the mind. We wished to ride up to them in quietness, and in silence and solitude drink in the spirit of the scene. This could not be done. Dozens of Arabs came out of a little village of mud huts near the base. We looked up to the top of the great pyramid, which covers an area of nearly twelve acres, and is about five hundred feet in height; and when we turned and looked at the low mud huts, we received our first impression of the magnitude of this mighty structure, which was old when Moses was a boy. The Arabs wildly rushed forward, but they reckoned without their host, for our friend astonished them with his Arabic and his stick, and compelled them to give us a wider berth than they wished. It was, however, impossible to silence the jabber which they obstinately kept up. By our commander-in-chief's directions, two of them were told off to accompany



each of the party. Away we went; but we had not climbed far when several Arabs, who had been concealed among the large blocks of stone, laid claim to us, and here another fight took place for possession of our persons. The staff and the brawny arm that wielded it were left below, and our tormentors knew full well that they were quite safe from both. Our friend, who was watching our movements, flourished his cudgel and vehemently shouted in Arabic. Till matters were adjusted, we sat down on a large block and surveyed the scene. At last a compromise was made, and it was agreed that a third Arab should accompany each of the party and lend a helping hand. Poor fellows! they were not encumbered with clothing (nothing but a shirt); and after we were fairly on the way, they did all that possibly could be done to lighten the toil of ascent. They had stages where they halted a little, not that they needed this, but we did. "Baksheesh" was constantly dinned in our ears; but at each halting place a more importunate onset was made, and again and again we were coaxed to give the baksheesh *here*, as they pointed to the step on which we stood: and then with a scowl, and thrusting forth both hands in the direction of our friend below, they said: "*Baksheesh here; him bad—him bad; baksheesh not down—here!*" We had agreed with our commander that none should be given till we came back to *terra firma*; but on coming down, his practised eye soon saw that the agreement had not been kept, at which he was much chagrined, as the Arabs chuckled and made themselves merry at his expense. Getting out of the reach of his stick, they held up the coins they had received, and grinned in rapture: they felt safe, for they could beat him at a race.

After all, we had very little credit in mounting the pyramids, for the Arabs had the heaviest part of the work, one pushing behind and another pulling before—sometimes singing a sort of chant, but more frequently repeating their formula for English travellers, in a kind of measured cadence of their own,

"Englese bono, bono (good, good). Baksheesh, more bono. Englese baksheesh plenty!" Many of the great blocks reach as high as the breast, and but for the help of the Arabs, who are almost naked, the work of climbing would be both tedious and difficult. They can bound along the steps like goats; and we were frequently surprised when boys, carrying water in clay bottles, made their appearance, rising suddenly up from behind a block, and running to us with the greatest ease. Of course they expect a baksheesh for the Nile water they carry to such a height, and who could grudge them a few piastres!

On reaching the summit, we found a space of about twenty feet square—much larger now than in ancient times, for many blocks were removed by the caliphs for the construction of mosques at Cairo. The stones on the top are nearly all covered with the initials of visitors. A small chisel and a hammer were offered to us by one of the Arabs, but we much preferred quietly to look around us, and indulge the many-coloured thoughts and ideas which our brief stay on the top of the great pyramid could not fail to suggest. One sad drawback to this was the constant clatter of the Arabs. They were in a frolicsome mood, and they shouted, and capered, and danced about, and kept us in constant alarm lest they would roll over the side.

In 1839 the annual prize poem for the logic class in the Glasgow University was "The Pyramids," and little did we think when writing that poem, and reading all we could get upon that subject, that we would ever have the good fortune to stand upon the top, and look out upon the scene which, in fancy, we had attempted to describe. We were most agreeably surprised to find that our description, on the whole, was so correct. One long dream of our life was realised, when from the summit we looked out upon the desert, the Nile, Cairo, and the Mokattam hills. Wondrous as this view was when we saw it in March, it must be much more striking during the

inundation season, when villages, fields, and patches of ground with palm trees, appear in the distance like so many floating islands.

It was only when we descended and went down the deep, dark incline leading to the heart of the great pyramid, and when we stood in the two apartments which have been opened, the one called the King's and the other the Queen's Chamber, that we became truly alive to the real magnitude of this mighty structure. We confess that we were utterly overwhelmed with astonishment as we went down that long passage, with lighted tapers, and stood at last by the tomb of red granite in the King's Chamber. This apartment is thirty-four feet long, eighteen feet broad, and about twenty feet in height. Some workmen, natives of our own country, had gone in before us, and as they came back shouting very boisterously the words of a song, which we had heard for the first time in Shepherd's hotel a few days before, the chorus being, "Slap bang, here we are again!" etc., etc., we were greatly taken by surprise. Down they came pell-mell, their faces gleaming in the light of the tapers, which every now and then they waved over their heads. We stood for a few moments bewildered, till we could make out distinctly the words of their song. The sudden rush and uproarious voices of half-drunk men awakening the echoes in the heart of this ancient tomb, had a strange and startling effect. It was a most unexpected union which was thus given to the spirit of the nineteenth century in one direction of fast life with a very remote period, which is still a puzzle. What a rude invasion of the awful secrecy of this mysterious building! Where was the outraged spirit of the monarch who built that enormous pile, in the belief that his tomb would never be discovered nor his ashes disturbed? After a little we could afford to look at the sudden and boisterous invasion from a ludicrous point of view; but even yet we cannot think of that uproarious scene without contrasting it with the oppressive darkness and solemnity in the heart of the

great pyramid, with the solitude of the desert outside, and the old-world far-away look of that mysterious companion of the pyramids—the Sphinx.

Having lunched among the blocks on the side of the great pyramid, very near the entrance, we came down and lingered about the Sphinx, and threw ourselves back into the far past, borne upon a current of thought that carried us beyond the days of Moses. How many have gazed upon these marvellous structures, and how many generations must lie below; for these giant buildings probably stood either at the entrance to mighty cities or in their immediate neighbourhood!

“Stop!—for thy tread is on an Empire’s dust.”

We were speedily recalled from our reverie under the shadow of the Sphinx by the cry for *baksheesh*, which now became endless and most annoying. Our friend with the stick had deemed us long before this quite incorrigible in this matter, and had gone off chagrined, leaving us to fight the battle. The Arabs, finding that they had now the field to themselves, followed us for about a mile, in the hope of getting a few more piastres. Our only hope lay in flight, so we ignobly turned our backs upon the pyramids and the Sphinx, and fled as fast as our donkeys could carry us, for the sake of peace.

On our way back, and when passing through a small village, we were extremely sorry to find a “British Workman” very much the worse of liquor, striking a poor Arab most unmercifully with his fists. The Arab’s face was a frightful spectacle; but notwithstanding all this brutal usage, not one of the inhabitants who were looking on interfered. Some of them muttered a few words, which were explained to us as simply meaning “Drunken Nazarene!” The ancient Egyptians had their sacred bulls;—how many of our own countrymen degrade themselves beneath the level of brutes!

We drove out to Heliopolis, supposed to be the site of On, mentioned in Scripture in connection with the domestic life of

Joseph (Gen. xli. 45),—"And Pharaoh gave him to wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-pherah, priest of On." There is only one solitary obelisk standing on the plain where the city of the sun once stood, and the hieroglyphics are as sharply cut as on the day they were finished. It may be reasonably supposed that a city consecrated to the worship of the sun would be built according to the highest ideas of Egyptian splendour at the time. That lonely obelisk is the last landmark on the site of a great city, bearing testimony to the terrible completeness of the desolation that has swept over this spot, and but for this last vestige the site itself might have been utterly lost. Among the mounds of this buried city, with what additional interest we read these words: "Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord." Not another vestige stands erect. Here and there a broken column or obelisk may be seen lying in the fields, like a stray boulder borne down by a resistless torrent. We walked for more than an hour over heaps of broken pottery, as if the whole city had been built of baked clay. The ruins are, doubtless, under these dunes, on which not a green blade of any kind is to be seen. Fields of luxuriant verdure lie beyond: and the brief scriptural allusion to Joseph and his wife was in itself quite sufficient to throw the glow of warm hearts, the light of domestic affection, over this desolate waste. Plato is said to have studied here at a famous school, but the story of Joseph, and the bright picture of his home, were uppermost in our mind.

On our way back we visited the traditional sycamore, under the shadow of which the Virgin Mother is said to have sat when the Holy Family found shelter in this land. A hatchet was handed to us by an Arab, who kept reminding us of bak-sheesh, and we cut a small piece off, with very little faith in the tradition; and yet, after all, why should it be so? as well this spot as another. We did not come to doubt and to question, but to believe, and take things as they are. Why leave home at all if everything is to be thrown into the crucible of unbelief?

During our stay in Cairo, we had much pleasant intercourse with the agents of the American mission, and were delighted with the tokens we saw of the good effected by their labours. Had that mission done nothing more than educate the little girl who became the Maharanee-Dhuleep-Singh, it would have accomplished a very important work. Many of our readers are doubtless aware of the romantic love story of this Prince and his young bride. There is nothing more wonderful in the "Thousand and One Nights." It would read like a second book of Esther—another proof that truth is not seldom stranger than fiction. This is not the place to enter fully into details, but a few may be given in connection with this oriental tale of romance.

When the young Prince Dhuleep-Singh, who is the son of the famous Runjeet-Singh, the late king of the Sikhs, was on his way to India, he happened to visit the mission schools at Cairo. He was struck with the appearance and manners of a girl of some fifteen years of age, who was then acting as pupil teacher in one of the rooms. Her mother was an Abyssinian, and when very young had been stolen and sold as a slave. This was her only child, and they both lived together in the same humble dwelling. The girl had been brought to the mission school, where she received a Christian education, and gave her young heart, it is believed, to Christ. The visits of the Prince were frequently repeated; his affection increased; and at last he revealed to the missionaries the honourable feelings and intentions which he cherished. They were all greatly taken by surprise, and none more so than the girl herself. Her desire was to live and die in connection with a school from which she had received such benefit. Dhuleep-Singh was obliged to sail for India, but as yet he had not obtained her consent to the marriage, and it was only after much persuasion on the part of her best friends that she saw it to be her duty to agree to the proposal. The ladies must excuse us for passing over the details of this remarkable courtship. Suffice to say that, after

the return of the Prince from India, he was married to his young bride by the Rev. Mr. Hogg, one of the missionaries, who was deeply interested in their mutual welfare. On the day of his marriage, he sent her with a donation of a thousand sovereigns to the school where she had been taught, and this gift has been renewed on every anniversary of their marriage day. They were received with much motherly affection by the Queen at Windsor, where their first-born child was baptized, and received the name of Victor Albert. The Maharanee now adorns a high station, and is acknowledged on all hands to be eminently worthy of the place she fills in that exalted Christian home with so much native grace and dignity.

We should not omit to mention that we also found Miss Whately, the daughter of the late Archbishop, doing a good work amongst the children of Cairo, with great self-sacrifice, perseverance, and womanly tact.

Our greatest difficulty, before starting for the desert, was in making choice of a dragoman. Ibrahim Gabriel, a Cairene and a Copt, was strongly recommended to us, and we selected him. He engaged an Arab sheikh of the name of Saleh, who had encamped with some of his tribe and their camels outside the walls. The sheikh came into the city, and we all went together to the British consulate, where a contract was drawn up and duly signed by all parties. This agreement was written in Arabic, and a translation in English was handed to us. The copy in Arabic was read over to the dragoman and the sheikh. The latter could neither read nor write. He took a signet ring from some part of his loose dress—a ring to which he evidently attached much importance, and handed it to the consul, who rubbed the seal over with prepared ink. This seal was affixed to the end of the contract, and in this way the sheikh signified his assent. He was to furnish a sufficient number of men and camels for the journey; the dragoman was to provide all other necessaries, such as tents, bedding, provisions, servants, and horses, when the latter were required.

A young American lady and gentleman, husband and wife, joined our party at Cairo, and their pleasant company did much to lighten the journey. This addition of two obliged us to make some little change in our contract, which was arranged at the consul's. We have never met with anyone who could quote the English poets with such amazing facility, or who had such a retentive memory, as this American friend. A word or a line was quite sufficient to start him on a long and intricate passage, which he could repeat not only correctly, but with great rhetorical effect. He was an excellent companion, and did much to cheer our solitary way through the desert by his quotations from the poets.

Our camels, to the number of some twenty, and as many men, were sent on several days before us, to await our arrival at Suez, as we could save a journey of three or four days in the desert by taking the railway. On the morning we started some Moslem festival was to be held on the following day at Tanta. It was scarcely possible to get near the railway station for the inextricable confusion occasioned by an immense crowd of Moslems, who were proceeding thither. They literally trod one upon another. It was in vain we tried to force our way through this surging sea of turbaned heads. By the kindness of a friend, we managed to get to the platform by a private door. We were shocked by the scene we now witnessed. Two stout fellows, armed with sticks, stood at the little turn-gate leading from the railway office to the platform. They kept constantly belabouring the people, who eagerly pressed to get through, and fast and thick the blows fell on heads, hands, and shoulders. Neither age nor sex was spared. This was to prevent actual suffocation, so desperately eager were the people to reach the train. Several poor women, who fell in their efforts to get to the platform, were also struck by the fellows, who laid on with their sticks in every direction. These would not break bones, but they must have left livid marks, for the dress in every case was too light to afford any protection from the blows.



We stood utterly amazed at the barbarity of the scene. It was humiliating to see how the crowd meekly took this beating without attempting the slightest resistance, and how lightly they treated the whole affair; for, on getting through, they laughed and shook themselves, and hurried into the carriages, which were scarcely so good as our cattle trucks. Many of them had beds, and large quantities of provisions, and they were all delighted they had got through, and had secured their places in the great rough boxes, in the bottom of which they squatted themselves, for there were no seats. Striking with sticks is a very common thing in the East; and this may serve to give additional point to the Apostle's injunction—which may seem strange to our Western ideas—when he says that a bishop must be “no striker.”

The dragoman's wife came to the station to see him off. She was accompanied by a very interesting-looking girl of some ten years of age, their only child. Ibrahim has property to a considerable amount; he lives in a good house in Cairo, and is in easy circumstances; but on asking him if his girl had been at school, he replied with a smile that “school was not the custom here for girls—that she had never been at one, and could not read.” On telling him that he might break through the custom and give his child the benefit of a good education, he shrugged his shoulders and said, “That be one very strange thing here—girls made to keep house.” He told us that he did not intend to send her to school, or teach her to read, for no woman, he emphatically declared, had any need of such a thing. It was enough if she was taught to use her needle, and his intention was to make her a tailor. He professes to be a Coptic Christian, but even amongst his community such are the prevailing ideas in reference to the education of women. In this respect the Copt has yielded to the views of the Mohammedan.

After a long delay we got off at last for Suez, through the desert. We were not long on our way when, to our great surprise, we seemed to be drawing near to the sea. This was our

first experience of the mirage. During our journey we had several beautiful specimens. We halted at some very solitary stations, formerly used, we presume, by the Transit Company, where the passengers got out for a little; and it was amusing to hear the fizz and the pop of the ginger beer bottles, and the predominance of the English tongue, in this wide waste. With the exception of our party, all the passengers were proceeding to various parts of India.

## CHAPTER IV.

Major Macdonald. Ice in the Desert. Medical Degree of Hakeem Pasha. First Night in the Desert. Our Dining Table. Arab Sheekh. Mustapha the Cook. Our Attendants Mohammed and Achmed. Ameerie. Hotspur. The Ventriloquist. Our Camels. Funeral at Suez. First Camel Ride. Dress of the Bedouins. Sketch of our Encampment.



N reaching Suez, we found our encampment very near the Red Sea, with Jebel Atakah, or the Mountain of Deliverance, right in front. We had scarcely entered our tent, which was now to be our home for some time, when Major Macdonald, whose tent was pitched in the immediate neighbourhood, called upon us, accompanied by his Arab servant, who, greatly to our surprise and delight, brought large pieces of ice as our first present in the desert. Nothing could have been more welcome on that hot day. It was artificial ice, made at the Peninsular and Oriental Company's establishment at Suez for the use of their ships, and also, we were informed, for our military stations in India, where our soldiers regard it as a great boon. The Major—who, in appearance, reminded us somewhat of our old Professor, Christopher North—has lived for more than twenty years in Wady Megârah, in a most lonely Robinson-Crusoe wigwam sort of dwelling, built, or rather leaning against the face of a rock. He has not a single English attendant, nor one with whom he can converse in his native tongue. There is, at least, a dash of the romantic in his life; but it would probably kill nine out of every ten who tried it. Notwithstanding his long period of self-imposed isolation from society, seldom have we met with a man who had more brilliant conversational powers. Not one of our party will ever forget the night we spent together at Suez. For the long period of

twenty years, the Major has been conducting mining operations with a few Arabs, in search of turquoise. A bad fever, from which he was just recovering, had obliged him to leave his solitary retreat and seek medical advice at Suez. We found his ice very agreeable, and his conversation still more so; the former we could not carry with us—we will ever retain a pleasant impression of the latter. He was of opinion that our tents were pitched not far from the spot where the hosts of Israel crossed the Red Sea.

We were much struck by the bold, bluff, precipitous mountain range, called Jebel Atakah. As the shadows of evening fell, and the moon rose with unclouded splendour, it did not require any effort of imagination to bring up the whole scene recorded in the book of Exodus: the shining of the flaming fire by night, the consternation of the defenceless hosts of Israel, as prostrate in heart and utterly bewildered, they found themselves hemmed in by the sea, entangled in the land, and pursued by the Egyptians.

One of our Arabs came up to the Major with a look of pain and exhaustion; he was very unwell. They had a short talk together, after which the Major asked us if we had brought any medicine from home. Happily, before leaving, we had received from an esteemed medical friend a small medicine chest, containing a quantity of well-selected drugs. We brought our box, and the Major took out a couple of pills which he thought would suit the poor fellow best, and requested us to administer the dose. We did so with as professional an air as we could assume, never dreaming what would be the result. This was enough in the estimation of the Arabs: we must be a distinguished "medicine man," and then and there we received our medical degree, and were ever afterwards honoured throughout the whole of the desert with the title of "Hakeem Pasha." It was in vain we told the dragoman to inform the sheikh and the Arabs that we were no "Hakeem." Either he did not tell them, or they did not believe him. It was quite enough for

them that we had a medicine chest and had administered drugs in the presence of the Major, who has acquired great influence over them and secured their confidence and esteem. Every sick case in the encampment was thrown upon our hands; not only so, but our fame spread to all the Arabs we chanced to meet. We tried to bear our honours meekly, and acting upon the Major's advice, never in any case refused to prescribe, taking care, of course, that if the drug did no good it would do no harm; and strange to say, all our patients got better. If we had no payments, we had abundance of salaams and many a "Kartir heirek, keteer, keteer,"—"Thank you, thank you, very much."

We were obliged to put the best face on the profession and the honours which were thus thrust upon us, and we can honestly say that, to the best of our ability, we did credit to both. We had patent medicines, and that is not what every quack can say. The pill that was in greatest demand was one which, from its active properties, was emphatically characterised by the Arabs as "the gazelle!" This pill wrought wonders in the desert, so our Arabs thought. We had occasionally recourse to blue-pill and colocynth; to quinine very frequently, as it is one of the best medicines that can be administered in cases of fever, a disease to which travellers are very much exposed in passing through the desert; but "the gazelle" was our sheet anchor in almost every case, and it never failed with the Arabs to put all to rights. Many a hearty laugh we now take at the whole thing, for we were obliged to look very wise and knowing to our patients, and never in any case refusing to give them something from our chest. It would never have done, according to Arab notions, for a Hakeem to refuse to prescribe something, and many besides the Bedouins have the same idea of the healing art. Only once did we shake our head again and again, in token that we could do nothing. It was pitiful to see the look of disappointment of a young woman at Nakhul, when she led her father from our tent in a

state of almost total blindness. They returned in a little, but we were again obliged to dismiss the case without attempting to prescribe. The disappointment of both was extreme. The dragoman, when he saw how matters stood, said somewhat vehemently in English, "Give some pill; don't shake head, and they'll hope all time!"

We saw how easy it is to drift into quackery, and how its professors can obtain for a time an influence and a position truly astonishing. It was matter of much regret to us that we had not made the noble art of healing a special object of study. Our brief experience as a Hakeem has deeply convinced us of the vast importance of medical missions in the propagation of the Christian faith in the "dark places of the earth." The medical missionary has access to parties and spheres of influence which an ordinary missionary cannot hope to reach. In our own case, had we known Arabic, and the practice of medicine, what fine opportunities in the way of teaching, as well as in healing, would have been presented to us, even among the wandering tribes of the Sinaitic peninsula.

Notwithstanding all the novelty of our first night in the desert, the incessant chattering of our Arabs for hours as they sat round the camp fires, and the occasional low grumbings of our camels, we managed to get a few broken snatches of sleep, and next morning rose, performed our ablutions, and took our breakfast in the open air, as we did ever afterwards during the whole of our tent life. Our table was so constructed that it could be easily taken down and packed; the supports could be folded up like a large camp stool. Over these, when stretched out, two boards were placed, and then the table cloth, which was kept as clean as daily packing, the absence of a bleaching green, and but a scant supply of water would permit. The legs of the table were kept together by a stout cord, which on one occasion gave way when all the breakfast was laid out and we were just stretching out our hands to begin. There was a sudden collapse, and the whole materials went crash into the

sand. There was first wonder depicted on every face as to the cause of the catastrophe, and then loud laughter, as each began to pick up the *débris* of his breakfast. Beyond the spilling of our tea, little harm was done, for the sand was very dry, and could be easily shaken off.

We may as well at this point introduce to our readers a few of the more prominent members of our encampment. The dragoman and the sheikh have already made their salaam, but we have still a few words more about the latter. We were rather taken aback with his appearance the first time we met him in the Ezbekyeh. He rose from the sand, where his camels lay around him, and kindly offered us a small cup of black coffee. But although he did this with the native grace of a gentleman, he really looked, to our unpractised eye, a complete ragamuffin, in his shabby turban and his loose underdress, which seemed to be a shirt and a pair of short drawers in one piece, ending a little below the knee, and fastened round the waist with a belt. In addition to this, there is usually worn a coarse cloak of camel's hair, with stripes of white and brown, but as the day was hot he had dispensed with this covering. Sundry articles were stuck round his belt, such as a tobacco-pipe, the stem of which was like a short black staff; two or three daggers in sheaths, and a sword about double the length of these. His breast, legs, and arms were almost all bare. His sandals, if they really deserved this name, were very much the worse for wear, and seemed to be nothing more than a piece of a dried fish skin fastened by a thong, and which barely covered the sole of his foot. There was nothing venerable about him, either in age or appearance. He was a little beyond the prime of life, and rather short and thick-set for a Bedouin. His face, which had never known a razor, had all the hirsute appendages in full. His look was rather dull and forbidding in the Consul's office, but he was there completely out of his element. He belonged to the Towara tribe, and he and the men who were with him seemed to be quite a different race of beings when

they got into the desert. In the city they were dull and lifeless; among their own sands they walked erect, with elastic steps, and made a sudden transition from the grave to the gay. On better acquaintance we found that our sheikh had a most friendly eye, and this was really the expressive index of the man's nature. He was most kind and obliging, and we had often reason to admire his judicious tact as a peacemaker, and the way he managed his men when any difficulty arose. By and by we got quite a liking for him, and can never but think kindly of him. All blessings on thy head, thou genuine son of the desert, if thy feet are still treading thy native sands!

We had an excellent cook, an elderly man, a Mohammedan, from Cairo, and so much an Oriental all over, that you could not look at his face without being vividly reminded of the cooks of Bagdad, as described in the "Arabian Nights." We have still a most savoury recollection of his culinary preparations, especially his soups, which were truly delicious at the close of a fatiguing day's march. In this department, Soyer himself could not have done better. Like a true son of the Koran, he had several wives, and spoke of them all with much affection. He had one very great defect, however; he could not make tea, neither would he learn to do it. He seemed to treat the fragrant leaf with perfect contempt, as utterly beneath his notice, so that we were unanimously installed by our party as tea-maker. This brought us at times into rather unpleasant rivalry with Mustapha the cook. He could not be brought to believe that boiling water was necessary to make good tea, and nothing would ruffle the temper of the kindly old man so much as the morning shout from the tent door, which was the more frequently repeated the more he seemed to feel it, "Boil water, cook!" The pronunciation of each word was very much prolonged, to the great annoyance of Mustapha and the amusement of the Arabs, who got to understand them, and who enjoyed the irritation which they produced—"Bo—il wa—ter, co—o—k!" He felt every shout to be a challenging of his culinary skill,



and each one was met by some emphatic grunts on his part, which were greatly amusing to the whole encampment. But he was a kindly dear old man, and, with the exception of "Boil water," very obliging; even this irritation was but a momentary ruffle on the surface of his Mohammedan gravity and placid thoughts. We never saw the sun go down on his wrath, and a bit of tobacco put all to rights.

We had two attendants, Mohammed and Achmed, and often would these rogues come and coax us to repeat the obnoxious shout, especially if the day was rather dull and oppressive. Mohammed was a young man of about nineteen, tall, strong, and powerfully built, a native of Thebes. He was extremely simple and confiding, naturally indolent, but when roused was like a lion both for strength and fierceness. Poor fellow, he was greatly troubled with ophthalmia, but he was cheerful and very frequently singing. He was a great big boy, fond of fun and frolic. Achmed was much older and married, and his various moods of humour, shrewd observation, sulkiness, stolid silence, obsequious devotion, and wheedling flattery, were quite a study.

Amongst the Bedouins the only one of mark besides the sheikh was Ameerie, one of the camel drivers. He was very fond and proud of his camel, which, out of the whole twenty-one, was by far the best, and was, therefore, unanimously set aside for the use of the lady. There was a superior bearing both about the camel and its master that struck you at once. He was darker than the rest, lithe and nimble as a gazelle, with an eye like an eagle when anything excited him, and when he fired a shot it was always deadly. Everything he did had a native grace about it that won all our hearts. He was often asked if he would not come to England, but his unfailing reply was that he had a wife and children in the desert: "My home is here." He was tasteful about his dress. In this respect he might be considered rather buckish, a Bedouin swell. In his whole bearing there was a marked contrast between him and the rest of his companions.

A firebrand of a fellow, who was always flaring up at something, was the "Hotspur" of the tribe. He and his camel were continually growling; and the sheikh had often to interfere between him and the dragoman, or some others, when angry words threatened to come to blows. Another was a first-rate ventriloquist, who greatly startled us on our first day's march by imitating the roar of a lion, and then the plaintive cry of a hyena, and we had more than once to look suspiciously around before we discovered the cause of alarm. To relieve the monotony of the way, and as if seized by some sudden impulse, he would imitate the ass, the jackal, the dog, the goat, the turkey-cock, the crying of a child, and the attempts of a mother to hush it to sleep. All the Arabs were alike in this, that they were tanned with the heat of the sun. They had no superfluous flesh about them; and their appearance betokened a life of frequent hardship and privation. Their dress was very light, like that of the sheikh already described, but although the general outline was much the same, scarcely two dresses were alike. One had a covering of rich purple silk, which had seen better days somewhere else than in the desert; another had a sheep's skin thrown over his back, the inside turned out, and this served as a baking-board at night on which to knead their cakes. All had some sort of warlike weapon stuck in their belts—an old sword or a dagger, invariably a tobacco-pipe, and several had long matchlocks, of a very ancient description, slung across their shoulders. Two or three of them were very savage in appearance, others had a soft and even feminine look.

Having said so much about our men, we now give our impressions of the camel. We did not find camel riding, on the whole, unpleasant, after the first two days or so. Of course the swinging, see-saw motion is very peculiar, and to many very fatiguing. The first attempt at mounting is generally very ludicrous; for, as the camel has an extra joint, it can only get to its feet by a series of rather awkward movements;

and the inexperienced rider, when it rises from the ground, is in great danger of being thrown either over its head or its tail. First of all, he is quite at a loss how to get on, whether he should walk over the neck, climb the sides, or ascend from the back, and his perplexity is certainly not diminished by the ominously threatening looks and grunts of his new companion. Of all animals employed in the service of man, the camel is the most ill-natured, peevish, complaining, and unsocial. Approach it for the purpose of giving it a kindly pat, before mounting, or laying anything on it, however light, and it will turn at once its frightful mouth upon you wide open (and such a mouth!), and show its green and slimy teeth, and make the most hideous noises, in a long-continued series of grunts and growls, as if it were then and there to be killed outright. Its face then presents the most intense look of ill-nature, mingled with the most imploring look for pity. This protest, as above indicated, continues during the whole process of mounting or loading, and when there are some twenty or thirty camels in one encampment, it is a combination of the most discordant sounds. Add to all this, the shouting, yelling, screaming, and angry quarrels of the Arabs, every morning when they are packing the camels, and it is hard to say which is the more unpleasant of the two. This much must be said, however, for the camel, that its noisy demonstrations generally cease as soon as it is loaded and gets to its feet. It will then patiently plod on for many hours together, under the burning heat of the sun; but it does not seem to have the slightest social instincts on the long and weary march. It will not go side by side, or "*sowa, sowa*" with another for any length of time. It will follow in rank and file fashion, but seldom alongside of any companion, unless actually compelled to do so by the driver. In point of intelligence, it stands to the horse about the same distance as the cow. It is thus difficult to pursue a conversation for any time in camel riding. You and your travelling companion are deep in some interest-

ing subject, when all at once your camel sees at some distance a favourite shrub called the *ghurkhud*, and it is off at a tangent in spite of all your efforts; and when you look round, you find the camel of your friend pursuing the same tactics on the other side, and the wide space now left between puts a stop to your pleasant talk. When the end of the day's journey is reached, there is another series of prolonged grunts and growls when the camels are brought to their knees that they may be unpacked, or that you may dismount, so that the day begins and ends with the most discordant sounds. "Oh, do not touch me, I'll bite; —I will!" seems to be the interpretation of its desperate excitement, as if it were really sore all over, and could not bear to be touched. It has no affection, no gratitude for its master. It is all one who owns it. When it loses the way, it never attempts to find it, but wanders on; and it will fall into the hands of a new master without a single care or reflection about its former owner. At the end of the day's journey, and when there is any pasture to be had, its fore-legs are tied together by a rope, so that it cannot go any distance from the encampment, for the Arabs know well that if it did, it would probably never come back, or be very difficult to find. The whole life of the poor camel, as we saw it, especially at the commencement of a journey, seemed to be a constant protest (and there may be too good reason for this) against what it regarded as cruel wrong and oppression on the part of man.

With all these drawbacks, however, it is a most useful animal, and well worthy of the name it has received, the "ship of the desert;" for no other beast of burden could be so serviceable to man in the same place. It can travel for a long time without food or drink, and this is a wonderful instance of adaptation, without which the desert would really be impassable. "It is the last straw that breaks the camel's back," is a proverb, which shows how much and how long it will endure, and what heavy burdens are laid upon it, one thing after another, till the last and the lightest literally breaks its back. It knows this, and also the

difficulty it has in rising, and the growling of the poor creature during its process of loading may after all be its urgent protest against a cruel wrong continued for ages, an outcry which man has heard unheeded for thousands of years. If there is not a great deal of actual patience about the camel, there must be an immense amount of stolid endurance, for it plods on till it becomes utterly worn out by age or work; and when it does lie down in sheer exhaustion, it is said that it never rises again—it lies down to die. It was a very painfully suggestive sight to witness on our way through the desert the numerous skeletons of camels that had fallen down under their burdens and found relief only in death. Every vestige of skin or flesh was gone, and the great hulk of bones lay whitening in the sun long after the vultures had done their work. We never looked upon the sight without being reminded of the touching words of Longfellow, pointing in another and higher direction,—

“He, the young and strong, who cherished  
Noble longings for the strife,  
By the roadside fell and perished,  
Weary with the march of life!”

On the morning after our arrival at Suez, we strolled down towards the sea-shore, and came upon a Mohammedan graveyard. It was Friday (the Mohammedan Sunday), and many women and children were sitting among the white-washed tombs and recently-made graves, uttering piteous lamentations. The grief, in some cases, seemed to be assumed for the time, and had a whimpering, artificial cast about it; but many of them were really in distress, and their wailing reminded us of the great cry there was in Egypt at the smiting of the first-born. We afterwards frequently met with this practice of wailing for the dead. On the same morning we saw the burial of a young person. The body was wrapt in a white winding sheet, and carried on an open stretcher, or bier, by two men. It was lifted off and laid in the grave along with the dead clothes. There was no coffin, but a few loose boards were

driven in around the corpse and covered up with sand. No one was present besides the two men, who did their painful work in complete silence. We withdrew, lest we might be considered intruding on a scene of sorrow.

After a great deal of very emphatic grumbling on the part of the camels, and screaming and quarrelling amongst our men, they were at last ready to start, and we sent them round the head of the gulf shortly after breakfast. Instead of following them, we remained to stroll about Suez—a wretchedly dull place—and about two o'clock in the afternoon, we took a boat and sailed right across to the Quarantine, the transition from Africa to Asia having been made in a few minutes. Major Macdonald kindly accompanied us to the other side, to see us fairly started. We took lunch in one of the deserted apartments of the Quarantine, and our camels having arrived, we proceeded to mount them.

Acting on the Major's advice, we laid hold of the two projecting pieces of wood, or horns of the saddle; but notwithstanding all our precautions, the first movement nearly sent us over the head, and the next gave us an awkward hitch towards the tail. The beast rose to its feet, and we were raised far above the hot sands of the desert. After we were fairly mounted, the Major shook hands and wished us a good journey. On looking back we saw him waving his English hat, which was the last of the kind we saw for a long time. He returned to Suez with the intention of following us to his lonely retreat in Wady Megarah in a week or so after we parted.

Ere we start on our first march into the desert, let us pause for a few moments to photograph the whole establishment. What an admirable group for a painting! A score of camels and as many men make a long procession, for, as already observed, the camels prefer to move forward in Indian-file fashion, and there is a space between each longer or shorter according to their humour. Ibrahim is at the head of our cavalcade, mounted on a camel with a large quantity of

baggage suspended on each side. He has dressed himself in his best for the first day's start, in a loose, flowing olive-green robe, and his *kefieh*, or headdress, with its red and yellow stripes glittering brightly in the sun, which we begin to feel already intensely hot. All our Arabs are now much more lively than when we first made their acquaintance on the sands of the Ezbekyeh before Shepherd's Hotel. They now seem like a different race of beings, for the Bedouins are always out of their element in a town, and before you can see them to advantage you must be with them on their own native sands. Their whole bearing is now quite different—their eye kindles, their step is light, and their movements are all unrestrained in their desert air. They are neither a merry nor a humorous race at the best; their life is too hard and the heat too great for this. In the town they are like fish out of water; when they get back to the desert they feel restored to their native element, and for a time are like a lot of boys let loose from school. No two of them are dressed alike, save in this particular, that they are entirely destitute of covering from the foot to the knee. The desert is not the place for a Highland kilt, for the heat leaves the leg with but a very diminutive calf. It is not a dress that would suit the Bedouin, not because it wants lightness, but because he is so thin and spare he would be lost in it. The hose would not stick on his shrunk shanks. His dress is like his own diet, very spare; like his own desert home, free and wide, and places no restraint whatever upon its wearer. At first we thought it an unmanly garb, but we got accustomed to it. The head gear is quite a study, and the swarthy faces under it no less so.

Some may wonder what we did with fully a score of camels. They were all required. Five were constantly needed by ourselves for riding. All our own personal baggage, and all the baggage of the encampment, were distributed among the rest. We had two large boxes or canteens, containing all our cooking utensils, such as knives, forks, spoons, metal plates, basins, and

cups, with all the other necessities for a well-stocked table. Our candlesticks and lanterns were also contained in the same boxes; if the former hailed from Birmingham they certainly did it no credit. Our lanterns were thoroughly Eastern, made of linen, and saturated in some substance like wax, which increased the transparency. This cloth is attached to a circular tin frame at each end, and when in use is drawn out to a foot or so in length; but when packed, the whole is folded in a small compass in the largest ring. These canteens were quite a sufficient load for a camel, and one box served to balance the other on each side. Two or three camels were employed in carrying barrels of Nile water and bags of charcoal. The tent-poles, camp-stools, iron bedsteads and bedding, required as many more. In addition to all this, we had the provisions necessary for five or six weeks in the desert. The dragoman told us he started with six hundred oranges and one hundred lemons; if so, it is still a mystery what became of them. We had a large number of flour loaves, but they were very stale long before we were half through the desert, and we were very glad to get a little fresh bread at the convent of Mount Sinai. Our heaviest part of the baggage was the barrels of Nile water. From these our *zemzemias*, or leather-bottles, were supplied, and the water was so churned, wrought, and shaken in the barrel and the bottle by the swinging motion of the camel and all but boiled by the heat, that it was a strange compound long before we were done with it. A most interesting part of our baggage consisted of wicker coops, nearly as large as some of the Egyptian mud huts. These were for carrying our poultry. The one was sadly overcrowded with live chickens and pigeons, but as some half-dozen of them were killed every day, the accommodation gradually increased as we went along. The other coop was occupied by some eight or nine turkeys—sonsy-looking fellows—which were put into their prison-house in fine feather when they left Cairo. Ibrahim, of his own accord, undertook to provide a turkey for our Sun-



day dinner all the time we were in the desert, and they must have been brought up at Goshen, judging from the fine condition in which they made their first appearance.

Little did they know the hardships that were before them in the wilderness. All our poultry suffered much from want of water and from exposure to the heat on the march, and the motion of the camel seemed to make them all sick. When we reached the encampment at night, they were generally let out of their prison to stretch their legs, feed, and drink, but it was evident from their appearance that they did not agree with desert life. It is anticipating somewhat our narrative, but this seems to be the proper time to say, now that we are on the subject of our poultry, that we did pity the last turkey that was left of all his companions when we came to the borders of the desert. He was rather a bit of a fop—a *Turkish swell*—when we started, and took a special pride in his scarlet ornaments; but all the lustre was out of his eye, and there was not even a tinge of redness in the withered and tawdry appendages about his neck. One of our party observed that he was *awfu' pookit* and *oorie*-looking. His feathers were nearly all gone, and, for a turkey, he was evidently sick at heart, so that we really questioned, in the event of his being killed, whether it would have been right to bring him on the table. It was too bad to make him the subject of our jokes, as we did at times. His very sickly and woe-begone appearance—the last of his race in the desert—made him look the very symbol of the sick man, his far-famed namesake, Turkey, the Sultan, or the Turkish empire. Our poultry required another camel, and these two coops, with some other *et ceteras*, went swinging through the desert, one coop suspended on each side of our heaviest beast of burden. There were other necessities for our camp-life, which were all distributed among the other camels, so that they had all enough to do.

And now we are on the move for Ayun Mousa. What a strange procession! What a sensation it would have produced

could it have been suddenly transferred to one of the principal streets of any of our large cities ! No procession of a wild beast show, or of an equestrian company, ever entered any town with one tithe of the grotesque appearance, or anything like the ludicrous grouping, which our desert procession had, as we slowly glided on into the first wady on our way to the "Wells of Moses." A long line of more than a score of camels was something in itself, not to mention the riders in their desert costume, and the Arabs in their picturesque light garb, with their strange-looking head-gear and sandalled feet. And then what a motley grouping of baggage, perched on the backs of camels, or dangling by their sides, as they go see-sawing along ! Tents and tent-poles, panniers and portmanteaus, bags and boxes, water-barrels and hencoops, charcoal and live turkeys ; add to all this the swarthy and tanned visages of the camel drivers, and the contrast which the European dress presents to theirs, shown by the few travellers who have brought all these elements of Eastern life together, and you have a procession which, had Dominie Sampson seen, he would have given vent to his famous ejaculation, "Prodigious ! most prodigious !"

## CHAPTER V.

Wonderful Tints. Wells of Moses. More Ice in the Desert. Deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea. Marah. Elim. Wady Useit. Wady Tayibeh. Encampment by the Red Sea. Workshop of the Cyclops. Desert Scenery. Wady Magarah. Major Macdonald's Home in the Desert. The Written Valley. Wady Feiran. The Bedouin Paradise. Mount Serbal. The Unfortunate Kid. The Sheikh's Present. Arrival at Sinal.



E enjoyed the novelty of our first ride in the desert very much. The see-saw motion of the camel was a new sensation. Our long procession, as it moved forward, had a dash of Eastern romance about it. And then the growing solitude of the wide waste, as we advanced from one wady into another; but above all, the glorious sunset of that first night, and the wondrous tints which it brought out on Er Rahah, the Mountain of Rest. There is something very appropriate in this name. On the opposite shore is the Mountain of Deliverance; yonder is the Mountain of Rest, gleaming in the radiance of departing day, like a flaming wall, to our left. Had we seen anything in a painting at all approaching the wondrous colouring thrown upon the face of these rocks, we would have said at once it was unnatural, and grossly exaggerated; but that scene has taught us never to judge hastily of any picture.

The sun had set, and the shadows of the brief twilight were gathering around us, when we reached the "Wells of Moses." We were agreeably surprised to hear the merry voices of children, and still more so when we found some patches of garden ground won from the burning sands, and enclosed with fences of strong reeds. A white villa, surrounded by a garden, with here and there a few wild palms and bushes,

some fruit trees, flowers, and vegetables, all treated as pets, and tended with great care, form a bright green spot, an oasis, on the borders of this "great and terrible wilderness," a circlet of verdure which still marks the spot where probably the Israelites had their first halting place after crossing the Red Sea. From one old clump of palms, six rugged and stunted trunks extend their feathery branches over one of the Wells. This object is generally placed in the foreground in any engraving of this deeply interesting spot. The children whose voices we heard belonged to an Arab family residing here for the purpose of keeping the gardens in order. The white villa, which in the distance we thought at first a tent, belonged to a gentleman in Suez who is fond of making agricultural experiments in the desert. The patches that he has brought under cultivation around this spot, which, from its historical associations, is a household word throughout Christendom, show what irrigation and culture may yet do on a much larger scale for the waste places of the earth. He comes over occasionally and spends a few days at his solitary "country house," which certainly meets the wishes of the poet so far as loneliness, but not so far as shade, is concerned—

"Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness,  
Some boundless contiguity of shade!"

It was evident that another party, or parties, had arrived before us, judging from the Arabs and camels that were resting round the camp fires; including our own, there could not be fewer than about fifty camels about the Wells. We pitched our tents near one of the encampments, and had scarcely commenced dinner when we received a very polite card, intimating that Captain S—— and party would be delighted to see us at the neighbouring villa when we had dined. We were still near friends, and lingering within the bounds of civilisation. Of course we accepted the invitation, and were greatly pleased to find that Captain S—— was one of our own countrymen, in the service of the Peninsular and Oriental Company, and

intended to join his ship for the Mauritius in a day or two. He was accompanied by a friend, with his wife and family, from Suez, and we soon discovered that this friend was a native of Glasgow, and also engaged in the same service. We had a good Scotch "crack" for an hour or two, and the clannish feeling of our countrymen was very manifest. Much to our surprise, ice was again produced, and from the same quarter as on the previous occasion. It was our last taste of icy coolness in the desert; the very recollection of it afterwards only tended to increase our thirst, and to beget a desire which could not be gratified. How much we missed it in the marches that followed through the burning sands!

It happened to be full moon when we were at the Wells of Moses, and we do not recollect of ever having seen one of such unclouded splendour. None of our party will ever forget the pleasant stroll we had that glorious night along the shore. The silence was oppressive. Several white tombs were gleaming here and there like sheeted ghosts in the pale moonlight, and this added to the witchery of that witching hour. Jebel Atakah looked dark in this wondrous brightness, for the great mass of the mountain was in shadow. It did not require any effort of imagination to people that sandy waste with the emancipated hosts of Israel, and the shout of victory which rose from this very shore seemed to ring in our ears—

"Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea  
Jehovah has triumphed, His people are free;"

or, in the language of Scripture, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea!" We felt it to be one of earth's most sacred places; the scene of a stupendous display of Divine power, needed by a nation of slaves at the commencement of their wonderful march into the wilderness. What must have been their feelings when the morning broke upon these shores, with the sea flowing on as before, but above their enemies, "whom they would see no more for ever!"—and they stood a

chosen people to begin the history of the world, free, delivered, and led out by the mighty hand of God into this vast solitude.

Next morning we drew water out of one of the wells by means of a *shadoof*, and sat down at a couple of small circular stones, at which two women were engaged grinding corn. We got a few handfuls of grain, and soon reduced it to meal, greatly to the amusement of the women, who kept at some distance, the paterfamilias all the while reminding us of baksheesh, and the mothers taking good care to plead for the little ones. Before leaving Glasgow we paid a visit to Mr. Anderson's Polytechnic, and provided ourselves with a large quantity of ornaments and nick-nacks, such as brooches, rings, mounted pins, knives, scissors, small flutes, pop-guns, etc. Many an itinerant merchant has driven a large trade at a country fair, to the astonishment of the rustics, with a much smaller stock than we had. It was at the Wells of Moses we first produced some of our showy trinkets. The women did not know the use of the brooches or pins, but the rings were highly valued. These daughters of Eve were, in one respect, so like the daughters of the horse-leech, as described by Solomon, that our Polytechnic stores, ample though they were, would soon have been exhausted, even at our first halting place. We learned to show but few of our tempting wares at a time, and to reserve them for special occasions.

It was with no ordinary feelings that we read in our tents, before leaving the Wells of Moses, the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of Exodus, so intimately associated with this sacred spot, and committed ourselves and the dear ones at home to the guidance of the same great God who went forward before His people in the pillar of cloud by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night. One of our party recited with much emotion the appropriate words of the hymn—

“ When Israel, of the Lord beloved,  
Out from the land of bondage came,  
Their fathers' God before them moved,  
An awful Guide, in cloud and flame.

“ By day, along the astonished lands,  
The cloudy pillar glided slow ;  
By night, Arabia's crimson'd sands,  
Returned the fiery column's glow.”

Bidding our friends, who had so kindly entertained us the previous night, good-bye, we now left off all intercourse with the European and African side of things for a long time. We would fain have taken some ice with us for our day's march, but we had no means of preserving it in such a heat. Leaving our camels to follow, we walked forward past the reed fences which enclose the little gardens from the drifting sands—past the stunted palms and bushes, the *shadoof*, and the wells, and were soon out of sight of any trace of a green thing, with the mountain range of Er Rahah still on our left, and the bright blue sea sparkling on our right.

At the “Wells of Moses” we were, doubtless, on the track of the Israelites, and often did we think of that mighty host moving on from one halting-place to another, under the guardianship of God, to meet with Him and hear His voice at the covenant altar in Sinai. To the eye of faith, and not mere fancy, these sands were again peopled with a great host, as we read the morning passage: “So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur: and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah” (Ex. xv. 22, 23).

Our way for the next two days lay through the wilderness of Shur, a border strip of desert between the mountains and the sea. For the first day's march, the most prominent object in the scenery was an immense mass of rock rising considerably above the mountain range to our left, called by the appropriate name, referring to its shape, “Tasseh Sudr,” the Cup of Sudr. There is a striking resemblance between the modern and ancient name of this region. On the second day we all alighted at the bitter waters of Marah. There is now but a very scant supply

in a hole under a limestone rock. It was brackish and unpleasant to the taste, but not so bitter as we expected. Some of our Arabs tasted it and made wry faces. They did little more than moisten their lips. Shaking their heads, they said it was "mushtaib," bad, and motioned us away. We filled a small bottle with it (as we did at the Wells of Moses), as a memorial of a sacred spot where God revealed Himself by a new and endearing name, Jehovah Rophi, the Lord thy Healer. A few hours more brought us to Wady Ghurundel, the supposed site of Elim, where, we are told in Scripture, there were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees. "And they encamped there by the waters" (Ex. xv. 27).

The Sinaitic peninsula is a great network of wadies, and these, it cannot be too often repeated, are the dry beds of rivers—in short, river courses without water. The desert must present a strange appearance when the great flood tides are at their height, and the winter rains have filled these channels with mighty torrents, that work their way, like so many huge serpents, through a wide ocean of sand, or in deep ravines or gorges between high walls of rock, and leave everywhere the marks of their giant strength in clefts, fissures, and high embankments. Resistless torrents, drifting sands, have in the course of ages produced the strangest formations, leaving immense masses here and there in utter loneliness, and towering far above the sandy waste, sometimes like an old fortification, a pyramid, a great mutilated sphinx, or some hoary sentinel of the desert, over which they cast a grateful shade. One of these solitary masses struck us much on the way to Wady Ghurundel. It stood alone in a great space, which rose round it like a vast amphitheatre. Has Moses not addressed, from the summit of that old-world rock, the hosts of Israel, who filled this great circle? A huge crag, jutting out from a mountain mass, supplied us with all the outlines of a face of immense proportions; Lord Brougham was suggested in connection with it, from some supposed resemblance between the two, and we



always think of that weird-looking cliff as associated with the name of the "old man eloquent."

The Israelites could scarcely have approached Elim with greater gladness than we did that night. Welcome was the sight of our camp fires and our white tents, which were pitched and ready to receive us; and still more welcome was Mustapha's delicious soup, after the thirst and fatigue of the day's march. Next morning early we examined this locality, and it is just such a place as would most likely be chosen as the camping ground of Israel. We did not find much water, but there are still many palm-trees—not the fine majestic palm of Egypt, shooting like an obelisk to the height of fifty or sixty feet, bearing aloft its coronal of beautiful leaves, but the wild palm of the desert, either trunkless and spreading its leaves from the sand, like great ferns, or with in-kneed and gnarled hairy trunk, the savage of his race, fighting for his very life in this arid waste, in company with the feathery tamarisk and the stunted acacia, the former resembling our silver birch. In short, the place is a wild palm jungle, but glad were we to see anything green, however tangled and dishevelled the whole might be. The branches were so interlaced and entangled that it was impossible to make our way through the thicket, where the hyena and other wild beasts have their lair. The sand was marked here and there by the trail of a small species of serpent. At no great distance from our camp, we ascended a height, and looked down into a great hollow or basin, where some convulsion had torn out the very heart of the desert. The fantastic shapes, the dire confusion were such, that some one of our party named the place "The Devil's Pottery." As we write this, a vivid picture of the awful desolation rises before us. Often did we regret that we had not made geology a special subject of study. This peninsula is a wondrous field for the geologist; what a pity Hugh Miller never visited this region! Its truly singular formations, and the grand historical epoch which has given it an imperishable place in the world's history, would have

furnished materials for what would have been his greatest book.

On the third day after leaving the Wells of Moses, we passed into what a Scotchman would call the "Trossachs," or "Glencoe," district of this region—a great Highland mass of rocks rising between us and the sea, shutting it, for a time, altogether out of view. We gave Wady Useit three or four lines in our journal. Another green spot in the desert, with the bright silver thread of a rill gleaming here and there through a scanty fringe of verdure, and dotted with a few stunted palms, so that some travellers have made this wady a rival with Ghurundel for the site of Elim. Great was our surprise when we entered Wady Tayibeh, or "the bewildering," and found an opening which seemed like an ancient thoroughfare leading to the sea, between high and rugged rocks, presenting an appearance of wild and desolate grandeur. These rocky battlements looked like the dwellings of a race long since departed, and as we threaded our way between them, we were again and again forcibly reminded of some vast city of the dead, silent and deserted. This was, doubtless, the highway of Egypt to the ancient mines in this district; and along this very pathway did the Pharaohs convey their treasures to the seaboard, at no great distance, long before Moses had reached Horeb, and while the whole peninsula was as yet nameless in the records of history. There is an air of mystery about this wady, and we did feel grievously annoyed with our dragoman for hurrying us through it at such a speed, to his old tune of "bad Arabs, robbers," etc. We have still a very vivid recollection of giant rocks, that looked down upon us like colossal statues of Egyptian gods. Our thoughts still linger with a kind of superstitious awe about a great archway through which we got a passing glance of what appeared to be, far up in that mysterious entrance, the broken columns of some vast temple. That it is some grand freak of nature, we have no doubt, yet at this moment we cannot but associate

in our mind a strange, weird-like fascination with that immense sweep of an arch which opens suddenly into that wall of rock. When we were about to turn into it, the shouts of the dragoon startled the echoes of this solitude, and reluctantly tore us from a spot which even now rises up before us in all its solitary grandeur. One scarcely knows whether more to admire the uncouth shapes which these rocks assume, presenting almost every conceivable form, or the various colours with which they are streaked. In all our experience of rock scenery never have we seen anything like these tints, and our readers must excuse the frequent reference to this very striking feature. The sea, which had been hidden for two days behind the mountains, flashed all at once upon us as we came out from this labyrinth of rocks, and we felt a degree of companionship in its very look. The camels stretched their necks, and, snuffing the fresh breeze, pressed forward to the shore. Through this gorge all the host of Israel must have defiled, for the site of no encampment can be so clearly identified in the few but expressive words of Scripture, "And they encamped by the Red Sea" (Num. xxxiii. 10). The sparkle of the blue waves gleaming in the sunshine of a cloudless sky of still more intense blue, was a striking contrast to the white cliffs on the one side, and the black calcined masses of rock on the other.

It is said that when the Tay burst suddenly on the view of the Roman soldiers, they exclaimed "Ecce Tiber!" What must have been the feelings of the Israelites when, coming down this gorge, the waters, through which they had been led but a few days before by the mighty and out-stretched arm of God, again sparkled before them at the end of this valley. Fain would we have lingered for one day at least on the site of this old encampment, with the great mass of Jebel Hummam rising to our right, the high cliffs of Zalima behind our tents, and an immense area all around, which can accommodate a vast multitude; but next day we were early on our march. We preferred to walk that glorious morning on the shell-strewn shore, with

the waves breaking over our feet, and a fringe of seaweed running all along. These few hours of wading and shell gathering at that sacred spot can never be forgotten. We filled our pockets with some of the finest specimens, and now look upon them with peculiar interest. It was here that the provisions which the people had brought from Egypt became exhausted, and all this great host was thrown upon the protection and on the providing care of God. When they faced the sea before at Jebel Atakah, the Egyptians were coming down upon them from behind; and when they met it again at Abou Zalima, famine seemed to hold them in its stern and icy grasp; and now, once more on the same coast, another deliverance was wrought: manna and quails were supplied. We saw, in fancy at least, the whole hosts of ancient Israel spread before us on this sandy plain at the rocky headland of Zalima, and the children gathering these curious shells, or wading in the sparkling waters that murmured at their feet. What a thrilling recollection is now awakened in our mind by that seemingly trivial announcement in the book of Numbers, "And they encamped by the Red Sea!"

Every traveller who has pursued this track by the shore must have been struck by the buttressed appearance of the mountains. These buttresses run tapering upwards from the base, as if to give strength to the overhanging masses above. The formation of some of these reminded us of the Coliseum at Rome. Not far from the sea, we observed a series of immense terraces, or flights of steps, as if running up to a vast temple, the distance between each terrace being so uniform that one would have thought each step or layer had been made by the hand of man. Several parts of the seaboard have a striking resemblance to the Giant's Causeway. We passed through one magnificent wady after another; and if the colouring of the rocks appeared to us wonderful before, all the previous tints that we had seen were dull compared with the hues that gave variety and animation to Wady Murka, and all onward to Mount

Sinai. Mining operations must have been conducted in this region at a very early period. Mountains of what appeared to be *débris* and calcined ashes lay all around. "The Temple of Vulcan," "The Workshop of the Cyclops," were the names we applied to some of the places in this remarkable district. For miles we seemed to be passing over the sites of old foundries, and the mounds of burnt ashes appeared to be so recently thrown out, that one was almost led to look for workmen behind them. We ascended the narrow pass called the Nûkb-el-Bûdrah, the "Pass of the Sword's Point," which winds round the mountain in a series of zigzags, and when on the top of this pass we sat down and gazed in amazement at the scene of wild desolation and grandeur.

We made the following rough jottings in our journal which may perhaps give the reader a better conception of this wonderful region than a more lengthened description.

*April 2nd.*—One would almost think, from the magical tints upon the great walls of rocks, varying with the course of the sun from "dewy morn to dusky eve," and with the condition of the atmosphere, that the pillar of cloud by day, and the shining of the flaming fire by night, had left imperishable traces of colouring upon these sublime pathways of ancient glory, where the very air that hangs over them seems peopled with the voices that spake to the hosts of Israel out of the cloud. All this may be the merest rhapsody to some; but these colours, to the most prosaic, matter-of-fact mind, must appear to be something truly wonderful. This was our first impression, and it was deepened, as we came upon rocks veined, streaked, and *crayoned* all over with green, red, purple, yellow, and grey, and each of these shading off into darker hues, without the slightest sign of vegetable life. We noted again and again the strange, fantastic shapes of the rocks, torn, twisted, and thrown topsy-turvy—immense spaces, covered with gravelly sand, Nature's vast amphitheatres, every here and there surrounded by high rock galleries of many colours—a vulture perched on a cliff, the

very impersonation of loneliness—oppressive silence and solitude—you startle at your own voice—sound carries to an incredible distance here—a bird uttering a few notes, which seem to frighten it—a dwarfed shrub—a lonely stunted tree—not a human being to be seen beyond our own encampment. And it was through this great and terrible wilderness God led His ancient people! Altogether, the scenery to-day has been wonderfully grand and rugged.

How much one is completely removed here from the turmoil of life, from all the exciting topics of the day. What matters it to us whether Gladstone has carried his Reform Bill or not?—no postman's knock—no letters—no plaguy messages—no communications from the outer world. And yet, after all, what would we not give for the briefest letter from the dear ones at home, or for this morning's paper? The faint sweet notes of another bird break the deep silence, but these are tremulous all over, and it seems afraid to sing out in these waste places. Poor bird! there is an eye over thee even in the desert, and thy life is in the hands of One who never slumbers nor sleeps. "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Luke xii. 6, 7).

So much for impressions recorded on the spot. One of our most picturesque halting places was at the entrance of Wady Megarah, so called from the caves where mining operations were carried on by the ancient Egyptians. Our encampment was in a large circle, closed in by very high rocks, and the shadows which crept up these walls in the moonlight added a dash of still more wild and terrific grandeur to the scene. Standing in the centre of this amphitheatre, there seemed to be neither a way in nor out, and for an hour or so we watched the creeping shadows in the moonlight go round and round, and descend from the summit to the base, some portions of the rocky wall being wrapped in gloom, and others appearing in striking contrast, beautifully draped in the silvery light. Our

white tents, our camp fires, our Arabs, wrapped in their loose cloaks, and stretched in sleep among the legs of their camels, never looked so thoroughly oriental as they did that night.

Next day (the fourth since we left the Wells of Moses) found us treading our way through Wady Megarah. The greater part of this wady is like a deep cutting of several hundred feet, with walls of red granite and sandstone on either side. Nowhere have we seen such mountain masses, veined with black and green porphyry. The wady is so closed in that, at some of the turnings, you imagine all further progress must be stopped, just as one feels when sailing on some parts of the Rhine. It was here we first met with the famous rock inscriptions. After an arduous climb on the face of a steep hill, we reached two of the caves. One of these is now wrought by Major Macdonald for turquoise, and he affirms it is the only mine of the kind in the world. The roofs of these caves are supported by pillars, or portions of the rock that have been left standing. Abundant traces of ancient Egypt are to be seen in tablets, hieroglyphics, and portions of broken statues. The whole district must have been one vast mine, from which she drew her mineral wealth.

Deeply did we regret that the Major was not at *home*—and such a home! At his urgent request, we went to see it. Two sides of this rough Highland shieling were formed by the bare rock; the other two of loose stones, as they came to hand. Empty boxes that had contained stores were lying about in all directions, and here and there fragments of the *Times* and other newspapers which had been sent by friends. He had evidently taken great pains with a little garden which he had enclosed; but for want of irrigation during his absence, it looked as bare as the desert from which it had been won. Now that we had seen his solitary dwelling, we were more than ever surprised that he could have spent more than twenty years in this lonely retreat.

There were few places in the peninsula that we looked for-

ward to with so much interest as Wady Mokatteb, the Written Valley. As much time as we could possibly spare was devoted to the examination of the inscriptions; but we felt, on the whole, disappointed, both with the number of these, and the style in which they were executed. Too much importance has been attached by some writers to these rude figures and scratches which are to be found on detached blocks of rock lying about here and there, and also on the face of the soft sandstone cliffs on either side, at no great height. The letters are, for the most part, from two to three inches in length. Several of them occur very frequently, and bear a striking resemblance to some of the signs in Pitman's system of phonography. It was thought at one time that these written rocks would contain much confirmatory evidence in connection with the wanderings of the Israelites, as recorded in the Book of Exodus; and those who held this opinion, of course, maintained the Hebrew origin of these writings. This theory has been exploded by recent investigations, which seem to exhaust the subject, the result being that the dialect is Arabic, with some peculiarities of form; that the writing was done by pilgrims, and consists chiefly of their salutations and names. One thing certain is, that many of the letters can be traced to alphabets which have long since become obsolete, and this is one proof of the great antiquity of these inscriptions. It may be safely affirmed, that they belong to different periods and systems of religion, and represent the Pagan, the Jew, and the Christian. Whatever be the origin of the oldest writings in this valley, one cannot but look on them with deep interest; and they suggested many curious inquiries regarding the desert, at a period long prior to that of Moses, when Mount Serbal was in all likelihood a shrine of idolatrous worship. It was something, at least, to have seen the Written Valley, although we cannot pretend to throw any additional light upon the various figures and letters, after the many speculations that have been broached on this subject. They reminded us of the



passage in the Book of Job, "Oh that my words were now written! . . . that they were graven with an iron pen, and lead in the rock for ever!" Groups of animals are roughly drawn in odd and grotesque attitudes, but these do not deserve to rank higher, either in point of artistic skill or purpose, than those puerile efforts by which the walls of our public buildings are sometimes defaced.

There is a view of surprising grandeur and glory at the head of Wady Mokatteb, which is for ever fixed in our memory. We had a quiet camel, perhaps it was stupidly so. Be this as it may, we could turn on its back in any direction: we could either ride as on horseback, or sit like a tailor, or lie as on a sofa. Its owner was surprised at the liberties we took with it. We were leaving in our onward march the glorious scene above referred to; and very often, to the no small amusement of the Arabs and our travelling companions, did we turn our back to the head of our camel, that we might catch every glimpse of that wondrous panorama, which was soon to be lost from our view for ever—a scene photographed upon our memory, but which we cannot attempt to describe.

We felt the same difficulty in Wady Feiran, a lovely valley, called the Paradise of the Bedouin, combining much that is awfully grand in rock and mountain scenery, and soft, sweet, and invitingly placid in the leafy shade of palms, acacias, tamarisks, pomegranates, and the trees which bear the little bright apples for which this place is famous. And then the musical rill that came down the glen like a gush of gladness in this dry and parched land, with its clear, sparkling waters, into which the camels plunged their broad, splay, spongy feet as they eagerly stooped to drink, and at which we all gladly quenched our thirst! The music of that little stream was a glad voice, and the sight of it was most reviving in that land; for what joyous interest attaches to the merest thread of a rill in such waste places! As it gently murmured o'er its sandy bed, and "wimpled" through the green fringe that fell over it,

sometimes hiding it from our view, we thought of the words, "In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert" (Isaiah xxxv. 6).

We only wish all our readers could have witnessed for themselves that scene of wild and desolate grandeur, the central glory of which is Serbal, the grandest mountain form we have ever seen, with its coronet of shattered peaks, so sharply cut and so clearly brought out against that sky of cloudless blue; and that bright green spot which flashes up from the wide waste, like some beautiful island that gems the bosom of the ocean. We never tired of looking at Serbal. Never. It seemed ever new and lovely. From all points of view we counted its peaks again and again. It became for a while the most familiar object; we said, "Surely this must be the Mount of God!" and we would gladly have come to the conclusion that it was so. But we had not yet seen the covenant altar itself on which the cloud of glory descended, and from which God spake to the people the whole words of the law. It was not at all likely that such a noble-looking mountain, not the highest, but the most prominent in the peninsula, standing apart in isolated majesty, would escape the notice of the sacred writers. There are two allusions to it, which occur in the sublime strains of Bible poetry. The Paran of Scripture is generally supposed to be the Feiran of the desert. When Moses gave his dying blessing to the Israelites, he thus spake of the manifestation of the Divine glory at the giving of the law: "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them." Another prophet thus refers to the same event: "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise" (Deut. xxxiii. ; Hab. iii.).

The palm grove of Feiran extends two or three miles up the valley, and consists of several thousand trees, many of them,

like the majestic palms of Egypt, shooting up fifty or sixty feet. The tamarisk, the acacia, and the nubk trees are not less numerous. A carpet of soft grass is beneath your feet; a bubbling brook, the source of this tropical beauty and verdure, murmurs at your side. Coming from the desert worn out, weary, and parched with thirst, where for days you have been surrounded by the sternest forms of desolation and sterility, you are filled with wonder and astonishment when you enter this delightful spot. It looks as if Nature had made some special effort in this charming region, by concentrating as much of life and beauty as could possibly be lavished on so small a space, to compensate for the utter absence of every green thing in the vast wastes which surround, like an ocean, this island of beauty. Strolling about this palm grove, soothed by the murmur of the brook and by the rustle of the palm-leaves overhead, and looking up to the awful forms of mountain grandeur which overhang this beautiful spot, we felt that it would be difficult to find another corner in creation like Wady Feiran.

This was the land and, probably, the capital of the ancient Amalekites, and no wonder they fought for it to the death. The height on which Moses is said to have prayed while the battle raged, is occupied by the ruins of an old Christian city and a bishop's palace, dating as far back as the fifth century, a date that seems but as yesterday compared with the remote period when Serbal was a sacred shrine, and the Amalekites invoked the aid of their gods, when fighting in this very place for their altars and homes. We were struck by the number of ruins of what must have been small houses, probably the abodes of early Christians, who were drawn to this sacred spot by traditions, not merely of a Bible, but also of a Pagan origin.

There are many huts scattered throughout this palm grove. The most of these were empty, as the encampment had left for some other place. A few Bedouins were, however, lingering about, and they were engaged in the process of dyeing cloth of

a dark blue colour, in a large pot. The dress of the women was made from this cloth. Their chins were tattooed with the same colour. They had many ornaments about the head and neck. One of them had a horn on the forehead composed of hair; probably it was designed for a "chignon," but placed on the front of the head instead of on the back. A husband requested his wife to withdraw her headcloth, and show the ornaments which she wore on the head and neck. She did this very timidly, and with some hesitation; and when we had examined these ornaments—which consisted of coins, beads, little bits of silver, and even gold, and what seemed to be charms—there was, of course, a most importunate onset for baksheesh.

A poor lame dwarf of a Bedouin, the minstrel of the grove, treated us to music from a most primitive fiddle. On such a rude instrument, we question if Paganini himself could have done any better. He sang, at the same time, a plaintive strain, but whether it was of war or love, or ancient fights and heroes, or of the beauties or *belles* of the place, we could not tell. His eye kindled, showing at least some heart and excitement. We left this minstrel with the new name of Ossian; but he knew as little of the honour we intended by this title as we did of his song.

On passing one of the huts, before we had dismounted from our camels, some dozen or more of pretty kids trotted out, and, drawn by their social instincts, kept frisking after us as we went up the side of the rippling stream. Several children burst out after them, and catching up as many as they could in their arms, ran back with them to the enclosure. Two pretty pets continued to follow, and would not be turned by all the coaxing, shouting, and alarm of the children. A woman came out, and caught one of the two, but the other gambolled after us, and would follow, in spite of all her efforts, and all the entreaties of the youngsters. Our American friends bought this one, which had manifested so much attachment to our party.

It was placed in a basket, and lifted on to the saddle, and there it swung during all our marches till we reached Nakhul. Poor thing! it left its happy home and its playmates in an evil hour. No green thing could be got for it in the desert, after leaving Sinai. Sick with the motion of the camel, weak for want of proper food, its plaints, like the weary cry of a distressed child, grew fainter and fainter, till it died; and we buried it in the sand at Nakhul, not without a genuine touch of sorrow in all our hearts. It was a day of sand-storm, produced by the depressing *Khamsin* wind, when we all felt dull and heavy, and the death of our little kid, recalling as it did all the pleasant recollections of Feiran, and sending our minds back to that bright spot, threw a deeper gloom over that dreary day. We felt dull in spite of ourselves, and the loneliness of the desert made the death of our favourite touch our hearts like some family sorrow.

Why did we not spend a night at the palm grove in Wady Feiran? The sheikh was anxious that we should see his encampment, some five hours' march farther on, and we were drawn away, very much to our regret, too soon from this bright spot. Often did we turn that afternoon and gaze upon the valley and the mountain peaks which surround it. Our disappointment was extreme when, on reaching the place where the sheikh expected to meet his people, we found they were all gone. His vexation was as great as our own. We pitched our tents; and after dinner the sheikh, who had gone to some distance, returned, bringing with him his wife and two genuine children of the desert, his own little boy and girl. The boy brought with him a lamb, as black as coal, for a present, and he came along with his father and mother into the tent to lay his gift at our feet. It was a great pet, and we gave it back, accompanied by some other presents, telling him to keep the lamb till we returned. This pleased the father, for he was disappointed at first that we did not accept it. The little girl, who was carried by her mother, slept all the time, and could not by

any shaking be awakened from her profound repose. The mother sat at the tent door, another instance of the distance at which women are kept, and of the degrading notions regarding them in the East. Our Polytechnic wares were again produced, and some of them now "waste their sweetness on the desert air."

The moon rose above Serbal, throwing a glorious white drapery over his coronet of shattered peaks. We hear much of sunrise, but the rising of the lesser orb that night was as wonderfully grand, in its own way, as any sunrise we have ever seen. One of our party went out and sang "All's Well," in the moonlight, and our Arabs were in great glee.


Next day (the seventh from the Wells of Moses) we started with the intention of reaching the Convent of Mount Sinai about two o'clock. We were late of getting off, for the "Hotspur" of our Arabs had raised a quarrel, which was fiercer and more prolonged than usual. He drew his sword at some one or other, but we could not say who was the object of his wrath, for all were engaged in the *melée*. The sheikh and one of our friends interfered, the latter threatening, in good humour, to read the Riot Act! A calm followed, but the calm of the Arabs in the morning is always a storm. The baggage camels took the way through Wady Sheikh, one of the broadest roads in the peninsula leading to Sinai. Our party, headed by the dragoman, took the narrow and difficult pass called the Nukb Hawy, which, in some parts, is as steep and precipitous as the Gemmi in Switzerland. The strain on the poor camels was great, and in ascending this narrow staircase we were obliged several times to dismount and walk; even walking for us was no easy matter. The air was scented with aromatic shrubs, growing here and there in the bare clefts of the rock. The leaders of the Israelites may have gone up this "Pass of the Winds" to Horeb, but the great body of the people must have taken the way by Wady Sheikh. At last, coming over the ridge, the Convent of Saint Catherine lay before us, with its old grey walls, its green patch of garden ground, and its tall

cypresses. It looked like a solitary picture left in a deserted chamber of some ancient castle. As we came down into Wady Raha, the Valley of Rest, we could see the monks walking on the top of the walls, and looking at us as we approached.

Arrived at the convent, the dragoman shouted and clapped his hands, to bring some one to receive us, but the monks were not very easily startled into action. They either regarded us with suspicion, or acted on the principle of the Mohammedans, that "all speed is from Satan." At length a door was opened on the top, and a cord let down, with a hook attached to it. To this we affixed the letter of introduction which we had received from the Greek patriarch at Cairo; and when it was drawn up and examined, a stronger rope, with a cross beam at the end of it, was let down by a windlass, the rope passing over a number of pulleys. Amid all the loneliness, terrible grandeur, and thrilling associations of the place, it was scarcely possible to refrain from a hearty laugh, as each of our companions was pulled up in succession, and kept dangling in the air, five thousand feet above the level of the sea, like a bale of goods on a hoist, till dragged in by some monks at the opening above. All our luggage was drawn up in the same way, followed by Mustapha the cook, and other attendants; for it was our intention to remain at the convent about a week. Our Arabs, in the meantime, went off with their camels to visit an encampment of the same tribe at some distance, on the understanding that they would return on a certain day. An elderly monk, with a long blue gown, conducted us to our apartments, with divans running along the sides of the walls, and, on the whole, with a cleanly appearance. It was a very welcome retreat, and one that was much needed, after the fatigue and burning heat of the desert. When shut in, our American friends observed that they felt as if in a prison. A reply was given in the words of the Apostle, "Mount Sinai gendereth to bondage."

## CHAPTER VI.

Convent of St. Catherine. Celebration of Easter. Sabbath at Sinai. Giving of the Law. Jebel Musa. Ras-Sufsafeh. Antiquities of the Convent. An Arab Supper. Departure from the Convent. Sheikh's Tomb. Religious Indifference of the Bedouins. Letter Carrier in the Desert.

UR rooms were on a large passage or corridor facing the main court of the convent, with a wooden rail running along it. Looking over this, the first things that arrest the eye are the leaden roof of the church, surmounted by a cross, and the minaret of a little mosque. The latter has been built to accommodate the Mohammedans who may visit the place, and also to make the convent more sacred in the estimation of the Bedouins, who nominally at least belong to the Moslem faith. The Cross and the Crescent have thus been brought into strange proximity on Mount Sinai. Laying Murray's Handbook before us on the wooden rail of our corridor, we learn that "the convent is an irregular quadrangular building, 245 by 204 feet, encompassed by thick and lofty walls of granite, with little towers at intervals, on some of which are mounted a few antiquated pieces of ordnance." This may serve to give the reader some idea of the mere outward appearance of the convent; but it is very difficult to convey anything like an accurate conception of what is contained within these walls. There may have been some method at first, some regular plan, when they were built, but all method has long since been lost in the complete jumble of buildings, and in the countless pieces of patchwork which have been forced into this limited space and stuck on to each other, from the days of Justinian to the present moment. Even now there are new hatbox-looking apartments being added to some part of it or another, in a style



of architecture entirely different from anything that went before. Looking from the passage of our gallery on all this motley group of buildings, one can have no idea whatever of this monkish *beehive* of a place. We use this word, not so much to convey the idea of a large population, or as illustrative of the lines so familiar to all good boys in the hymn of Isaac Watts in relation to industrious habits; but to give our readers some notion of the outs and ins, narrow lanes and blind passages, nooks and corners, crannies and crevices, cells and doors, meeting you everywhere, in galleries, and queer, out-of-the-way pigeon-holes, — vaults, store-rooms, archways, cellars, workshops, stables; — short elbow-looking stairs, leading somewhere; — a mosque, a church, and a library (the latter we fear but seldom used, as the monks are no great readers, and are said to be very illiterate); and all these closely and most confusedly huddled together, from the charnel house below, containing the bones and skulls of the monks who have died here, to the rusty cannon on the top of the walls. You must therefore leave your perch on the railed gallery, and set out upon a tour of exploration, up-stairs and down-stairs, in and out, backwards and forwards, right and left (like the juvenile game of "Through the Needle-e'e, Boys"), down subterranean passages, along narrow galleries, out of one hole into another; and if you do anything like justice to this game, and without a guide, it will be as good a puzzle as any you have ever tried, to get back to your perch again. At certain times of the day, the old convent seems as if utterly deserted, and you are startled by your own footsteps on the rickety stairs and the long dark passages. Now and then a big cat will whisk past you, or the black figure of a monk will glide silently out from some hole or corner, and, with noiseless tread, disappear in another. There is, of course, more life at times when pilgrims arrive, or when the brothers, with their mallets, summon the whole fraternity to chanting and reading in the little church. There is a bell, but it is seldom used. Somehow or other, there is a prejudice against bells in the



East; and out of deference, we presume, to this Mohammedan feeling, the Greek monks at Sinai announce the various times of devotion, chiefly by striking with mallets on a piece of wood or iron, pierced with holes, about eight inches broad and six feet long, and suspended by ropes from the roof of one of the galleries. The beating is done in time, as if regulated by a musical notation. In this lonely place, where sound carries so far, it is heard at a great distance. It reminded us of the boyish practice of striking the top of a table with both hands to a certain number of words in an old nursery rhyme, which some of our readers may probably remember, beginning with the frequently repeated name of one who may have been an illustrious person in his day, "Peter Dick," etc. These measured beats, followed by the chanting of the monks in the church below, at midnight, or very early in the morning, had a strange effect on our mind among the solitudes of Sinai. Having said this much, we have about summed up all that the Greek Church has been doing for many centuries in the peninsula for spreading the glad tidings of salvation. The Bedouins gather round the walls of their convent, or they are quite within reach in the desert, but the monks have no mission, no message of mercy for them. Often must they hear the sound of the *zimandro* at morning, noon, and night, but they hear no more. This is all that the Greek Church has done for the desert tribes. She makes no aggressive effort on the waste places, but awakens the echoes of Mount Sinai by beating her wood and iron so many times a day. In one sense, the brothers have shown how the desert, even in its sternest aspect, can be made to rejoice and blossom as the rose. This is true, at least, of their convent gardens, and of other lovely green spots which they have won from the waste. The same care directed to a higher culture might surely bring light and hope to the Bedouin's heart and home.

We happened to arrive at the convent the day before the celebration of Easter, and we were invited by several of the

monks to attend the service in the church, which was to commence shortly after midnight on Sabbath morning. Before the service began, the mallets were unusually busy, and the convent bell was also rung. As the service was to commence so early, we did not go to bed, but kept strolling about from one gallery to another, till the mallets and the bell summoned us to church. On entering it, we found the floor strewn with green leaves, and twigs here and there on the pillars and the walls. The whole of our party were present, and all that was expected of us was that we should hold a lighted candle in our hands; and as this was given us, simply in a spirit of friendly recognition, we saw no reason to refuse the proffered light. Each of us being thus equipped, we sat down, and remained during the whole service, which lasted nearly five hours, and which we felt, long before it was over, to be unspeakably tedious. From twenty to thirty monks might be present, but there were no strangers besides ourselves. There was a great deal of chanting and reading the Gospels, all in Greek; but the nasal organ is called so much into action, and the voice is trained to such a metallic, wiry sharpness, and there was such cold formality about the whole thing, that, in spite of all our efforts, we could scarcely think it was a religious service at all. With the exception of a few words that we recognised here and there, we might as well have been listening to the beating of the mallets on the *zimandro*. It was with great difficulty that some could keep from sleeping, and the lighted candle was more than once in danger of falling from their hands. One of our friends showed great wisdom in handing his candle to the dragoman and walking out. On the whole, he had the best of it, for he enjoyed an excellent cup of coffee with the Arab servants. After a great deal of incense-swinging, chanting, and reading the Gospels in the way above described, the whole assembly marched in procession out of the church, each one carrying a lighted taper. They all stood in the porch—the cold wind meantime sweeping down from the heights of Sinai,

which made our position very uncomfortable. The superior, an old man with a long white beard, continued to read, when suddenly he seemed to be seized by some strong excitement, and which, as his voice quivered and his aged frame shook, spread to the rest, and they all fiercely shouted the words of what we regarded at the time as some ancient hymn announcing the resurrection of our Lord. The voice of the old superior was nearly drowned, but his fervour became all the more intense, till we thought every instant he would fall down. There was a solemn pause for a few moments; at length he was heard announcing in a paroxysm of joy, "The Lord is risen;" which words he frequently repeated. They were taken up by all the monks in a rapid succession of shouts; and when the enthusiasm was at its height, the rusty cannons on the top of the convent walls were fired in succession. The effect was indescribable: the sudden transition from cold formality to something like frenzy;—the waving of lighted tapers;—the shouting in the porch;—the thundering echoes which the cannon had awakened on the heights of Sinai, rolling from peak to peak, from wave to wave, in that ocean of rocks, and then dying away in the distance. We were, at least, startled and deeply impressed, if we were not edified. For a time we were utterly overwhelmed when we thought of the mighty fact of the Christian faith thus announced, and the associations connected with the place where we now stood. The fact was, at least, brought home to us in a way it had never been before.

When the excitement had ceased, the superior approached the door of the church, which had been closed, and, after knocking several times, he demanded admission in the name of the risen Lord. Someone answered from within. The superior knocks again, and this time, in imitation of Mary at the sepulchre, asks where the body of Jesus has been laid. The reply from within is, "He is not here; He is risen!" The superior knocks a third time, and suddenly the door is opened—the church is blazing with lights, and dazzling to the eyes. All

entered, and there was a great deal more of chanting and reading, but with such apparent indifference that the contrast between this and the furore in the porch was very striking. The superior, who has been very long connected with the convent, had such a frail appearance that we thought this was probably the last time he would celebrate Easter. When we left the church, the full moon was paling her beams before the bright radiance of the rising sun, which tipped with quivering rays of gold the shattered peaks and cliffs of Sinai. It was the homage of the sun to the Sun of Righteousness, who arose on the first day of the week from the darkness of the grave, with healing in His wings.

We spent several hours that morning in the plain of Raha, where the hosts of Israel rested, and from which they could all see the stern grandeur and glory connected with the giving of the law. We read all the passages of Scripture that referred particularly to the place. On this day our own congregation, along with thousands of their fellow-Christians in Glasgow, sat down to commemorate the love of Jesus at His own table. They were brought under the shadow of the cross at Calvary ; we were sitting under the shadow of these mighty cliffs which, long ago, had been "altogether on a smoke, and there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud, for the Lord came down in sight of all the people." Calvary and Sinai were united in our mind as they had never been before, and tenderly did we remember in our prayers all our flock who would that day celebrate in the holy communion the love of Jesus.

During the service that we held in the plain of Raha, several Arab children gathered about us and looked on with much surprise. They offered us a few specimens of precious stones which they had picked up in the neighbouring heights. Poor things, they were almost naked, but not by any means rude or importunate for baksheesh. They seemed to wonder very much at our service, and we longed to speak to them in their own

language of that divine Friend of sinners who died at Calvary to fulfil the law that was given from the adjoining mountain. What has the Greek Church done for these poor boys? Major Macdonald affirms that the Bedouins are merely Moslems by name, that they have little or no attachment to the Mohammedan faith (Mr. Palgrave, in his "Central Arabia," expresses the same opinion), and that they would listen with deep interest to the teachings of a Christian missionary.

If our wonder on seeing Serbal was great, this feeling was much more intense when we sat on the plain of Raha, with the altar-shaped head of Ras-Sufsafah right in front, and overlooking the whole plain; for no one, we think, can look up at this height, unless he has made up his mind persistently to maintain some previous theory, without being convinced that, of all places in the peninsula, this is the most fitting for the people to have seen all the glory that accompanied the giving of the law; and that of all the mountain heights, the one before him is the most likely to be the covenant altar of Sinai, from which the very words of the law were given. Such was the impression of every one in our party. That plain is like the approach to a great temple, and there is no temple on earth so grand, so awful as that where God entered into covenant with His people. The neighbouring height of Serbal had probably, long ere this, been a shrine of heathen worship. Sinai was now to be consecrated by the presence of the one living and true God, as a shrine that was to eclipse all others—the scene of the grandest event that had yet taken place in the history of the world.

We were still more and more convinced that all the demands of Scripture with what is stated to have occurred at Sinai, were fully met by the plain of Raha and by Ras-Sufsafah, when we stood on the top of that height and looked down upon the vast area below. That plain would be quite sufficient to contain the whole hosts of Israel, and from which every one would be able to see the awful glory that crowned the summit. On

the top of this mountain we read, in company with one of our companions, all the appropriate passages in the book of Exodus. We need not say more; but that was an hour which neither of us will ever forget. In deference to our feelings, the few Arabs who were with us retired to some little distance, and were hid out of view in the neighbouring clefts.

If a scene of awful solitude and desolation—if countless jagged peaks and mighty billows of rocks, as if they had been lashed into fury on a molten sea of lava, and when running mountain high were seized by an invisible hand, and hardened all at once into variously tinted granite, and left shooting their giant heads into the deep blue ether—if mighty masses of rock, rent and torn, and tossed one above another in dire confusion, and without the slightest trace of any green thing on their sides or summits—if silence and solitude, which seem even oppressive to the eagle as he swoops over these rocky billows, scathed and shattered by lightnings—if all this may be regarded as giving a special fitness to any place for the Divine manifestation which accompanied the giving of the law, then surely, above all places on the face of the earth, this wonderful region has the strongest claims to this honour. Next to Calvary, this is the world's greatest shrine, and it speaks to you of Moses, of Elijah, of Paul, and of all the terrible glory when "Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof descended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly."

As we gazed upon that sea of rock spreading out before us in wild tumultuous billows, we felt as if still standing face to face with that ancient glory which has given Sinai an imperishable name and place on the page of history, and often were we reminded of the words of the psalm—

"O God, what time thou didst go forth  
Before thy people's face,  
And when through the great wilderness  
Thy glorious marching was;

'Then at God's presence shook the earth,  
Then drops from heaven fell ;  
This Sinai shook before the Lord,  
The God of Israel."

We repeated these words on the top of the covenant altar, and they were heard at a great distance, so that we had no difficulty as to what is stated in Scripture about the people hearing all the words of the law.

We had no previous theory to support. We yielded up our minds to the feelings the scene could not fail to produce, and we were so greatly struck with the plain of Raha, and with the altar rock Ras-Sufsafeh overlooking the whole of it, that we stood for some time thrilled under the influence of the first impression, and of all those sacred associations which the locality called up. It was so with Dean Stanley, and others who have visited the spot. There is a natural boundary round the base of that mountain, which would keep the people at some distance, according to the Divine command.

We ascended Jebel Musa, but that mountain commands a view of no plain sufficient in extent to accommodate a host like that of ancient Israel. If there is any place more than another, taking all its surroundings into account, to be identified with the august transaction of the giving of the law, Ras-Sufsafeh, we have no hesitation in saying, is that place. Jebel Musa may be the mount on which Moses held communion with God in the thick darkness. It is considerably higher than 7000 feet above the level of the sea, and commands a magnificent view of the peninsula. A little white-washed chapel, belonging to the Greek Church, stands on the edge of the enormous precipice, and, not far from it, a small Mohammedan mosque. We visited the Well of Moses, and what is called the Cave of Elijah, the supposed scene of the event recorded in the First Book of Kings xix., where we read that there was a strong wind that rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks, and after the wind an earthquake, and after the earthquake a fire, and after the fire a still small voice, and when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face



in his mantle, and stood at the entering of the cave. One could scarcely conceive of a more fitting place for such a sublime scene as this. On our way down the mountain, we lunched at a ruin called the Chapel of Elijah, where there is a beautiful cypress, standing out in striking contrast with the dreary desolation all around.

We often turned into the plain of Raha to look up to Ras-Sufsafeh, which is now for ever associated in our mind as the covenant altar. We wandered up Wady Leja, past the mould in the rock where, according to tradition, the golden calf was cast, and round to the strange, massive block which Moses, it is said, struck with his rod, and water gushed out. Very probably the water-worn appearance of the rock may have given it this traditional importance. We looked with interest on the old convent walls of Arbaim, the scene of a dreadful tragedy; for here forty monks were put to death by the Arabs.

The sheikh and a stranger Arab accompanied us to Ras-Sufsafeh. On our return to the convent, they called at a black tent. A woman came out, and brought in her hands a large wooden platter of boiled rice. It was now near sunset, and the men sat down to their evening meal outside. They washed their hands first of all in a little wooden basin of water, and, without the aid of knife, fork, or spoon, they soon made clean work with the dish, clearing off all its contents with their fingers, and with a relish which never falls to the lot of the epicure. The empty dish was handed to a group of children, who nearly fought for the honour of scraping it.

We stayed for six days in the convent, and during this time we saw the most of the old curious relics it contains: the site of the burning bush, behind the altar—the tomb of Saint Catherine, together with the splendid coffins sent from Russia in honour of the saint—the sickening horrors of the charnel house, with its bones and skulls, all arranged in greater order than any other thing we saw in the convent. We enter not into other ghastly details of hermits and anchorites, further than to give a closing reference to one box, which contains the

remains of two brothers, who lived as ascetics, chained together in the neighbouring mountains. It is said that they never both slept or ate at the same time. They were, therefore, not "lovely and pleasant in their lives," but it is true that in "death they were not divided." As we stood amidst the skulls and bones of this charnel house, we were reminded of the two lines descriptive of the horrors of Alloway Kirk, on the memorable night of the satanic orgie—

"Wi' mair o' horrible and awfu',  
Which e'en to name wad be unlawfu'."

On the morning we left the convent, our baggage was all let down to the outside by the windlass, at the trap door. Our Arabs had arrived with their camels on the previous day. Some slight changes had taken place; two or three went no farther than Sinai, and some new camels and drivers had come in their stead. Confusion was now worse confounded, when preparing to start, than ever we had seen it before. We looked down from the top of the convent wall at the fight raging below, and, from the uproarious state of matters, we thought that in three or four hours there might be a calm. On going down to see our saddle properly adjusted, the onset for baksheesh was such as we never met anywhere in the East. Any one who has not passed through this ordeal, can have no idea of the annoyance. Our glittering wares from the Polytechnic only brought us into trouble at Mount Sinai. One boy out of many followed us with such imploring looks, and kept at it with such pertinacity, that we could not resist him; and when we gave him a knife for himself, and a pair of scissors for his mother, he fairly danced for joy. But this only provoked him and others to make a more determined onset. We were truly glad to get inside the convent for a few days' rest, and we were as truly glad to get off, for what with the growling of some twenty camels, the shouting and yelling of our Arabs, and the incessant clamouring of stranger Bedouins of all ages for baksheesh, we grew desperate in our efforts to get away. We left in a state of mind far from favourable for solemn and devout impressions, and waved

our last farewell to the old grey walls and the scene of tumult around them, with the feeling that not only "bondage" but bedlam was there.

Shortly after leaving the convent, we entered the spacious Wady es-Sheikh. Our lunching ground was close by the side of the little white dome-shaped building in the inside of which Sheikh Saleh is buried. Above his grave, on the floor, is a wooden coffin, and a handle of the same material, wrapped in cloth, to mark the head. This coffin is covered with very faded shawls, to which rags and bits of strings are hung, as the votive offerings of the poor worshippers who from time to time have visited this spot. The whole place is not larger than a good-sized coal-cellar, and displays no more taste. A few grave stones are set up here and there. It is a lonely burial-place, and belongs to the Towârah Arabs, no others, however near, being permitted to lay their dead in it. Tradition says that this sheikh was a companion of the Prophet, and that he died on one of his journeys, and was buried here. We were told that he was a favourite saint among the Towârahs, and so expected to see some striking proof of their veneration, but in this we were disappointed. Not more than three of our Bedouins entered the tomb. We followed, but they did not by any means relish our presence. Their manner, at least, was far from cordial, and we retired, but not till we saw two of them prostrating themselves, and muttering a few words, probably of prayer. Our sheikh, though bearing the same name as that of the departed saint, did not enter. He and all the others, with the exception of the three above referred to, were equally indifferent. Dean Stanley gives a better account of the Arabs who accompanied him when they came to this tomb—in other words, they showed more reverence to the dead saint. The scene of devotion which we witnessed at the grave of Sheikh Saleh was the only instance of religious sentiment after the Mohammedan fashion manifested by our Bedouins during the whole journey. It is said that they have still a superstitious veneration for the sun, and that some of them show it when he is rising, by pros-

trating themselves on the sand. They seem ready for a new faith. God grant that it may be the faith of the Crucified One! Who should carry it to them? Frequently were we reminded of the prayer of Abraham—"O that Ishmael might live before thee!"

On leaving the convent, our intention was to proceed to Petra by Akaba, but on hearing next day that the tribes about the ruins of this ancient rock city were fighting with each other, and that our dragoman regarded our proposal with the greatest apprehension, we resolved very reluctantly to change our route and go to Nakhul, and from that to Gaza, being a journey of some sixteen days in the desert. Colonel M—— and his wife, whom we left at Sinai, had agreed to follow us in a day or two, and meet us at Akaba, so that they might proceed along with us to the ancient capital of Edom. It was therefore necessary that they should know of the change of route. One of our companions sat down on the sand and wrote a letter; but where was the post-office, and where the letter-carrier? Our sheikh went off to some distance—probably to some neighbouring encampment—and returned in a little with a lad who was to be our postman. After giving the youth all necessary instructions, the sheikh took his striped cloak from off his own shoulders and gave it to him, that he might sleep in it if necessary, and also to show us that he had full confidence in the fidelity of the stripling. When he got the letter, he started like a gazelle; it was something to see him run—even in the desert he was soon out of sight, and next morning returned with a reply. He reminded us of the ancient runners we read of in Scripture, especially those whom Joab sent to David to carry intelligence of the death of Absalom.

It was at this point of our journey that we wrote, at the request of a friend, the following hasty sketch of "A Day in the Desert." Placed now in connection with our continuous narrative, it may seem to contain several repetitions. But we give it as it was written, believing that our readers will like it none the less on this account.

## CHAPTER VII.

A Day in the Desert. Morning's Work. Quarrels of the Arabs. An Umbrella Catastrophe. Rhetorical Amusements. Happy Thoughts. Famished Bedouins. Camping Ground. A Bedouin Butter Merchant. Intense Thirst. The Mirage. Hagar and Ishmael.



HAVING been a few days in the desert, we are now in some measure prepared to describe our mode of life. One day in many respects may be taken as an average specimen of the rest. About five o'clock in the morning, the dragoman, or one of our attendants, takes two tin plates for cymbals and strikes them together at our tent door. This is the morning call, or *reveille*, agreed upon; in addition to which, there is a lusty shouting for us to get up at once. We start from our iron bedstead, sometimes not a little reluctant, and, having partially dressed, we get to the outside, where we find a tin basin, with but a very scant supply of water, placed on a camp-stool for a wash-stand. Having gone through our ablutions, we next spread a large Mackintosh sheet some little distance from the tent, and out of the bustle of the camp. On this sheet we lay all the articles necessary for the completion of our toilet, which is performed entirely in the open air. We find great advantage in this mode of dressing; for if we remain inside, the attendants come in to pack up the beds and clear everything off, diving sometimes among our legs, hustling us on every side, and ten to one huddling up some necessary article of clothing (one day a vest and a stocking thus disappeared) amongst the beds, which they roll up with a celerity truly astonishing. The Bedouins outside are meanwhile taking up the pins and the cords of the bed, so that if we do not get up, it will be collapsed over our heads like a big umbrella when suddenly closed. It is out of the question to

lie a-bed after these operations are commenced: for when the tent pins are withdrawn and the tent collapsed, the bed and its inmate, if he is still there (which did happen once or twice), are left exposed under the open canopy of heaven, with the covering of the tent flapping about his ears. Our kitchen grate, which is a long iron box pierced with numerous holes in the sides and bottom, and fired with charcoal, is placed at one end of the encampment, and there Mustapha the cook is busy preparing our breakfast, whilst now and then the morning shout of "Boil water, cook!" reminds him that tea is a beverage he cannot yet prepare. These shouts are met with angry grunts from Mustapha, which are greatly relished by Achmed and by our big boy from Thebes. But even apart from tea, our breakfast is far in advance of anything that the hosts of Israel met with in the desert: eggs in abundance, pieces of roasted fowl, fried potatoes and mutton, and always a dish of preserves, mish-mish, and sometimes Scotch marmalade. Moses never dreamt of anything like that during the forty years in the desert. Our table, the construction of which we described before, is placed in the open air, and covered with a white cloth; and when all the culinary preparations are ready, our party is brought together by the rattling of two tin plates for a bell, or the shouts of Achmed. Camp-stools serve for chairs, and a Bedouin boy holds a large umbrella over us to screen us from the sun, which is already beating fiercely over our heads. During all the time we are at breakfast, the hot blood of the Arabs is raging more fiercely than the sun. The packing is the great event of the day, and is never done without quarrelling. We sometimes wondered if the scanty food of the Bedouins, and the want of a bed to sleep on, had anything to do with this constantly recurring ebullition of noise and temper every morning at the same time. They sleep all night among the legs of their camels, with no covering about them but some old cloak or wrapper; and as to their food, it was always a mystery to us how they could exist on such scant meals.

But notwithstanding all this privation, their blood always seems at the boiling point at sunrise, and all the time of our breakfast they succeed in keeping us in hot water. One would have thought that the distribution of the luggage at the outset—so much being allotted to each man and camel—would have been a final arrangement, not for one day, but for the whole journey. No such thing; this would not have been a journey at all, according to Bedouin notions. The morning quarrels seemed to be a necessary part of the affair, and if they had a scant breakfast, they had no end of loud words and frantic gestures. All this was a matter of course to them; it was part of their daily life; they could never have done without it. It acted on them like a mild stimulant for the rest of the day. We had more of it at times, but there was never a morning without it. The daily distribution of the luggage was a fruitful source of quarrel. One Bedouin, for example, would refuse to allow his camel to carry what it had done the day before, alleging it had carried too much and some other had carried too little. He would therefore endeavour to transfer some part of his burden to another, and now came the fight of words, loud and long, accompanied with the most expressive gesticulation and the most threatening attitudes. Sometimes swords would be drawn, but the tongue was the chief weapon in the noisy warfare. The dragoman would rush into the thick of the *melée* and lay about him with a stick, and when matters became serious, which the practised eye of the sheikh could detect at once, his tact and judicious counsel succeeded in laying the storm. It was most amusing to survey the scene from a little distance and to listen to the roar of words, when we knew that nothing but words would come out of it. After breakfast we preferred to walk in advance for about an hour, and then wait till our camels came up. At mid-day we generally stopped for about two hours. It was with great difficulty we got the dragoman to agree to pitch the tent for shelter, and his continual cry was, "Robbers will come down upon us if we halt." There

was nothing about pitching the tent at mid-day in the contract, but we carried our point and found the covering of our tent most grateful at noon, when there was no "shadow of a great rock in a weary land." How strikingly appropriate and expressive this Scripture language now becomes to us!

Amongst other good things, our lunch generally included a small cup of black coffee, thick as a syrup, without sugar or milk, and prepared by the sheikh himself. He pounds the beans in a little black mortar, which has seen much service, and the cheering beverage is soon hissing on the red-hot embers of the charcoal. We find this black coffee excellent for allaying thirst.

Shortly after we have pitched our tents for our mid-day rest, the baggage camels and drivers approach; they do not halt, but move on to the place that has been selected for the evening's encampment. The Bedouins pass us silent and exhausted, some of them seeking comfort from their long pipe sticks. The attendants who are more immediately connected with the dragoman are perched high up among the baggage, and, with an oppressed look, go swinging along. Both they and the Bedouins, we observe, are particularly careful to cover their heads, and the different kinds of head wrappings, no two of them being alike, have a strange appearance. Old Mustapha, the cook, in whom we have a special interest, brings up the rear, with a couple of *kefyehs* wrapped round his head. He is perched aloft on the back of an immense camel, by the side of his kitchen grate turned upside down, and with its legs like signal posts gleaming in the sun. We cannot let him pass without a friendly shout, "Boil—water—cook!" but to this friendly greeting there is no response, not even a grunt, and we charitably conclude he is deep in his arrangements for the next dinner. The strange procession moves on in silence. What a contrast from the fire and fury of the morning, when breaking up our encampment! We are seized with the same dreamy spirit of silence and oppression, and enjoy our siesta,



when it is possible to sleep in such a heat. After having done justice to all the good things provided by our dragoman, we prepare to mount our camels. In doing this, we throw our umbrella on the sand, to get a firm hold of the horns of the saddle. The bright glare of the sun is so great, that we do not observe the embers of the charcoal on which the sheikh has made his coffee, and when our ill-fated umbrella is handed to us, it is all in a blaze! What a look of anguish we gave, for it is of great consequence to have a large umbrella, covered with white cloth. The whole thing must have been ludicrous in the extreme, especially our looks, for the loud laughter of our party makes the desert ring. The damage, however, is not so great—thanks to the kind lady who repaired it in the evening, we shall not say with what materials. The desert is glowing like a furnace, and but for the burning of our umbrella, we would have gone on in silence.

By and by a breeze springs up, and our American friend with the retentive memory unlocks his literary treasures, and treats us to page after page of Milton, Addison, Shakespeare, Longfellow, Thomson, Tennyson, Cowper, etc., till we begin to think he is either an actor or a professor of *Belles Lettres* in one of the chief cities of the Union. What is more astonishing still, if his memory chance to fail him, he has only to apply to his amiable wife and she supplies at once the missing link. To-day we think he must be exhausted. Not so, when to-morrow comes the variety of his quotations will be as great. One of our party now feels that Scotland must be represented. He asks the loan of the sheikh's sword, and brandishing it aloft on the back of the camel, recites with great energy Bruce's Address, "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled." Then follow several quotations from Burns, given with true Scottish fervour, and which are greatly relished by the whole company, who, forgetting for a time the burning heat of the sun, and all the discomforts of the way, join together in singing "Auld lang syne," and were it possible on the back of the camel, they would suit the action to

the words, and join hands. We enter a wady with high rocks on each side, singing, "A man's a man for a' that!" Some may think this irreverent, and that it only betokens a spirit of levity in such a place, but we do not come to the desert to make it more a desert than it is, but as far as possible to spread through it the streams of a happy spirit and of cheerful converse, which sometimes, in spite of ourselves, would burst forth into song. This was more especially the case in the morning, or when the sun was sinking in the west, and the heat was tempered by a cooling breeze. Were this the spirit in which we sought to pass through life how many desert places would rejoice and blossom as the rose! A singing spirit is surely to be preferred to grumbling, no matter where the desert is.

All this only helped us to enter with greater zest into our quiet resting-places of devotion, of praise and prayer, of reading the Word, and of solemn converse, when our hearts burned within us, and we felt surely God is in this place. Nowhere have we felt nearer the Father of spirits than in the "great and terrible wilderness," and nowhere have we sung with greater emotion the beautiful hymns,—

and— "I'm but a stranger here, Heaven is my home;"

"Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,  
Pilgrim through this barren land;"—

and nowhere have we felt the words of the poet come home to our hearts with greater power:—

"Should fate command me to the furthest verge  
Of the green earth, to distant barbarous climes,  
Rivers unknown to song; where first the sun  
Gilds Indian mountains, or his setting beam  
Flames on the Atlantic isles; 'tis nought to me,  
Since God is ever present, ever felt,  
In the void waste as in the city full;  
And where He vital breathes there must be joy."

Our dragoman does not like the singing nor any demonstra-

tions such as the above, and the reason he assigns for this is, he is afraid we may be attacked by "bad Arabs," an expression which he pronounced with an ominous look and awful emphasis. In short, he often tells us for our comfort, and with the most serious face, that he is afraid we may be attacked and murdered, and that he is obliged to watch by night and by day for our safety! This is his "cuckoo song" since the day we started, and certainly, in this case, familiarity has bred contempt; we learn to laugh at him and all his fears about "bad Arabs," for the whole thing is evidently got up for a purpose. According to his view of the case, we could not with safety pitch our tent in the middle of the day; the Arabs would be down upon us, and carry off everything, and leave us wounded and half dead. The additional trouble is the thing that galls him, for, notwithstanding all his forebodings, we have seen nothing yet worse than himself. With a long face he tells us at times not to talk loud, not to make noise, meaning not to sing; and just as he concludes this advice, when our whole party had been singing, we see in the distance what appears to be a party of Bedouins. As they approach, we see that they have no camels. "I told you," said the dragoman, "that you would bring them; there they are, and we must prepare our guns, swords, pistols, and all." Our revolver is at the bottom of our portmanteau, and those who have their pistols, load them, look at them, and place them where they cannot fail to be seen if they are not to be used. The dragoman this time really seems uneasy and not to be acting a part.

He asks us to keep together. The sheikh advances a few hundred yards in front, and when the strangers come up, he kisses each of them on both cheeks. We see that there is no need for our pistols yet. These strangers belong to the same tribe with our sheikh, and they appear in a truly deplorable state with hunger and thirst, and have a most lamished look. They are all armed with guns and swords, but are so weak and exhausted that they can scarcely carry them. They tell our

sheikh that some of the Tiaha tribe had stolen their camels a few nights ago, and that they had gone in pursuit, but had taken few provisions with them, as they imagined they would fall in with their camels after a short march. They were mistaken; they found no traces of their missing property, and had gone on in search till they could proceed no farther, on account of hunger and thirst. We give them all we can spare, both of food and drink. On coming up to us, the first thing they do, after saluting the sheikh, is to lay hold of our water bottles, hung at the camel's neck, and drink them empty. After a few minutes' conversation with the sheikh and exchange of salutations, they proceed on their way, greatly relieved. In the spirit of a little harmless banter, we assure our dragoman that if our singing had attracted these poor Arabs, both they and we had reason to be thankful. We were able to show a little kindness, and they were relieved. But he does not like such inroads upon his stores, and when we sing again, he assures us we "will bring more bad Arabs; steal—wound—kill," and he raises his gun to show us how they will do it; "I have much care for you, not for myself!" This may be so, Ibrahim; yes, thou art a careful fellow, but *self* is assuredly uppermost. If our party will sing any more, he asks that we will give him a guarantee that if his canteens are stolen, he will be no loser thereby! We now see the cause of his uneasiness; it is his own canteens, more than our heads.

The most agreeable sight during the whole day is when the sun is westering, and we descry our white tents in the distance, and begin to think of the savoury preparations of Mustapha, and the rest after another day's fatiguing march. At length the tents are reached, the camels are brought to their knees, and we are glad, if all is not ready inside, to spread a rug on the sand and lie down for a little; or if all is ready, in the tent—which is generally the case before our arrival—to throw ourselves upon the bed for a few minutes before washing for dinner, which is again repeated at the basin on the camp stool

outside. On the tent of our American friends, the national flag, with the "stripes and stars," floats most gracefully, and on ours, the "Union Jack." These two banners are always set up when our tents are pitched, and give the Arabs a salutary idea of official dignity and union. Frequently was the mutual wish expressed that the same kindly feelings, the same friendly relations, might ever exist between the two countries as were manifested by the inmates of these two tents.

But the beating of the tin plates (our dinner bell) announces that Mustapha's delicious soup is ready, so we place our camp stools around the table—the whole party dining together—America and our own country represented at every meal in good fellowship, as they ought to be. We have several dishes of mutton, fowl, pigeons, etc., prepared in a variety of ways, and served up in courses—Achmed and Mohammed going between the cook and the tent as waiters. This is followed by a dessert of dates, figs, raisins, oranges, and nuts; the oranges are generally picked up and laid aside for to-morrow's journey, for they will be more needed then than now. Tchibouks and coffee end the meal, and these glide into an excellent cup of tea, the brewing of which is superintended by ourselves. The events of the day are talked over; one learns to be very minute and observant in the desert. Some time is given to journal writing, if one is kept; some portion of Scripture, appropriate to the scene of almost every halting place, is read; and then the evening prayer, in which the dear ones at home are never forgotten, and all our interests are committed into the hands of that God who never slumbers nor sleeps; then the short stroll around our tents, sometimes under the light of the glorious moon, always under a cloudless sky and the bright stars, which are seen in the desert as they are nowhere else. Before turning into bed, we occasionally visit our Arabs, and give them a treat, at which they are all greatly delighted, exclaiming "*Taib! Taib!*" (Good! good!) They sing and dance to express their gratitude, their swarthy and tanned faces all the while gleaming in the

light of the camp fires; some of them have an expression of child-like simplicity and feminine softness, others are excited and fiery, as with savage glee. A music-box, which rattles off some dozen tunes, and a mask can put them into raptures any evening. We have picked up the Arabic for "Good night!" and we amuse them by repeating it. On the whole, there is a great deal of the big child about them. They coil themselves round the dying embers of the fire, and amongst the legs of the camels on the dry sand, and these poor children of the desert sleep soundly (certainly their sleep is not disturbed by a heavy supper), when "uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

We have a good bed, but somehow or other we cannot sleep. We rise and take a turn round the camp after midnight. The fires burn low, and there is not one of our party—yes, we discover one, in a sitting posture. He is the watcher for the hour; the rest are all buried in sleep and in sand—the wide, wide waste all around, and the sky dark from the excessive brightness of the stars. Everyone seems a bright eye. Surely the desert is the place where, above all others, we may say (and the words were first used there), "Thou God seest me!" We are startled by the cry of a jackal, resembling the wail of a child, and we make for our tent and fasten the curtain which does for a door, and at last get to sleep, from which we are awakened too soon next morning by the rattling of the tin plates and the shouts of Achmed to resume the march of another day. Often at the close of a day's march do we repeat the words of the beautiful hymn—

"Here in the body pent,  
Absent from Him I roam,  
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent  
A day's march nearer home."

We have not yet found that intolerable monotony in the desert of which some complain. The morning quarrel of the Arabs is, to be sure, always repeated, varying only in intensity; but there are new features in the scenery every day, and there

are no worrying letters and visitors, in connection with a host of little petty details. There is one circumstance in this day's journey which we must not omit. Shortly after noon, and when the heat was intense, we came upon a most solitary habitation. It stood alone in the heart of the desert. But lonely as it was, there was a home circle—a father, mother, and children, and a few goats. It was difficult to see how either man or beast could subsist in such an utterly sterile spot. The dwelling was not exactly a tent. There was a pole, but instead of being stuck into the ground, the end of it was driven into a crevice in the face of a rock, and over the projecting part of the pole was thrown a black piece of cloth made of goat's hair, stretched out to its full length on both sides, and fastened to pins driven into the ground. A piece of blue calico was hung in front. A woman with her chin tattooed, and the upper part of her face covered with a long fringe which really gave her a frightful appearance, sat nursing a child. She withdrew into the inside of the tent when we came up. This was not necessary on account of her good looks. Suddenly there emerged from behind the curtain a thin, swarthy Bedouin, with a Pariah look about him, and carrying something black in his hand. We were horrified at first, as it had the appearance of a human head! He approached the dragoman, and unrolled this black ball, and presented him with something which he took out of it. This black wrapper was a goat's skin, and the ball that was wrapped up in it was butter! This was the Bedouin's place for keeping it as cool as he could in the desert. He was urgent that our dragoman should purchase this product of his dairy, but no bargain was effected. Of all the good things Ibrahim provided for us, his butter was an article which we could scarcely endure to look at, much less taste. This specimen of the Bedouin's dairy did not lessen our prejudice, although we are inclined to think his article may have been the superior of the two: it was not, at least, reduced to an oily fluid.

Such is one day's life in the desert; but before closing our

account, we would refer more particularly to the burning thirst that often seized us. We then had recourse to one of the oranges which we had carefully preserved at dinner on the previous day. One after another is eagerly sucked, but the burning thirst is not quenched; it is rather aggravated and made more importunate; and one now feels a new appropriateness in that passage describing the blessedness of heaven, "they shall thirst no more." We try the water in our *zemzemia*, or leather bottle, fastened to one of the horns of the saddle. Taking the spongy cork out, we raise the bottle to our parched lips, but the water is thick and hot, and tastes like a decoction of old leather. We have nothing better, and we know we cannot possibly get anything better, and so we are at it again and again in a short time, and begin to think of flowing fountains, and clear rushing rills, and the cool spring under the rock on which the sun never shone, and the "bonny wee well on the breist o' the brae." What would we not give for one long cooling draught from the icy thread of a mountain rill? We are at the bottle again, and it has scarcely passed from our lips when an Arab comes up, and, with imploring looks and gestures, entreats for a drink. We nod assent, and he eagerly takes a long draught, and leaves but little for us. Water was the first word in Arabic which we learned to repeat, for we heard it so often. "Moyeh! Moyeh!" we exclaimed, as we saw what we took to be bright pools at no great distance. Our camel man shook his head mournfully, and muttered, "*Ma feesh, serab, serab*"—"It is nothing but the mirage." And so it was; but the very look of it helped to divert our thoughts for a little, and actually to lessen our thirst. We thought of the hosts of Israel in these wastes, and what they must have suffered, and we felt that there was a new beauty in all the Scriptural allusions to water as descriptive of spiritual blessings—"As rivers of water in a dry place." "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them. I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will



open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."

Often were we reminded of Ishmael dying in the wilderness of Beersheba, and the agony of his mother, Hagar, when the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs, probably the "*retem*," which we saw so frequently, a species of broom, with long feathery tassels—"and she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept. . . . And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink."

## CHAPTER VIII.

Wilderness of El-Tih. Curious Formations. Agreeable Disappointment. Sand-Storm. Arrival at Nakhul. American Triumph. Shakespeare's Anniversary. A Hated Sheikh. Locusts. Borders of the Desert. Night Visit. Bedouin Horsemanship. Flitting Day. Two Ishmaelites. Our Guide Stolen. Approach to Gaza. Ramble through the Town. Telegraph Poles. Howling Dervishes. Farewell to the Desert.

**I**T would be dry and tedious to lead our readers through all the wadies that lie between Sinai and Gaza, a journey which occupied about sixteen days. We shall, therefore, content ourselves with a few rough notes from our journal, containing our impressions of the scenery, with a few incidents that helped to give variety to these two weeks.

One lovely morning, after an arduous climb (we were walking), we got to the lofty plateau of El-Tih, the "Wilderness of the Wanderings," and were struck with astonishment at the almost complete change in the scenery. Great stretches of hard, yellow sand made us think, in respect of colour, of the harvest fields of our own country;—low stunted shrubs, completely dried up and withered, and all with a tinge of dark green and blue, like the leaves of green tea;—to the right, immense cliffs of limestone rock, with buttresses like the steps of a stair, and sloping inwards from the base. In many places these curious formations had the appearance of waterfalls, and such was the influence of imagination, that, in that clear atmosphere, we actually thought we heard the sound of rushing waters. Sometimes this rock formation spreads over a large surface, in broken waves or hummocks, like the Mer de Glâce. No one has any reason to complain of the monotony of this part of the desert. For hours you pass cliffs of limestone, as

white as the driven snow. Here and there large detached masses have been left standing in utter isolation, like immense solitary sphinxes round which the storm has been raging for countless ages. These hoary watch-towers of the wilderness shoot up in lonely majesty and grandeur. This is really a wonderful sight. Is not God in the silent and waste places of the earth? What stretches of sand—what huge walls of limestone rock! One long line of wall, like an embankment, stretches far away into the distance, and ends abruptly in a frowning headland, as if the sea was surging at its feet. There must have been pyramids and sphinxes here long before Egypt was heard of—the builders, the storms of the desert; the materials with which they wrought, the mountain masses of limestone rock which have been detached from the main body, and formed not only into pyramids and sphinxes, but into almost every conceivable shape. Occasionally green patches of the *retem*, with its tassels of white flowers, fall upon the eye, in striking contrast with the far-sweeping stretches of sand, and flints, and the walls of limestone, and the broken masses, some of them presenting a ludicrous caricature of the face of an old crone. No creation of the painter or the poet's brain has ever produced such hydras, gorgons, and ogres as the storm has done in its wild winter-play around these detached masses, which sometimes stand as thick as stacks in a barnyard. Silence and solitude become oppressive in presence of these uncouth forms, which work on the imagination. What a temple for Queen Mab! The remark was made in our own native Doric, "What an eerie place this would be in a dark night!"

We were most agreeably disappointed with this part of the wilderness. We had pictured to our mind before entering it a vast monotonous, dreary plain of soft and ever-shifting sand—an unbroken level, without any elevation but mounds of sand here and there to relieve the eye, and had fancied ourselves, at times, half buried in some of these with our camels. It was a great mistake. When walking, our light canvas shoes were

seldom, if ever, covered with sand, for much of the surface consists of hard, gritty gravel, and small flints. It is, indeed, to use a Scripture expression, "the great and terrible wilderness," and much of it agrees with the description of the poet—

"A region of emptiness, howling and drear,  
Which man hath abandoned from famine and fear,  
Which the snake and the lizard inhabit alone,  
And the bat flitting forth from his old hollow stone:  
Where grass, nor herb, nor shrub takes root,  
Save poisonous thorns that pierce the foot.—  
A region of drought, where no river glides,  
Nor rippling brook, with osier'd sides,  
Nor reedy pool, nor mossy fountain,  
Nor shady tree, nor cloud-capp'd mountain,  
Are found to refresh the aching eye,  
But the barren earth and the burning sky,  
And the black horizon round and round,  
Without a living sight or sound,  
Tell to the heart in its pensive mood,  
That this is Nature's solitude."

There is not a little, however, to relieve the dreariness of all this. There are valleys, mountain ranges, deep ravines, and tortuous windings, with high and precipitous rocks on either side, and the varied tints of these are at times truly wonderful. Sometimes the way lies through the dry channel-bed of what must be a mighty and resistless torrent in the rainy season. The soil that has been left when the flood has abated, is cracked and turned up at the edges by the intense heat of the sun, and the broad feet of the camels crush it in pieces, like so much brittle pottery-ware—again we descend into hollows, or basins of enormous extent, and sweeping round and round like a vast amphitheatre, which would hold an immense multitude of people; at other times we follow a track well-defined and hardened by the tramp of camels and of Arabs for thousands of years. Over this shining pathway millions of flints lie black and blistering in the sun. There is nothing but the blazing waste all around; and, hot and weary, you now feel what a striking beauty there is in the Scriptural allusions to the varied phenomena of the

wilderness. You pass again and again the strangest formations of limestone rock, such as those described already, and mounds, sand hills, and long solitary embankments, like the huge railways of a giant race abruptly stopped. You feel as if the navvies must still be somewhere about, for the sand and the debris seem to have been lately toppled over from the invisible trucks.

During the whole time we were in the peninsula, we had only one dreary, monotonous day, when there was nothing but sand, sand, sand all over, and this was owing to the *sirocco*, which produced a suffocating heat, and raised the blinding dust in clouds, throwing it at times into the form of driving pillars. The camels plunged on amid the whirling drift, turning their sides to the storm, and keeping their heads out of it as much as possible. When our tents were pitched at Nakhul, we dreaded every moment lest they should be torn to shreds, and scattered over the desert.

This was so likely to be the case that we went to see if, in the event of being obliged to take down our tents, we could be accommodated in what is called the Castle, but what is really nothing more than a Khan, a square building of no great extent, and designed chiefly for soldiers, to command this part of the desert, especially during the pilgrim season to Mecca. We entered by a low iron door, which led into a court with a stone bench running along the wall, and carpets spread on it. Here we found the governor, as he is called, sitting with some others. There was no ceremony of introduction except the usual salaam, and the signs which accompany it. We sat down on the divan, or stone bench, and by and by were presented with a small cup of coffee and a *tchibouk*. The governor must be a devoted Moslem, for in the midst of the smoking and talking which were going on, he rose to his feet, adjusted his carpet, and went through his devotions in the presence of the motley group who regarded this spurt of zeal as a matter of course. We were shown around the place, but a glance told

us we would be better in our tent, if it would at all stand above our heads.

There cannot be more than thirty regular soldiers in the Khan, if indeed so many, and yet there is not only a governor, but a government agent besides. The storm abated, and at night these two officials came to our tent, and sat, smoked, drank tea, and dozed for several hours. We could only converse with them through the dragoman, but they were silent men, more given to smoking than talking. Nothing in the way of baksheesh came amiss, and some of our Polytechnic wares, such as small flutes, knives, scissors, etc., were gladly received. The governor himself was greatly delighted with a pop-gun, and the agent asked one for his little boy. There was, however, a little business done. According to rule, we were obliged to stay twenty-four hours at Nakhul before we could proceed to Gaza with the Towarah Arabs and their camels. If at the end of twenty-four hours the Tiaha tribes belonging to this part of the desert could not furnish the requisite number of camels, then we were free to go forward with our own men.

Many were the applications we had at Nakhul for medicine and toys. Our fame as a Hakeem spread amongst the soldiers of the Castle and the people in the neighbouring huts, and our stock of medicine was nearly exhausted. It was here that the poor blind man formerly referred to was brought to be cured. One had chest complaint, a second rheumatism, a third fever and ague, and a fourth was sore all over. We could soon have had a large practice, and, acting on the Major's advice, we gave them all something, which at least pleased, if it did not cure them.

At night we heard an unusual talking about our tent door, and on looking out saw several soldiers sitting round a fire with their arms piled. They had been sent by the governor as our guard of honour! That evening was the first time we ever went to bed under the protection of guns and bayonets. Surely such an honour deserved a baksheesh. We would not have

grudged one had they taken themselves off, for their incessant chatter with our Arabs kept us awake far into the morning.

There is a fine supply of water at Nakhul, and it was a pleasant sight—calling up many scenes of pastoral life, as described in the Bible—to see the large flocks of sheep and goats gathered round the wells. The process of watering them was the same as in the days of Rebecca and Moses. The wells are deep, and built of solid masonry. It is this abundant supply of water which makes Nakhul, lonely though it is, a station of considerable importance. We waited more than twenty-four hours, but there was no offer made by any of the Tiahas to furnish camels for the remaining part of our journey. The governor and the agent called next night at our tent, so we had to endure several hours more of dozing, smoking, and sipping of coffee. They gave us another illustration of the Mohammedan belief that “speed is from Satan;” but at last they signed a paper intimating that we had spent the full complement of hours at Nakhul, and that no camels being forthcoming we were now free to move forward. The governor’s seal was attached to the document which was intended as a safe-conduct; and, to make assurance doubly sure, it was agreed that one of the Tiaha tribe should go with us, and explain matters to any of his brethren we might meet on the way. We were not at all favourably impressed with any specimens of this tribe we met at Nakhul, or in the course of our journey. The elderly man who went with us by appointment of the governor was very irritable and surly, not merely toward the Towarahs, but to ourselves. He showed no sense of gratitude when any favour was done him. The Towarahs are a mild, good-natured race in their intercourse with strangers; the Tiahas are much more fierce and insolent. We scarcely deemed it possible that on the same desert there could be such a contrast.

Shortly after lunch on the day we left the Castle, we were all surprised to find our tents pitched. Our sheikh, when questioned about this, said “that he had reached the place

where it was always customary to stop after leaving the Khan." We had observed that the first day's journey after leaving any important place was always short, and the reason assigned for this seems to be a good one. If anything has been forgotten it can be all the more readily got, as the distance is not far to go back. But this did not suit the views of our American friend, and he would teach the Arabs how they might go ahead. He got down from his camel, pulled up the tent pins, and ordered the dragoman to see that the camels were at once re-loaded for a march of at least two hours more. The Arabs were rather surprised, and neither they nor the dragoman liked this mode of treatment. It was breaking through the custom of ages, and it seemed for a time as if they would not comply. Our party all moved forward, and, at last, when we were about a mile in advance, we saw the encampment on the move. The American spirit of progress was triumphant in the desert, and the slow notions of the East were compelled to yield to it.

On sitting down to dinner in our tent, on the night of the 23rd April, after a long day's march, our American friend reminded us that it was Shakespeare's birth-day. The very thought, for a time, carried us out of the desert; it linked us and our lonely spot to a countless number of places throughout the wide world where the same announcement would be repeated, and where it would stir many hearts. We question if ever there was such another celebration of the poet's birth-day as that which we held in the desert; for on the fact being announced, we naturally, and without any pre-arrangement whatever, glided into the most spirited commemoration of an event which stands out so conspicuous in the world of letters. We need not particularise the *dramatis personæ* further than to say that every one of us took a part; we all fell naturally into our places, and had all something to quote that night from the bard of Avon. It was a trial of memory, in which our brother Jonathan was victor. There was a very humorous incident connected with our celebration. When Achmed, who was dressed in a loose,



white shirt, like a night gown, and who was tall and spare, came in with some plates in his hand, one of our party styled him Hamlet's ghost! This appellation instantly brought out from another the startling speech of Hamlet to the ghost of his father—"Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" etc. Achmed understood English pretty well, but he had never heard such words before, neither had he ever seen such a dramatic air as that assumed by the speaker who addressed him. The looks of our attendant were ludicrous in the extreme. We all retained our gravity, and sat like judges, as one line after another in that famous speech came rolling out. Achmed was thrown into the greatest consternation. He imagined he must have committed some flagrant fault; and he stood in utter bewilderment, unable either to speak or to move for a time. Still the speaker went on addressing poor Achmed, and we all assumed a most solemn look. He was quite confounded, and rolled his eyes about from one to another, but could get none of us to utter a word by way of explanation. The speaker's voice became more loud and impassioned; his gestures more violent; and Achmed threw down the plates and rushed out of the tent, muttering some Arabic gutturals, as unintelligible to us as Shakespeare was to him. When he returned, carrying the soup tureen, he was again addressed, but this time in the thrilling words of King Lear, and with more passion and gestures than before: "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!" etc. The attitude of the speaker, the expression of his face, and the sort of confused notion that Achmed had of the words, so wrought upon him that, with wide-mouthed amazement, he dashed the tureen down upon the table and ran out of the tent, shouting "All face make too red!" He rushed to the cook and the dragoman, and told them, in Arabic, that we had all got sunstroke! Old Mustapha was too busy with his omelettes to leave his post, but the dragoman came after dinner with the astonished Achmed. The muse of Shakespeare was still on the wing, but this time in the terrible soliloquy of

Richard III. when about to rush on his awful doom: "Give me another horse! bind up my wounds!" etc. Then came Wolsey's Address to Cromwell, the famous speech of Shylock, and scenes from Macbeth. Achmed still clung to his theory of the sunstroke, but the dragoman was of opinion that it was an English game, or some western "Thousand and One Nights." The result was that we were left to ourselves; Achmed, still in astonishment, expressing the hope, "to-morrow find better." The last scene of our celebration was outside the tent. It was beautiful moonlight, the forehead of night gemmed with stars. The words of Lorenzo to Jessica were never given with finer effect. We had no music, nor any flower-covered bank, but we had glorious moonlight and our camp-stools —

"How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!  
 Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music  
 Creep in 'our ears: soft stillness and the night  
 Become the touches of sweet harmony.  
 Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven  
 Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:  
 There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st  
 But in his motion like an angel sings,  
 Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims;  
 Such harmony is in immortal souls;  
 But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
 Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."

Our American friend was the Roscius of the party; and if his eye should ever happen to fall upon this, he will doubtless smile, as we now do, at the memories of that pleasant night.

On turning to our journal, we find a few jottings descriptive of the main features of the scenery round our encampment on the memorable 23rd of April. "On the left a long line of blue mountains; on the right a lower line of rocky heights, one detached from the rest exceedingly beautiful; at one time it looked like a white pyramid, but on getting nearer, and surveying it from another point of view, it looked like a great cathedral:—two shattered masses of rock (limestone), broken up into pyramids; a long ridge, like a railway embankment in

preparation for laying down the rails ; several great rocks, like altars in the desert ; on the sides, a succession of steps, worn by the action of the elements ; here and there the feathery *retem* waves its graceful tassels in the cooling breeze ; heard again the sweet notes of a solitary bird ; they had a melancholy, plaintive tone, made all the more so by the solitude in which they were uttered."

On the third day after leaving Nakhul, we had many pleasant tokens that we were approaching the borders of the desert. We had, here and there, delightful strips of grass and patches of wild flowers, springing out of the sand. The fight between the desert and a more fruitful soil had begun—the struggle between life and death. Flora, with her bright garland and her horn of plenty, was still at some distance, but a few flowers at least had dropped from her hand, and were now fringing the borders of the wilderness, and timidly shedding their fragrance on the desert air. Our place of mid-day rest was on a carpet of flowers, some of which were not unlike our own mountain daisy. Here and there the poppy shot up its scarlet leaves, which our American friend no sooner saw, than he quoted the lines with which these flowers will be for ever associated—

"Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flower," etc.

"But pleasures are like poppies spread,  
You seize the flower, the bloom is shed."

The desert, however, had still the mastery, for these strips of flowers were followed by long stretches of sand. These bright green patches that forced their way into the wide waste, as it were too soon, were like a bright day of sunshine that has wandered out of its place into the dead of winter. By and by the selvae of flowers became more extended, and the song of the lark occasionally fell like home music upon our ears, with a stronger note as the greenness increased.

We frequently passed large spaces enclosed by low stone walls, where there was an attempt at cultivation, but with very

little success. These low walls, at some parts, are very numerous, and probably mark the site of ancient towns that stood on the borders of the desert, at a time when it was much more cultivated than it has been for ages. These ruins—for such they really seem to be—form a remarkable feature of this region. The wilderness of Beersheba is not far distant; and in this neighbourhood the patriarchs had their tents, their flocks, their herds, and their wells; there they led their quiet pastoral life, and had their families, their sorrows, and their joys. We felt not only standing on the borders of the desert, but on the very borders of patriarchal times—the boundary line, as it were, of an old world.

One day, in passing through Wady Amrie, as it was named to us, we came upon the tomb of a sheikh, who bore the same name. Those of our Arabs who had matchlocks fired them at this tomb. Some went forward and spat upon it; others threw sand and stones; all showed the utmost contempt for it in some way or other. The rush was so sudden at this hated object that we thought at first they were in pursuit of some wild animal. There is a tradition that this sheikh was a traitor to his tribe when it was at war with another. What the special act of treachery was we did not know, further than that his tribe, on his account, were nearly all cut off. His tomb to this day is an abomination to all the Bedouins who pass it. There are large tracts and mounds of very bright yellow sand in this wady, so bright and soft that we were induced to fill a bottle with it as a memorial of this accursed tomb, and as a specimen of the brightest sand we have ever seen. The mounds resemble bright ochre, and in the rays of the morning sun gleamed like gold. We found a live tortoise amongst these mounds, and carried it with us to Jerusalem, but whether it had strayed or was stolen we could never learn.

We were struck with the immense number of young locusts that lay thickly heaped upon our path for several days. They were still unfledged, and could only leap like grasshoppers.

Thousands of them, notwithstanding all the efforts they made to get out of the way, were crushed to death by the broad feet of the camels. They were so numerous that as they parted on either side to make way for our camels, they resembled a stream of running water both in sound and appearance. What a scourge these would become in a few days when they left their scanty feeding ground in the desert and took to the wing, to find their way to all green places within their reach! These young locusts—the drenching dews at night—the increasing strips of vegetation—the breeze that came with greater coolness—were all so many indications that we were approaching the “Great Sea,” and the fertile fields of ancient Palestine.

On the day before we reached Gaza we occasionally passed, at some little distance, groups of black tents—Bedouin villages, or encampments, with long strips of cultivated ground where the barley was ripening for the harvest. These black tents, made of goats’ hair, reminded us of the “black tents of Kedar.” Arabs going into their fields frequently passed us, riding on camels; they were all armed with some kind of weapon, chiefly the matchlock, and they all respectfully returned our salutation.

Our tent was pitched at night on a carpet of flowers. We saw them peeping out under our bed, our camp stools, and our table, and growing by the side of our bags and portmanteaus. It was the feast of Bairam, and we heard the boom of the guns that were fired at Gaza.

The most convincing proof of all, that we were getting out of the desert, was a visit that was paid us that night from some half-score of Bedouins, who were mounted on swift horses, and who came dashing up to our tents in the moonlight, armed with long spears, stuck into their broad shovel stirrups, and the upper end held by the right hand. They evidently regarded themselves as lords of the soil, and looked quite a different race of men from our Towarabs. It was quite an oriental picture to see these Robin Hoods of the desert drawn up around our camp fires, the light gleaming on their swarthy faces, on their long,

red, leather boots, that hung loosely about their legs, on their bright *kéfiéhs* and tunics, and on the curious trappings of their small, nimble horses, which they managed with great dexterity, and which were restless, and active, like their riders. They had come to levy *black mail*, or some considerable sum of money for the right of passing through their country. We left them and the dragoman to settle the point in dispute, which by the terms of our contract he was obliged to do. The picture of this bit of Eastern life is burnt into our memory. There was a great deal of noisy eloquence on both sides. The dragoman insisted that he had paid all the required dues to the governor of Nakhul, and in proof of this produced his document bearing his seal: and the old man who had been sent with us stood forth to bear his testimony. Whatever was their intention it ended in good-natured banter, and one of them dismounted and kissed the dragoman. After wheeling round our camp fire, in a style that would have done credit to Ducrow, throwing their long spears in the moonlight to a great distance, dashing on at full speed and catching them when they were still quivering in the sand, suddenly pulling up their horses, and as suddenly darting off, they vanished over a rising ground, leaving us standing amazed at their feats of horsemanship. Nothing in Astley's was ever given with finer effect. The dragoman was as proud of his diplomatic feat as the Arabs were of their horsemanship. Of course he had saved us a great amount of money, our property, perhaps our lives! He never felt so great during the whole journey as he did that night. The inference was very plain, and it was this—"What could you do without me? What *baksheesh* can be equal to my services?" He gave us special injunctions that night to have all our fire-arms ready for the attack which was now sure to be made. It was the best night's sleep we had for a month, and Ibrahim slept soundly too.

Next morning, on getting up, we were delighted to see strings of camels carrying several families and the whole of

their moveables. An entire village of tents, or a large encampment, was on the move to some other part of the country. It was like a "flittin' day," but in a very different style from anything we had ever seen in the way of removal. There were large flocks of sheep and goats, and they were led, not driven, the shepherd going before them and playing on a pipe, a very simple musical instrument. The camels were much superior to any that belonged to our Arabs, and there was an air of greater comfort about every one in the long procession than they had ever been able to exhibit. We had drawn our ideas of the desert life entirely from our sheikh and his followers. Here was something that betokened a much more comfortable state of matters. Compared with anything we had yet seen, this appeared to be the aristocratic side of Bedouin life. The sight brought up the old times of the patriarchs, and reminded us of Abraham and of his household removing from one place to another.

Our mounted Arabs paid us another visit in the morning, and treated us to another circus entertainment, wheeling round our camp and dashing off into the distance in fine style. The throwing of the long spear, and catching it up when the horse is at full speed, is a favourite feat. A fine boy, who rode a beautiful little pony, was quite a prodigy for his age in horsemanship. The dragoman would fain have coaxed us to give all of them presents; but we had done so much in this way before, greatly to his relief, that we left him to settle with this equestrian troupe. They never applied to us for baksheesh but they seemed to have either a new claim or an old score to settle with Ibrahim. Whatever it was, he sought hard to roll it over on our shoulders; but we left him to fight it out. We had now become pretty well acquainted with his tactics.

We mounted our camels that morning for the last time, and proceeded towards Gaza. None of our Rob Roy friends had been seen for at least an hour, and we were congratulating ourselves that we had seen the last of them and of their quarrel,

when suddenly two of them rushed out from behind a mound of sand, and came dashing up towards us, carrying their long spears as above described. The dragoman now made a last appeal to our party for a present, telling us that there might be a hundred or two of the tribe lurking behind the mounds which lay to the right and the left. There was a decided refusal. If anything must be given, he must settle accounts with them. It was plain that he wished to save his own pocket, or, as our American friend hinted, divide the spoil (if it could only be got out of us) with these desert freebooters. As they kept talking to Ibrahim, we had an opportunity of studying their physiognomy. They were reckless, wild-looking fellows, with a dash of the Spanish brigand about them, the picturesque representatives of an Ishmaelite roving life, untamed like the desert itself through which they roamed. An occasional gleam of good humour lighted up their swarthy faces, and relieved the sternness of their looks, just as the feathery *tamarisk* and the tasselly *retem* give a dash of the poetry of nature to the wild and dreary waste. They had bright *kefiaks* on their heads, and these fluttered gaily in the morning sun. They never asked one of our party for baksheesh; they seemed to be above this, and it was only with the dragoman they had any talk. If they had any just claim, it probably should have been met by the surly old Tiahan who had been sent with us from Nakhul. Greatly to our surprise, they suddenly turned upon him, and tossed his shabby turban in the air on the point of their spears. He thrust his hand quickly into his breast, as if to bring out something which had been too long delayed, but ere he could accomplish this each of them had hold of him by an arm, and, lifting him up between their horses, flew with him through the desert, his sandals dangling in the air, his poor bald head gleaming in the sun, and his turban fluttering at the end of their spears. The scene was as ludicrous as it was exciting. We now laugh when we think of it. He was "in the hands of the Philistines," and they would, doubtless, give



him a shaking ere they let him go. It was a practical joke which the old Tiahan would not forget for a few days. We never received a satisfactory explanation of this curious transaction, but our belief is that an attempt was made to withhold some payment, in the hope that we would come forward. The mounted Bedouins seemed to know this, and they had no dealings with us at all. We never learned what they received from the old Tiahan, but notwithstanding all our unfavourable impressions of him, we were glad that he sustained no bodily harm. He made his appearance next day in Gaza, and his turban seemed all the better for the shaking it had got. It was the last we saw of the Philistines, and they would have their own hearty laugh over the whole affair in their tent at night.

On approaching Gaza, the air was vocal with the song of larks. It was quite a gush of melody. The sweet music of these songsters, the rich gardens, the green fields, and the yellow ones that were ripening for the harvest, formed a striking contrast to the desert. We pitched our tents near a graveyard where there are many white headstones. The first thing we did after dismounting was to go up to a neighbouring height, crowned with a *wely* or tomb of a Moslem saint. The way lay through extensive gardens, abounding in fruit trees, and hedged in by the prickly pear, which is a very common fence in the East. It is a gigantic cactus, with a strange thick leaf, like the broad spongy foot of a camel, or a sonsy Scotch meal bannock, and full of minute sharp prickles. It has a pretty blossom, and the fruit, we were told, is luscious, but it would not be ripe for several weeks. Passing between great hedges of prickly pear, where the lizards were darting out and in with amazing celerity, we reached the top of the hill, and what a glorious scene burst upon our view! On the south the desert we had just left, the caravan road to Egypt, associated with the lives of the patriarchs and the Pharaohs—before us, the straggling town, like a group of villages (containing, it is

said, 15,000 inhabitants), a portion of it lying on a hill, the other parts nestling amongst verdant orchards, with here and there a white mosque and its minaret—the belt of sand beyond the town stretching down to the sparkling sea; on the east the broad plain, with its mounds of green and red in the foreground, and the blue hills of Judea forming the background on the distant horizon. We had got out of the desert, and were now entering the “Promised Land,” and this was the first view we got of its borders from the summit to which, it is supposed, Samson carried the gates of the ancient city. His strange life-story was now vividly before us, especially the tragic scene of his death. The Temple of Dagon, in which the lords of the Philistines and a large multitude, to the number of three thousand, were gathered together, occupied in all probability the site of the great mosque on the rising ground. The blind captive stands between the great pillars, an object of laughter and derision to that multitude. He prays to the God of his fathers—his ancient strength returns—he strains with all his might at the pillars—they yield—they fall—the whole building gives way, and that vast assembly is buried in its ruins. We thought, too, of the Ethiopian eunuch passing along these sands, and sitting in his chariot, reading the scroll of the prophet; and of the command given to Philip the Evangelist in these words, which are still an accurate description of the place: “Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.” We carried to the top of that hill the offering of a grateful heart, and more than one spot was hallowed by silent prayer.

Gaza is one of the oldest cities in the world, but there are few remains of antiquity about it possessing much interest. The great mosque is one of these. It is said to have been originally a Christian church, built by the Empress Helena, and dedicated to John the Baptist. There is also an ancient tomb, believed by the Mohammedans to be that of Samson. The town, as seen from the neighbouring height, has a straggling and mean

appearance, for the houses are low and built of mud, with the exception of a few which occupy the rising ground, built of stone, and probably very old. There is no architectural beauty whatever about the place. To the eye of a stranger, at some distance, the grey houses look like so many bean-stacks, in some places closely packed together. The monotony is relieved by a mosque and a minaret here and there, and by the beautiful gardens which fill up every space between the houses and the various clusters of villages, or suburbs, that make up the modern Gaza.

No company of Japanese could have produced a greater sensation in any of our large towns than our party did in this old city of the Philistines when strolling through its streets and its bazaars. Mrs. C——, the American lady, was a special object of attraction to the women, many of whom had, probably, never seen a lady in the European dress before. The people were still observing the feast of Bairam. A large space was filled with the attractions that are generally seen at a fair in our own country—stands for sweetmeats, merry-go-rounds, shows, jugglers, and a great concourse of people, with a considerable sprinkling of Turkish soldiers, whose efforts, in our behalf, helped to keep the crowd at a respectful distance. In passing through the town we observed several looms at work. They were very clumsy affairs compared with the Jacquard machine and the Paisley shawl loom, but quite capable of producing a rough sort of cloth, with brown and white stripes round the borders, for the loose cloaks which are worn by the Bedouins.

We had not gone far till we found we were not the only strangers in Gaza. The news of our arrival soon spread, and four young men hastened to meet us. They represented Scotland, England, France, and Russia, and were engaged in connection with the telegraphic department, which had been but recently commenced, to the no small annoyance of the "slow coaches" of this ancient town. "As water to a thirsty soul," so was our presence to these young men that afternoon. They

felt themselves completely isolated, in the midst of a Moham-  
medan population who regarded their mission with bitter  
hostility. They took us to a garden abounding in all sorts  
of oriental fruit-trees. A few of the telegraph poles had been  
set up in this garden, and the owner of it regarded them with  
feelings somewhat akin to pious horror. What were all the  
telegraph poles and wires in the world compared to his fruit-  
trees? But for the soldiers stationed in the place, and a  
salutary dread of power in high quarters, these poles would  
soon have been chopped up for firewood, and the representa-  
tives of science and of four nationalities would have been sent  
adrift, or, perhaps, worse than that. It is something, how-  
ever, to have a telegraph office at Gaza, where a few years ago  
the fanatic Moslems would not allow the presence of any  
European consul. The flags were torn down, although a British  
war-vessel was in the offing. That telegraph wire represents a  
greater power than ever lay in the majestic locks and brawny  
arms of Samson, when he carried the gates of the city to the  
top of the hill, and it will yet work mighty improvements in  
this and other lands.

On returning to our tents in the evening, we were struck  
with a strange noise that we heard at some distance. We  
could not conceive what it was at first. It had something like  
the hard measured beat of the piston of a steam-engine. Greatly  
to our surprise, on reaching the graveyard we found about fifty  
men gathered in a circle round a tomb, holding each other by  
the hand, swaying backwards and forwards, and uttering the  
peculiar sounds which we had heard. It is difficult to convey  
a correct notion of these extraordinary utterances, which pro-  
ceed from the depths of the chest, and gradually increase in  
rapidity, till the eyes are like to start from their sockets. As  
much force seemed to be thrown into each utterance as the  
stone-breaker does in that peculiar vocal jerk, or *sugh*, with  
which he brings his hammer down upon the stone. The sheikh  
sat in the centre of the group, on one of the steps leading to

the tomb. He regulated all their movements, and gave them the signal when to rest for a little, and the key-note of their intonations at the commencement of another turn. We stood and looked at this strange religious service with amazement; it was the first time we had ever come in contact with the "Howling Dervishes." They were now performing what is called a "*zikr*" round the tomb of one of their sheikhs. It was hard work, for the motion of the body kept time with the utterance, however rapid it might be. Of course, there is much in habit, but many of the group were much exhausted with the violence of the action.

Our mode of locomotion was now to be changed, as we could dispense with the camels. Mules and horses were now to take their place. Our riding horses were the sorriest lot of broken down hacks ever presented to travellers. One was lame, a second was all but blind, a third was the victim of asthma; the only one that was tolerable was given to the lady. Ibrahim solemnly affirmed that no better could be got in Gaza, and we were forced very reluctantly to believe him when no others made their appearance. Even our camel-drivers forgot their baksheesh for a little, to enjoy a laugh when they saw us mounted. We had been more than a month with them, and we now parted with good wishes and kindly feelings on both sides. Every one of them carried off some of our glittering Polytechnic wares, and something more substantial as a present. Poor fellows! in a day or two they would return to their tents, and to their lonely wandering life among the solitudes of nature. Ameerie was a gentleman to the last; he never clamoured for baksheesh, even at parting; and it was with a peculiar grace and fervour he shook our hand and made his salaam. So was it with the sheikh. Their eyes will never fall upon these pages, but the memories of our desert trip will linger in our hearts, and the "Hakeem" and his friends may perhaps be remembered when the old camping grounds are visited again.

We cannot bid farewell to the desert without referring, in a

closing sentence, to the memories which we will ever carry with us, of sunrises, that made the desert a blaze of glory—the breezy afternoons, that acted as a charm on our spirits—the bright sunsets, making the many-coloured rocks glow like the rainbow round about the throne—the deep blue starry vault at night, that was dark from excessive brightness—the majesty and full splendour of the moon (and oh, how beautiful moonlight is in the desert!)—the picturesque appearance of our camp—the Arabs and their camels sleeping around the fires—and then, when we went a little way from our white tents, drawn on and on, and still further on, by the wondrous stillness and beauty of the night, the “eerie” feeling that crept over us to oppression when the sigh of the midnight wind came sweeping from afar, and seemed like the voice of eternity itself. Nor should we omit the magician work of the mirage, which spread over the desert at times pools of water that looked out like bright eyes, and brought up, like so many dissolving views, streams, and seas, and ships, and castles, and fortifications, and all the fairy work of a beautiful illusion, which, like many human hopes, all melted away. The desert waste was a vast temple, peopled oftentimes with bright visions, that will remain in our heart of hearts as “a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.”

## CHAPTER IX.

Ancient Philistia. Her Five Royal Cities. Ruins of Askelon. Triumphs of the Sand-Drift. Scene at Mejdil. Ashdod. Ekron. Life in a Tomb. Plain of Sharon. Approach to Jaffa. Festival of Tabitha. Amusing Scenes in Jaffa. House of Simon the Tanner. Doing Business in the Old Seaport. Strange Sights at the Water-Gate. Dog Fights on the Hill.

**I**N our school-boy days, no word was more familiar to us than the word "Philistines," and no wars made a deeper impression on our boyish imagination than those which were waged between this warlike race and ancient Israel. With what thrilling interest we used to read of those border raids, and the fatal battle of Aphek, where Hophni and Phinehas were slain—where the flower of Israel fell, and where, saddest stroke of all, the ark of God was taken! And then the tragic death of the ancient priest as he sat by the wayside, blind and heavy with years, anxious to hear how the battle went. He could bear up under all the sad news, as one terrible announcement after another fell on his ear, till he heard the closing knell, "The ark of God is taken!" and he sank to the earth under this last blow—which also wrung from the heart of a mother, dying in the pangs of a sorrow keener far than that of childbirth, "Ichabod, the glory is departed!"

The tide is turned. The prayers of Samuel bring down the blessing of God upon the hosts of Israel—their enemies are scattered—the stone of grateful remembrance is set up—"Ebenezer, hitherto hath the Lord helped us." Another time of reprisal comes, and we follow the shepherd youth from Bethlehem to the camping ground of Israel, where the giant braggart from Gath came down with heavy armour and swaggering gait to defy the armies of the living God; and the

shouts of triumph rent the air when the stripling warrior wiped away the reproach of his nation.

Again, in the rapidly dissolving views of history, the mountain of Gilboa—the “Flodden Field” of ancient Israel, drenched in the best blood of the nation—now rises before us, for Saul and Jonathan, and the flower of the country, fell on its high places. “How are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.” The very name of that old race has given rise to a proverbial expression still current as denoting some disaster or another from which there is no escape,—to “fall into the hands of the Philistines.”

All these early recollections, and many of the oft-recurring statements about the five lords of the Philistines and their five royal cities, Gaza, Gath, Askelon, Ashdod, and Ekron, came rushing back during our quiet ride through the long forest of olives immediately beyond Gaza, and as we cantered over the sandy heights leading to the ruins of Askelon. Our mind was full of the subject when we reached the crest of the hill on which this famous city stood, overlooking the blue waters sparkling at its feet. Little more than a day's ride would have brought us to the sites of these five cities. With one exception, the modern names closely resemble those of Scripture. Along the shore there is a line of bold cliffs, varying from fifty to eighty feet in height. At each end of this line there is a ridge of rock, which sweeps inland in the form of a crescent, and within this strong natural enclosure stood the greater part of the city, its walls running along the top of the rocky crest facing the sea. On getting down to the shore and looking up to this line of cliffs, we were struck with the commanding appearance the city must have occupied. It is scarcely possible to conceive of a finer situation; and from that natural citadel, as upon a throne, Askelon, like a queen, looked out upon the sea on the one hand, and the wide sweeping plains on the



other. It was regarded by the Crusaders as one of the most important posts in the whole land, and it was therefore the scene of many a bloody struggle between the Moslem and the Christian in connection with Godfrey and the Fatimite Caliph of Egypt in A.D. 1099, and with Saladin and our own Richard Cœur de Lion a hundred years after. The Lion Heart fought his way from Acre; and during that march of a hundred miles, there was a continual battle of eleven days. In the memorable siege which it sustained, the Knight Templars mounted the first breach that was made. It was more deadly than the Charge of the Six Hundred, for not a man of that gallant band came back to tell the tale.

No ruins can be more complete than those of Askelon. It is an utter desolation. Great fragments of the wall that faced the sea lie scattered about like immense boulders—the stones and the mortar bound together in a solid mass. One is at a loss to conjecture what mighty forces could have been employed to wrench such massive blocks from a wall that seems to have been part of the rock itself.

We clambered over these fallen masses, which will soon be buried in the drifting sand, and reached the highest part of the old battlements. Seating ourselves on a projecting column, we surveyed this scene of awful desolation. On our way up, we passed several marble and granite pillars, beautifully polished, and bearing testimony to the taste with which the city was adorned. Fragments of marble and granite lie scattered about in all directions. Patches of garden ground, onion beds, hedges of prickly-pear, mounds of *débris*, now occupy the site of Askelon. There is not one inhabited house amongst the ruins—not so much as the vestige of a modern house. The fine crescent sweep of the ancient city is filled up with sand. The words of David, in his lament for Saul and Jonathan, were repeated more than once as we clambered from one part of the battlements to another—"Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon." Climbing, with some difficulty, up

the shattered wall of a tower, which is still of considerable height, we reached the top, from which the best view is got of this scene of desolation. It was a wonderful commentary on the following passages of Scripture, which, with the aid of a small concordance, we turned up on the spot:—"Baldness is come upon Gaza; Askelon is cut off with the remnant of their valley. . . . O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? . . . How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Askelon, and against the sea-shore? there hath he appointed it." "And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Askelon, and will turn mine hand against Ekron: and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish." "Askelon shall see it, and fear; . . . and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Askelon shall not be inhabited."

Looking over to the hills of Judea from the top of this shattered tower, we could now understand much better these portions of Scripture, also the relation in which the ancient Philistines stood to the Jew, and the reason of those border raids which are so frequently referred to in the Bible.

We descended from the top of this tower and went over the fragments of the wall, towards the north-east, where there are beautiful gardens filled with fruit trees, flowers, and vegetables. Every now and again, in the narrow lanes, we came upon broken columns of marble and granite, and ornamented friezes which had been dug out of the sand-drift. It is a remarkable fact that not a solitary column stands upright. At a little distance from the walls there is a small village where pieces of broken pillars are now used for door steps. Many portions of the ruins have also been drifted into the adjoining gardens. Almost everyone in this village turned out to see us as we passed, and some came and offered us ancient coins and relics for sale.

Along the coast, in some places, the sand-drift has gained very rapidly on the gardens and patches of cultivated ground.

This is particularly the case with the gardens belonging to the village of Burbârah. The sand had drifted into these enclosures to such an extent that the tops of the trees were only appearing above it, as when a heavy fall of snow, in our own country, has all but buried the lower bushes in a garden. It was a painful sight, and from the operation of this cause alone the prophecy will not only be fulfilled, "Askelon shall not be inhabited," but every vestige of the ruin will ere long be buried in the sand. That night we pitched our tents in the neighbourhood of a large village, of the name of Mejdil, and as dinner was not ready we all agreed to have a turn through this queer old-world looking place. It was towards evening; the people had all quit their labours in the fields, and were enjoying a quiet hour before going to bed. Our appearance created quite a sensation as we turned into a narrow lane, at the end of which we found the passage blocked up with heaps of dry manure, and all kinds of rural accumulations. The news spread that strangers had arrived, and all the villagers poured into that narrow lane, so that we had the greatest difficulty in getting out. At length the sheikh came and made a way through the crowd, and did not leave us till we reached our tents. The people were full of good humour. It was plain that we were as great objects of curiosity to them as they and their village were to us. The women crowded round the American lady, offering her their babies to kiss. That visit was the source of much amusement to us and to the villagers. By and by we got better acquainted with the dirt, dung-heaps, blind passages, narrow crooked lanes, strange oriental costumes, and many-coloured turbaned heads bobbing around. Under the guidance of the sheikh we made many a detour round heaps of straw and manure, sometimes scaling the savoury heights before we got back to our tents, followed by the whole village, and it was not till a late hour that they dispersed. Sanitary arrangements have never been heard of in the old land of the Philistines. It was sometimes difficult to distinguish a heap of manure from a human habi-

tation, and having said this much about one village, we have indicated pretty correctly the character of all the rest. There was, however, no rudeness about the inhabitants of Mejdil. They are seldom visited by strangers, and they all turned out to show us respect. Next morning the whole village was gathered about our tents—the young women were wrapped in loose white coverings from head to foot—the men, forming a wide circle round our encampment, sat down and watched with great interest all our operations. They had evidently made up their minds for a holiday till we got off. The dragoon attempted to drive them away, but it was needless; and even after we had started they followed us out of the village, passing, doubtless, many a joke after their own fashion about our strange manner and appearance.

That day brought us to the ruins of Ashdod, now called Esdud, a village of mud huts, situated on a rising ground. A small lake, a tomb, a ruined khan, a granite column, a sculptured sarcophagus, heaps of stones, patches of garden ground, are the chief features of modern Esdud. The Bible student must ever attach a deep interest to this place, as the temple of Dagon stood here, in which the Ark of the Covenant was placed after the fatal battle at Aphek, and the fish god fell from his place mutilated and defaced.

Ekron, now Akir, is a village of some fifty mud huts, and this was the northernmost of the five cities of the lords of the Philistines. There are no traces of antiquity about it except two finely built wells; but no one can visit this dreary looking place without thinking of that day when the Ark of God was brought hither. Anxious to get quit of it, the terror-stricken inhabitants had recourse to the plan mentioned in the First Book of Samuel, chap. vi. Standing in the neighbourhood of this village, one could easily trace the route which the lowing kine, with the new cart bearing the object of dread, and followed by the five lords of the Philistines, took when left to themselves on to Bethshemesh, the modern Ain-Es-Shemesh,

where the people were reaping their harvest, and where "they lifted up their eyes and rejoiced to see it."

Yebna was the next village through which we passed. It is beautifully situated on a rising ground, the site of the ancient city of Jabneh, which King Uziah dismantled (2 Chron. xxvi. 6). At the village fountain, where the water is raised by a *sakia*, we watered our horses, and during this process many of the villagers honoured us with their presence.

At night we encamped in the neighbourhood of a miserably dirty village situated on a hill side. The name of this collection of mud huts, as given by our dragoman, sounded something like Khubabi. A sheikh's tomb crowned the summit of a neighbouring hill, and whilst our tents were being pitched, we rode up to this spot, accompanied by a jet-black Nubian, who grinned and showed a set of teeth that would have delighted the heart of any dentist. On reaching the wely, or the tomb, we were surprised to find that it was the abode of a living sheikh or saint. A Moslem came up and laid down a piece of money on the window-sill outside, but the sheikh would not make his appearance, and the poor man went away much disappointed. Insanity qualifies a man here for being a saint, as the popular idea is that the soul is absent with God—drawn up into union with Him, as a token of the Divine favour. In the course of our journey we met with several men who were regarded by the people with peculiar veneration, but who were certainly fit subjects for a lunatic asylum; some of them were dangerous maniacs.

Our tents were pitched among quite a profusion of wild flowers. They were peeping out everywhere—under the bed, the table, and the camp-stools of our tent. Ibrahim had been very sparing of his carpets; a few more pieces would have been very agreeable in the sands of the desert, but now we had nature's brightest carpet under our feet, both in the tent and out of it. The dews were now very heavy, and the tent-covering hung above our head like a wet blanket, reminding us of

Gideon's fleece—"When he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water" (Judges vi. 38).

A few hours' ride over the plain of Sharon brought us to Jaffa. It was rather late in the season; the full flush of spring was over, but many flowers were still lingering in all their beauty. The bright colours of this glorious carpet had not quite faded; enough was left to make us put the question more than once, "What must it be in all the fulness and freshness of spring?" Larks were singing sweetly overhead; it was one continued gush of song; the air was flooded with melody and perfumed with the fragrance of flowers. The beautiful passage frequently occurred to our mind that morning, "The rain is over and gone, the flowers appear upon the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land." In a little we came out on the sandy plain, with great mounds rising to the left, and the sea beyond—wave after wave of sand, and every time we gained another crest, we strained our eyes to catch a glimpse of the famous old sea-port, but still one ridge after another rose between us and it till the last was mounted, and there lay Jaffa, crowning the crest of the hill, as in the days of Jonah, when he fled to find a ship in its harbour to carry him, as he vainly thought, from the fire of troubled thoughts within, and the presence of his God. The first look we got of Jaffa from the sand mounds, reminded us of the words of our Lord, "A city set on an hill cannot be hid." At first sight it looked more like a castle than a town. We had seen the highest houses towards the land, the rest of it lay on the slope facing the sea. Cheered by the sight, we rode over the sand drift as best we could on such a hack, rejoicing in the prospect of dissolving partnership when we reached the top of the hill. Depend upon it, in spite of all sacred associations, a bad horse will spoil the finest train of thought, and it is very annoying to have this broken up by a complete standstill. But we are approaching Jaffa, and must not get peevish,

like the old prophet. Now we are among the narrow lanes, where everyone who walks is up to the ankles in sand—hedges of prickly pear on either side. By the by, the prickly pear always reminded us of a thick-set, surly, in-kneed sort of a man. Up the narrow lanes, and you now ride under the grateful shade of orange groves, bright with yellow fruit, peeping out everywhere among the green leaves and the scarlet blossoms of the pomegranate. You wonder at the strange soil, for if you dismount, you must wade among sand. Beyond these hedges of prickly pear are beautiful gardens, rich in all the luscious fruits and vegetable products of the East. Another turn in the narrow lane of sand, and we enter a long avenue, with oranges drooping from the branches. We thought of our Sunday-school gatherings and juvenile soirees, where even an orange is looked upon as a special treat. What a place for Sunday-school excursions, and how our boys would revel in an orange grove! Another lane, full of sand, and bright with the same delicious fruit, and the scarlet glow of the pomegranate.

The question, "Why do the people here not turn out for pic-nics?" had scarcely been proposed by some one of our party, when, at a bend in the narrow lane, we saw a large number of females gathered round a fountain in the midst of orange trees. All the women wore a loose covering of cloth, as white as the driven snow. There could not be fewer than a hundred seated round the fountain, and their white dresses formed a striking contrast to the dark green leaves, the yellow fruit, and the bright red blossoms. The sight was one which struck us all greatly, and on inquiry our dragoman learned it was the festival of Tabitha, and these women were gathered round the fountain which was called by her name, to show the esteem in which they still hold one who spent much of her time in relieving distress in the old town of Joppa, and who "was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." Our arrival thus happened to be on the very day that was set apart by the women of the place in commemoration of Dorcas. The gather-

ing round this fountain, presenting as it did a very oriental and striking appearance, assumed at once a new and thrilling interest when we understood the object which these women had in view. It was a fine tribute of respect to female piety and worth—to a useful life that was spent in the neighbouring town.

When leaving our camping ground in the desert, few traces were left behind to mark that we had ever been there; these had no worth in themselves, and could not benefit any who would follow. The wish was frequently expressed that it might not be so when we came to break up our earthly tent, at the close of our pilgrimage in this world. This was the thought which laid hold of our mind when we saw that gathering round the tomb of Dorcas. "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance."

"The good abides, man dies. Die, too,  
The toil, the fever, and the fret;  
But the great thought—the upward view—  
The good work done—these fail not yet!  
From sire to son, from age to age,  
Goes down the growing heritage."

Our tents were pitched on a sand-hill dotted with a few trees, the blue waves right in front, and the quaint-looking old town rising a little to the right like a cone, house above house, stair above stair, out of the sea. It is a strange packing-box-looking sort of place, as if the design of the founder at first had been to try how many houses could be huddled together, above and below, in nooks and in corners, and in all out of the way places. The streets are narrow tunnels and steep stairs. You may as well try to ride up the Pyramids as go through some of these break-neck, blind passages on horseback. The life of the town is not within but outside the walls, in a large open common, where you walk up to the ankles in sand, and where there is quite a litter of booths, and sheds, and all kinds of branches, twigs, and straw matting, thrown over a few sticks crossing one another, and affording sufficient shade for



the buyer, the seller, and the Eastern loafer. There are also a few wooden erections for coffee, which is served up as thick as a syrup, and *narghilehs*, and a *cafgeh*, or waiter, to bring you a bit of red-hot charcoal. Around these wooden cafés are stands for mules and donkeys, where you can get your choice of either, but there is no cab-stand. Such a thing was never known in this land, and the millennium will be far advanced when one is seen in this quarter. There is not a wheel-barrow nor a wheeled vehicle from Dan to Beersheba. In Cairo or Alexandria you may call a cab, but there is an end to all wheels at Jaffa. What could they do in its narrow streets, some of which resemble a corkscrew stair going up a steeple? Donkeys, camels, and mules, are the wheels, the waggons, the trucks, all in one. Enter one of these booths, and having purchased a few delicious oranges, sit down under the twigs or the matting, and look out upon the strange scene. What immense piles of vegetables and fruit are heaped up all around in the burning sand—oranges, grapes, dates, figs, bananas, cucumbers, tomatoes, citrons, and melons, and all in as great profusion as gooseberries at a Glasgow Fair. A real bit of Eastern life is passing before you—muleteers, *fellaheen*, camel drivers, dervishes and fakirs—women covered from head to foot in white—long strings of camels carrying the produce of acres, or proceeding to the great caravan road to Egypt through the desert, with the glittering wares of bazaars, or the more substantial products of the soil—crowds of pilgrims, of every colour, clime, and costume, on their way either to Mecca or Jerusalem with the unwashed dirt of months about them.

Having finished your oranges, and strolled about the booths, pass into the town by the Jerusalem gate, with its finely arched and sculptured front, the only gate towards the land, and ten to one you will find the *cadi* seated there hearing cases for judgment, in the midst of donkey boys, Arab merchants, half-naked peasants, sheikhs from the desert, dancing dervishes, far-travelled pilgrims, and Turkish soldiers. The sentence may

be a fine, or a flogging, so many stripes or piastres. The rod settles a great deal in the East. Unlike all other things there, the *cadi's* judgments are quickly given, unless the heat is all the more intense, and there is no appeal.

If you wish to see this old seaport to advantage, proceed at once to the water-gate facing the sea. Select your boat and boatmen, and get out beyond the dangerous reef of rocks through that small opening of only twelve yards wide, and then look up to the terraced hill, with the old-world houses toppling one above another, and running up to the highest point, in the shape of a helmet. This view is picturesque and striking. If there is any swell on the sea, don't venture out, as there is great danger of being dashed to pieces on the rocks at the narrow opening. This life or death sort of entrance is the only sea-gate to Jerusalem, to which Hiram sent all his timber for the building of the temple, and through which Jonah was borne on the surge to reach the ship that was lying at some distance in the offing.

A portion of the house (the old wall) of Simon the tanner, "by the seaside," is still pointed out. A small lighthouse now occupies the site; and as we saw the light flashing from this tower one night over the sea, we were reminded of that better light which had gone forth from the same spot to lands beyond these waters, in the divine message which was given to the Apostle on the roof of Simon's house, a message which broke down the partition between Jew and Gentile, "Call no man common or unclean."

We were commissioned to buy a few articles for Achmed, Mohammed, and an orphan boy who did a few things for us at Jaffa, the necessary supply of money having been placed at our disposal by a friend. Accompanied by the orphan and the two servants, we sallied forth to the bazaars, where we had a specimen of how business is done in the East. Our business was *everybody's* business, and we were soon surrounded by a tribe of idlers, who took as much interest in the charities we

were called upon to dispense as we did ourselves. They had to examine the shirts, the tarboosh, and the cotton trousers. The merchant appealed to several in the crowd; he showed them his articles, told them his price, and they acted as a kind of jury. At last the bargain was concluded; and after a great deal of delay on the part of the merchant in managing his various coins, payment was made, the crowd following us to the next place where we had purchases to make. On our return we passed the shop in the bazaar where we had made the former purchase, and the merchant came out and told us he had made a mistake in the money he had given us in exchange for our sovereign. The whole thing had to be gone over again; a money-changer was called in, the crowd was again appealed to, and the transaction was at last arranged to their satisfaction. Doubtless they saw that justice was done. Their interference was not owing to the fact that we were strangers, but that everyone must take a part in his neighbour's affairs. The transaction that afternoon was slow in the extreme, and was the occasion of no little amusement.

On hearing the voices of many children one day in passing, we looked in at an open door and found a Jewish school. The little boys were reading the Hebrew Bible; two teachers were present, and they and all the scholars, when reading, kept seeing-sawing with great vigour. It was the same in a Mohammedan school that we visited, where the teacher and his scholars read the Koran. In neither of these establishments was there a single girl present, and this fact is significant as to the general neglect of female education in the East.

With what delight we bathed in the sparkling waters of the sea, much needed and much enjoyed after a month in the desert!—with what a new sensation of life we strolled as often as we could through the fine orange groves, taking our own sweet will of the delicious fruits for a few piastres!—with what increasing wonder and amazement we sauntered amongst the booths and sheds outside the wall, and hung about the gate,

where so many dissolving views of Eastern life presented themselves, and dawdled through the arches, and tunnels, and stone-ladders of the city, down to the narrow port-hole, some six feet square, a mere slit in the wall, from which everything going out to the sea must be tossed into the boats, and from which everything coming in must be hoisted up, the arms, legs, and backs of the Arabs being the only "donkey engine" used for this purpose! Though Jaffa is the sea-gate to Jerusalem, our readers must never for a moment imagine that this entrance has either harbour, basin, dock, landing, stair, jetty, quay, or anything of the kind, but what it derives from a rugged bit of reef that forms a sort of breastwork to the sea water, which goes right up to the town wall. When there is any swell, the waves break over this ridge of rocks with great fury, shutting them out of sight altogether. All communication with the sea is then cut off, as it is either impossible or exceedingly dangerous to make the passage with small boats in or out through the narrow gut. Even in the smoothest sea, ships are obliged to lie off at a considerable distance. But all this only serves to make this old sea-port all the more quaint and primitive-looking. One feels certain that what it was in the days of Jonah, and long before, it is now. It would be Joppa no more if it had a harbour, and water bailiffs, and commissioners, and sheds, and all the hoisting apparatus of a modern seaport.

These boatmen must be a lot of grave imperturbable fellows, without the slightest inclination to the humorous side of life or sense of the ludicrous, or they would be killed with laughter at the scenes they witness when hoisting up from the boats to the slit in the wall, which forms the water-gate of the town, pashas, consuls, pilgrims, bales of cotton goods from Manchester, heavy corpulent Turks, and the fat women who compose their harems. In this respect Jaffa stands unrivalled. Comedy and Farce were never so represented. It would be very dangerous for any man easily tickled with the ludicrous to saunter about the water-gate when the hoisting process is going forward.

Sydney Smith used to say that some people would require to undergo a surgical operation before they could see the point of a joke. These boatmen seem to need something like this. How they can go through their work without an apoplectic fit from laughter is really a matter for medical inquiry. In the hoisting process we witnessed some of the most awkward and ludicrous combinations, some most laughable predicaments, that were exquisitely droll; and whilst we were holding our sides, the boatmen, and others actively engaged in the shipping interests of the place, were coolly smoking their pipes, or preparing to take a cup of black comfort, *alias* coffee.

It is not easy, even at this distance, to think of the dogs of Jaffa without a grudge. They seemed at least to have a grudge at us, and were determined that we should not sleep. No sooner were our tents pitched on the rising ground than a number of these canine watchmen, who appeared to be the guardians of the hill, took us under their special protection. This would have done very well had there not been a rival interest, and had our camping-ground not been a disputed territory between our guardians and another tribe who also laid claim to it. The claims of both parties had not yet been settled. The war was still fiercely raging when we arrived, but we did not know this till the evening, when hostilities were renewed and the night was made hideous with howls. As we were going off into the land of dreams on came the attacking party from the town, to dislodge our watchmen from the hill. Then came the tug of war. Our first impression was that all the dogs, not only in Jaffa, but in Palestine, were fighting about our tents, and would, ere long, eat us up. But the attacking party were driven ignominiously down the hill, and the fight raged for some time at the foot of it. Attack and repulse were again and again renewed with varying success, till about midnight the strangers had possession of our camping ground. There was a truce for a short time, and when we were again going off into peaceful slumbers, a sudden dash was made against the

tent ropes making the pole and canvas shake violently ;—then a rush in full chorus down the hill. Our party had returned with a reinforcement, determined to dislodge their assailants, which they ultimately did ; but the war was not yet ended. Attack and onset were kept up with such a horrid noise, till neutrality and endurance on our part were impossible. We took no side, but declared war against both parties alike. It was the only night we had recourse to fire-arms, not for the purpose of killing the poor brutes, but to drive them all away.

## CHAPTER X.

Worse than a Dog Fight. Departure from Jaffa. Photographs at a Well. Beth-Dagon. Ramleh. View from the Tower. Lydda. The Lost Plaid. Syrian Fever. Pass of Beth-Horon. Sagacity of the Arab Horse. A Lily among Thorns. Appearance of the Country. Neby Samwil. First View of Jerusalem. Impressions. Gibeon. Approach to Jerusalem. Pic-Nic Parties. Daughters of Zion. Marks of the Curse. City Walls. Within the Gates. First Night in "The Damascus."



HIS dog fight was, after all, to be preferred to the confusion, worse confounded, which greeted us in the morning. Just as we were preparing to leave Jaffa some hitch took place between Ibrahim and the owner of the mules and horses which were to carry us and our baggage during the rest of our journey. It was a fierce quarrel, more so than any we had yet seen in the desert. The owner insisted on taking away all his mules and horses, and ordered his black slave, a fine specimen of a Nubian youth, to trot them off. All this was followed by an unusual amount of thunder and lightning, in the noisy warfare that ensued. At last both parties went off to the Consul's office, and from that to the Governor's house, where matters were adjusted. When Ibrahim and the owner came back they fell to kissing one another on both cheeks. Oil had been thrown on the troubled waters, but this storm cost us a delay of some three hours. Mounting our horses, which showed much more mettle than those of Gaza, we rode slowly past the cemetery, on which we could never look without emotion, as we thought on the sad fate of Dr. Hodgkin, down to the market place, where we find it more than difficult to thread our way among sheds, booths, women haggling at the stalls, strings of camels, bearded and bare-

legged Arabs, mules and donkeys bearing panniers filled with fruit, for which boats are waiting in the roadstead—several Eastern jokes are passed upon the Frank as he passes. At last we clear them all, and for an hour plod on through the burning sand, which must cover a splendid soil not far below, the proof of this being patent to all our senses in the rich gardens through which we passed, filled with oranges, lemons, and many other tempting fruits. The heat was so great, and the flies so troublesome, that our horse was constantly tossing his head and showing signs of distress. We stopped to cool his mouth at a well where the water is brought up by a *sakia*, the wheel and the pitcher making a merry splash in the troughs. One cannot be many hours in this country without attaching great value to a fountain. In the course of half an hour at such a place, one sees a great variety of life, and the well is the best school for the study of Eastern manners, and for receiving many pleasing illustrations of Scripture. Everyone stops at the well to drink, smoke, or gossip, and then passes on, to make room for another dissolving view. What enjoyment it was to sit under the shade at a well for a forenoon, and study the mosaic of oriental life, every new group forming a necessary bit in the pattern, without which it would not have been complete! What a study for an artist! A photographic apparatus, for five hours at a well, would do more for the illustration of Eastern life than all the word painting of as many volumes. But who could sit or stand in one posture for the time required for this process, with the blood-sucking flies buzzing all around? To get quit of them the donkeys not unfrequently rolled themselves all over in the sand, the riders allowing the poor beasts to slip from between their legs. This was not so easily done when the rider, which was not seldom the case, happened to be a woman. Jack would let her down as gently as he could, and the bundle, wrapped up from head to foot, would manage, somehow or other, to get off without performing a somersault. Just as we arrived at the well, some



half-dozen women came up in as many bundles on donkeys. One of them, partly from a frolicsome humour, and also from a desire to rid himself from his tormentors, went down into the sand, and having parted from his bundle, which was wrapped up in white calico, he kicked and rolled about most vigorously. His fair rider, though riding Adam fashion, managed to disentangle herself, and took it all in good part. This was the first time we really heard a woman laugh in the East. Our horse made three attempts in the same day to get down into the sand to roll about. The first time he was most successful in his performance; in the other two endeavours he was interrupted by a gentle touch from the spur. He had come from the grass that morning, and was disposed to carry out his field habits on the sand, and inclined, at the same time, for a practical joke. Next day he was quite cured.

At a short distance from this well lies the little village of Beth-Dagon, half-buried amongst olives and prickly-pears. You cannot pass it without thinking of the fish-god of the Philistines, and of the humiliating plight of this deity when, confronted by the Ark of the Covenant, he fell mutilated and defaced in his temple of Ashdod.

The country now opens, and you canter along the wide plain of Sharon, where herds of sheep, goats, and camels are feeding. The gardens and the enclosures cease till you reach Ramleh, which is finely situated in the midst of olive plantations, and which has a kindly look about it.

The population is said to be about three thousand, and the houses are better built, and not so closely packed as in most Eastern towns. Following the dragoman we took through a cultivated field as the nearest for the famous tower, at a short distance from the town. This tower, which is a hundred and twenty feet in height, stands alone, but it was formerly connected with a mosque. The ruins of a spacious khan, dating probably from the time of the Crusaders, are in the neighbourhood. Arched cloisters and many subterranean vaults still

exist, and show that this, at one time, must have been a place of great importance. We ascend to the top of the tower, from which we get our first extensive view of that land, which, above all others, has been the theme of song and story. All around us are spots of sacred interest, if you had only an intelligent guide to point them out. But the most of dragomen know but little, and care less for these places. They go through the country profoundly ignorant of its most interesting localities. Ibrahim could tell us little or nothing on the top of that tower, and we had scarcely reached the summit till he urged us to get down, as we had to sleep at Jimsu, and robbers might be in the plain. We point to a long stretch of blue water on the horizon, and he can tell us that is the sea, *but he can do little more*. So is it with the most of the dragoman tribe.

The eye rests on the white plain of the ancient Philistines—what a history is bound up in that one plain! How often has the tide of battle rolled along it from the days of Joshua to Lion Heart, and from the time of the Crusaders to Napoleon. Yonder is Lydda, or Ludd, and, in fancy, we now see the Apostle Peter leaving his house there, and setting out in company with the friends who had been sent to bring him to Joppa; directing their course across that plain, pretty much in the same track that we have taken to-day—to the east, the pass of Beth-horon, the heights around Ajalon, and the mountains of Judea. This is but the merest outline, and even as such most meagre. How many sacred places and details remain to be filled in? The impression lingers with us, and ever will; but it is impossible minutely to describe the scene.

We rode on to Lydda through lanes of sand, with orange groves on each side. The dirty little village, embosomed in palms and olives, with patches of cultivated ground lying all around, was reached in about an hour. The fact that the Apostle Peter had dwelt for some time in this place, and healed the palsy-stricken Eneas, had more interest for us than

the deeds of Lion Heart, or the achievements of England's patron saint of dragon notoriety, who is said to have been born and buried here. How he came to be England's patron saint at such a distance is hard to say. Be this as it may, the ruins of the church erected in honour of him, and which still bear his name, are the principal attraction of this place. The arch and the pillars which still remain are fine specimens of architecture. Looking over a wall into the court of a mosque, we saw several of the faithful washing their feet in tanks, previous to saying their prayers. On getting to the outskirts of the little village, on our way to the camping ground for the night, we turned round to admire one of the finest sunsets we saw in the East. The radiance gleamed through the feathery branches of some palm trees, and the minaret and old ruins of the church of St. George were burnished with gold. It was here, while seated on horseback admiring the glory of the setting sun, and thinking of the sacred associations of the place, that our good Scotch plaid, which had accompanied us in many a journey, must have slipped, unobserved by any of the party, from the saddle. The loss was not discovered till we had nearly reached Jimsu. The sun had set, and the chill air and heavy dew reminded us that it was time to get the plaid over our shoulders. It was gone! Where could it be? No one had seen it fall. We concluded that it must have dropped from the saddle shortly after leaving Lydda, while we were looking at the setting sun. Accompanied by the dragoman we rode back as fast as we could, but no plaid was to be found. Night had set in, the stars were gleaming overhead, and Ibrahim raised his old story of "bad Arab," and turned back, shouting on us to follow. Very reluctantly we were compelled to give up the search, for we knew full well it could not possibly be replaced. The loss of our plaid in that strange land, trifling as it may seem, was to us like the loss of a friend. No reference whatever would now be made to it, but for the somewhat serious consequences that followed, and which may be a warning to some future traveller in the East. On

reaching our encampment, long after sunset, we felt chilled all over by the night air and the heavy dews. The result was a fever, which hung about us for several weeks, depriving us of our sleep, filling our bones with aching pains, and compelling us to *fight our way* through the greater part of Palestine. This might have happened independently of the loss of our plaid, but there seemed to be a close connection between the two. One of our attendants went back to Lydda early next morning to make inquiry about the missing article, but without success. It would make an excellent blanket for a Bedouin, or a covering for his tent, and should we ever return, we will not grudge our friends the use of it. The chilly air and the heavy dews of that night, and the effects of these in the fever that followed, gave peculiar force to the words of Jacob, "In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night." Nothing could more accurately describe the Syrian climate at a certain time of the year. Next morning, on striking our tents, a great number of the villagers formed a circle, and looked on in idle curiosity.

Nowhere have we encountered a pass so difficult to climb on horseback as that of Beth-horon. Ibrahim was an utter stranger to the pass, and we had to beat about for a considerable time before we got into the right track. It is not easy to give our readers any accurate idea of the difficulty of that mountain path. First of all, the day was intensely hot to begin with—the air was not merely like a hothouse, but the rays of the sun were fierce and blistering in that mountain gorge. The difficulty did not lie so much in the steepness of the ascent—it is nothing in this respect compared with the Gemmi—it was not that the path was narrow, wild, and rugged, but the difficulty lay in the shape and polish of the stones. The track seemed to be the dry bed of a winter torrent; the stones were skull-shaped and polished like marble. At times the way led up a very steep ascent of solid limestone rock, with a polish equal to that of a mantelpiece, and the sure-footed horse would pause for a little

before proceeding, and very patiently form a judgment in its own way as to the best step to be taken. The sure-footedness and sagacity of these Arab horses are truly wonderful. At a very awkward and dangerous-looking place you may wish your horse to get over it by taking to the right, but it has come to a different conclusion, and you must allow it to take its own bent, and you invariably find that it is the best. Often had we reason to admire the above all-important qualities in our Arab cob in threading the pass of Beth-horon. When we felt inclined to pull in one way at a difficult step, and had indicated, very unmistakeably, our wishes in this direction, our horse, now put to its mettle, would stand and weigh the matter for a few moments and come to quite a contrary decision, and stick to it whether we would or not. Often had we reason to commend its sagacity in a few kind words, and by gently patting its neck, the latter being the language which it could not fail to understand. We laid aside our white umbrella when riding up Beth-horon, and this exposure to the burning sun, after the chill of the previous night completed the mischief already begun. Had we known the trustworthiness of the Arab horse, in getting over difficult ground, we might have held an umbrella in each hand and gone up in safety. Our confidence now is such that we believe our horse, which was none of the best, but certainly an improvement on the Gaza one, would have carried us, even had we been blindfold, to the top of the pass.

This was one of our most memorable rides in Palestine, not merely on account of the wild and rugged grandeur of the scenery, and the polished surface of the narrow channel stones, but chiefly because that pass overlooks the valley of Ajalon, the scene of one of earth's greatest battles, and of one of the most astounding miracles, when Joshua, leading the hosts of Israel to victory, scaled these heights, rolled down the resistless tide of battle through that plain, and routed the exhausted forces of the five kings. It was the triumph of truth, righteousness, and freedom, over error, idolatry, and oppression.

At noon we reached the little village at the top. The sheikh's house occupies a most commanding position on the highest point of the hill. When we entered this hovel, for it was nothing better, the light being admitted only by the door, the sheikh, by a fine stroke of policy, removed the ladder, or some other means of ascent, and placing his knee for a step beckoned us to mount, while another who stood above lent us a helping hand to the roof. The view from this elevation is truly grand, and teeming at every point with historical associations of great interest. It was in vain that we attempted to steal a few moments' quiet. A motley crowd had collected around the base of the house, and a host of hands were stretched upwards for baksheesh. The owners of these had a look very far from prepossessing. Out of this villainous-looking group there rises at this moment the sweet face of a little girl, probably of some eight or nine years of age; she was so utterly unlike all the rest of her juvenile companions, or indeed anyone in the crowd, that we pointed her out to our friends as a "lily among thorns." She carried her dowry upon her head in the form of a circlet, about an inch broad, composed of silver coins, the one overlapping the other like the scales of a fish. She, too, held out her tiny hand with a sweet smile and a winning grace, that won all our hearts, and drew from us all the small coins which we had, for she made us think of some dear little ones at home. She was timid as a startled fawn, and the moment she received a coin she ran off with it to her mother. To this day we think of her as a "lily among thorns," and often wonder what must be her fate in such a place. No contrast could be greater than that child and the brigand appearance of the group, among whom she seemed to be an especial favourite.

So far as begging was concerned we had fallen among a nest of hornets. The whole village turned out, men and women, young and old, and when they could get nothing more we have an impression they followed us with something very different from a blessing. The wild flower we saw no more, but if good

wishes can make her happy her future will be a bright one, even in the mountain fastness of Beth-horon.

On descending the hill on the other side leading down to El-Jib, or Gibeon, we were much struck with the circular and amphitheatre form of the little hills shooting up around us, from the narrow and desolate-looking valleys, with natural ledges rising tier above tier, like the seats in a gallery, from base to summit, and covered here and there with small green patches of corn. This is a remarkable feature of the scenery which cannot fail to strike any traveller. Low walls or dykes formed by loose stones have been raised at one time on these natural ledges of rocks, in order to keep the soil together, and to prevent its being washed away by the winter rains. These dykes in many places are broken down, and the soil carried off into the valley below. All the fine old trees that clothed the sides of these hills have been cut down, leaving the limestone rock white and bare, giving the scene, save where it is dotted with olives or patches of green, a ghastly and desolate appearance. The first things that will probably strike a stranger in the Beth-horon and Gibeon districts are the natural terraces on the bare hill sides, and then the oppressive sense of desolation which will lead him again and again to ask, "Can this be the land which was described as flowing with milk and honey?" His first impression will, in all likelihood, be that of disappointment. He will almost be inclined to think that there must be something of oriental exaggeration in the ancient descriptions which are given of this land; but this feeling will soon correct itself, for on looking around, and becoming better acquainted with the country, he will see every now and again on these bare ledges of rock, where the dykes have not been broken down, and where the soil is preserved, bright spots of verdant beauty, where the waving corn rustles in the passing breeze; and he will by and by discover that industry, a small capital, and a good government, would again make this down-trodden land rejoice in the profusion of a wondrous fertility;

but these three essentials are at present wanting. Place a little soil from the valley below on these bare ledges, keep it from being washed down by the heavy rains, and these ghastly terraces will, in a few years, be clothed with crops which would yield an abundant return. The beautiful words of sacred writ, describing the ancient appearance of the country, might again be applied—"Their pastures shall be in all high places." "Thy paths drop fatness." "They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness; and the little hills rejoice on every side." "The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing." On coming down towards Gibeon, with the little rounded, terraced hills about us on every side, some of them made glad with the olive, the vine, and the little patches of corn, we did feel the appropriateness of the expression, "the little hills," for such they really are, and how beautiful they must have been when the words were literally true, "The little hills rejoice on every side."

We lingered so long among these "little hills" that we had scarcely time to reach the top of Neby Samwil before the sun went down. This mountain associated, as our readers will observe, with the name of the prophet, Samuel, is about 2700 feet in height, and from the roof of the mosque which crowns the summit, very near the whole Palestine of the patriarchs, in its entire length and breadth, can be seen. This is supposed to be the Mizpeh of Scripture to which this distinguished patriot and prophet, who has given his name to the mountain, gathered the tribes in seasons of national trial or deliverance, when a great religious solemnity was held. This venerable man of God very probably had his dwelling either here or at Gibeon, at the foot of the mountain; and it is very striking that to this day his name lingers about this sacred spot. It has not been so with some of the most prominent places mentioned in the Bible. The names of many localities associated with the deeds of illustrious personages have been changed, but Neby Samwil is an exception to this.



When our party reached the foot of the mountain, it was so near sunset that for some moments it was discussed whether we should ascend at once, or go up to-morrow and see the sunrise. Our tents were at hand, and never did we feel more inclined to turn in and rest, but, notwithstanding, our voice was given for immediate ascent. It was well that we so concluded, for when the morrow came, the fever that hung about us would have interdicted any such attempt. Without leaving the saddle we started for the summit, and having more confidence in our horse after the trying ascent of Beth-horon, we let him take his own way, and again had occasion to admire his sagacity in going up, but more especially in coming down. When we reached the top, the sun was sinking in the glowing waters of the great sea that stretched away to the west, beyond the plain of Philistia and Sharon. The golden radiance of a setting sun threw a wondrous glory over the unbroken, monotonous chain of the mountains of Moab to the east, and on olive trees, little villages, and gardens that dotted the landscape here and there.

"Where is Jerusalem?"

"Down there to the right." We did not think it was so near, and straining our eyes to catch the first glimpse, we had looked at more distant objects in another direction. We turned in silence, and got our first look of the old grey walls and the domed roofs of some of the houses. It was a moment never to be forgotten. The view from that point is not striking—*but it was Jerusalem!* Some have felt disappointed with this view; such was not our feeling, and we were not there many moments till we could fully sympathise with the feelings of the ancient Jew expressed in the words, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning!" Our eyes caught sight of a portion of the city just as the retreating radiance of the setting sun gave place to the sombre shadows of the brief gloaming in the East. It was a fitting time for the first glimpse of the city. We had long heard of her as sitting solitary and widowed, and the appropriate drapery of coming night now closed in the

scene, and was in harmony with the somewhat sad and solemn cast of our own thoughts. Not a word was spoken for a time. Every one went apart by himself: the soul needed to be alone in such a place. Words were irksome, silence sweet and welcome, in the rush of memories that came upon us on that hill-top. No one can ever forget his first sight of Jerusalem, no matter from whatever point he sees it, there is such a history connected with the sacred enclosure within these walls. When standing on the summit of Neby Samwil, the thought which was uppermost in our mind, and which gave a colouring to all others, was this—down there the Saviour of the world taught, healed, suffered, and died on the accursed tree! His wondrous love seemed to assume a more vivid and striking reality, when we looked down upon the city where He gave His life a ransom for the sins of the world. It is surely no weakness to confess that when the silence produced by the first view of Jerusalem was broken, some of us felt it difficult to speak. There was an unusual tightness and huskiness about the throat, not from the chill of the evening air, but from emotion, which some strove in vain to conceal—not a little moisture about some eyes, and very mingled feelings in some hearts, as if a funeral and a wedding-day were suddenly rolled into one—sorrow and joy strangely blended together. Night was fast closing in, ere one of us could leave the roof of the mosque. As we took a parting glance at the mountains lying around the city, we thought of the words, “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever” (Psalm cxxv. 2).

Next morning we climbed over the terraces of the limestone rock, and reached the plateau on which the village of El Jib, the Gibeon of Scripture is situated. It occupies a very commanding position in the heart of a rich but neglected country. The successive layers of limestone which rise one above another to the top of the hill gave the place a very peculiar appearance. They resemble a long flight of steps leading to some great

temple. One can scarcely conceive of a more fitting place for an altar than this broad platform, with its natural steps all round. This was the great "high place" of Solomon, of whom we read, "And the King went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar" (1 Kings iii. 4).

As you sit on one of these steps the curtain rises on the past, and one of the greatest religious solemnities of any time, with all its gorgeous details of altar offerings, music, king, princes, priests, and people, is enacted before you. The people are crowding up the steps to the altar of God, or gazing at the ascending smoke of the sacrifice from the plain below. It was here that the words were addressed to Solomon from the excellent glory, "Ask what I shall give thee," and in reply he presented his memorable prayer for wisdom. It was with deep interest we read here the ninth chapter of the book of Joshua, and in fancy saw the wily Gibeonites busy making their preparations for deceiving Joshua and his people, by a stratagem which betrayed duplicity and cowardice, and which, after all, has a dash of the ludicrous in it, as you look at these deputies of Gibeon going in clouted shoes, in clothes very much the worse for wear, with rent sacks and bottles, and all looking travel-worn and weary, in order to cheat the leader of Israel into the belief that they have come from a far country. Such is the statement these deputies made, and what arrant knaves they must have been when they palmed themselves off on the unsuspecting warriors of Israel! (Joshua ix. 12, 13)—"This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy: and these bottles of wine, which we filled, were new; and, behold, they be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of the very long journey." Their trick succeeds, and they return to receive the congratulations of their friends, and to talk over their success with mutual glee. It was a crooked policy which saved their

lives, but which made them hewers of wood and drawers of water ever afterwards.

On passing through the village we observed that most of the houses were built of stone taken from former buildings. These stones and the arched doorways gave a very ancient appearance to the village. The very look of the stones links you to a remote antiquity. There is an old massive ruin with arched vaults of solid masonry and fine workmanship. This probably was the ancient citadel. These are all the remains that represent the former greatness of Gibeon, which in the days of Joshua was spoken of as "a great city, as one of the royal cities."

The spot where that terrible tragedy was enacted, an account of which is given in 2 Samuel xi., and which reminds us of some of the bloody deeds in the records of the Highland clans, is pointed out at a fountain, where there is still a large supply of water. This is referred to in Scripture as the "Pool of Gibeon," where the two warrior chiefs, Abner and Joab, representing different interests, set their men to play, and the sport ended in a "very sore battle." Altogether Gibeon, from its high and central position, and its historical associations, is one of the most remarkable places in the land.

A short ride, full of many stirring recollections, brought us at last down to a valley, dotted over with olive trees and covered with stones, not far from the old grey walls of the city. As we approached, we were very much struck on seeing women and children seated here and there on the brown earth under the shadow of the olives. It was a Jewish festival, and the daughters of Zion had turned out in holiday attire. The ground was literally sown with stones, so that walking was very difficult, and the heat was great. Many family parties, the mothers and children at least, passed us on donkeys to the various groups under the olives, who were enjoying themselves in pic-nic fashion. No one could fail to mark at once the Jewish type of countenance. There was a thoughtful, matronly

air about the women, much more of that quiet Quakeress look than we expected to find. They ambled deftly along, and their dresses, though not gay, gave a cheery holiday appearance to the scene. This was especially the case with the young people. But for this festival turn out, the approach to the city would have been oppressively sad. Even as it was, sorrow seemed to cling to the skirts of all. There was no mirth, no laughter, no merry-making—how could these be seen with the ruins so near? It would have been like decking a corpse with a garland. The daughters of Zion were sitting amid the desolation of their country. Many of them had beautiful faces, reminding one of Rebekah and Rachel, and pictures of the Madonna, but, with few exceptions, there was a tinge of sadness in every countenance. Here and there you might see a happy looking little girl—a perfect brunette—very cleverly managing her donkey, and such a face presents a wonderful contrast to the looks of the men who were strolling about singly or in pairs by themselves, but never mingling with the groups of women and children. Amongst the men there was no exception, all were sad, spiritless, and dejected. Never have we seen anywhere such faces. They were not merely “sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought,” but they had a most unhealthy and sallow hue, betokening a vitiated atmosphere in their dwellings, and a very meagre and unwholesome diet. There was something more than this burnt in their faces; it was not so much the marks of poverty and privation that struck us, as the stony fixed look of a “rooted sorrow.” We never expect to meet with such features anywhere, unless we happen to return to that place. Here and there you might see the sharp, keen eye, the hard, stern, expression, the compressed lips, the set teeth of a Shylock type of countenance, still bent on dollars, but nearly all seemed to have resigned themselves to poverty and passive sorrow. The young men were extremely pale and thin, and, for their age, tall. Their hair was done up into stringy twists of ringlets, which hung down their cheeks, and gave them a very sickly and

effeminate look. We have seen many kinds of head-gear, of all shapes and sizes, from the long shaggy funnel of the Persian, to the bald and naked *fez* of the Turk, but nothing of the kind has ever struck us so much as the low-crowned, broad-brimmed beaver worn by the Jew in the city of his fathers. Old men sauntered about, some with books in the Hebrew language, from which they read occasionally; some sat apart, in melancholy musing, under the shade of the olives; some aged waifs kept muttering to themselves, and only cast a furtive glance at us as we passed, reminding us of old men who had drifted into a lunatic asylum, and whom we have seen chattering to themselves as they walked about the grounds. These wandering Jews represent their race, and that race as scattered through the whole earth. They had come from all lands, travel-worn and weary—through incredible hardships of poverty, want, insult, and injury, to die in the holy city. All bore the marks of a peculiar people, and we could not divest ourselves of the thought that the shadow of a terrible curse still hung over them. It is a painful sight; quite unique in the history of the world—a nationality, yet not a nation in the sense of being gathered into one—a people without a home, scattered over every kingdom, but having no kingdom of their own—a race without a country, yet clinging to the land of their fathers as no people ever did, and living inspired with the hope that a bright time is coming, when that land shall yet be their own, in a glory which it never saw even in its best and palmiest days. As group after group passed us, we thought of the bush burning yet not consumed. Here is a people whom the world has not been able to shake off. They have survived all the persecutions of successive ages—persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed, and, in one sense, “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus;” for the curse invoked in their fathers’ words, uttered in the very city we are now approaching, has not yet been wrung out—“His blood be on us and our children!”

“ Tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast,  
How shall ye flee away and be at rest ?  
The wild dove hath her nest, the fox his cave,  
Mankind their country—Israel but the grave !”

Full of such thoughts, we rode up along a part of the city wall, partly formed from the native rock. A high wall, varying from forty to eighty feet, goes round the entire plateau, two miles and a half in circumference. The present wall dates no farther back than about the middle of the sixteenth century, but it has a grey, time-worn, venerable appearance, having been built with stones from a former wall, or from other ruins connected with the city. On the top there is a narrow path, and a parapet, so that, on getting to this elevated position, you may still “walk about Zion, and go round,” but the “high towers thereof” are no more. It was pleasing, however, to find it in a good state of repair. Several times has it been levelled to the ground, and no city in the world has been so frequently and so terribly besieged. On reaching an open space nearly opposite the Jaffa gate, we found our tents pitched. Dear as the old city was to us, something lay still nearer our heart, and the first thing we did was to ascertain if there were any letters from home lying at the British Consulate. In the desert we had been shut out for several weeks from all communication with the outer world.

It was with very mingled feelings that we rode in at the Jaffa gate, and passed the Turkish guards. It was an exciting moment. A friend reminded us when we were a few yards from the gate, that we had not doffed our somewhat nondescript head-gear on getting within the precincts of the city ; but if our hat was not taken off in token of reverence, our heart was lifted up in devout thanksgiving. The truth is, we were quite taken aback by the villainous-looking faces that met us at the gate, and by a poor fellow who thrust the stump of an amputated limb towards us, and kept shouting in a most stentorian voice *tor baksheesh*, laying prodigious emphasis on the last syllable.

Our horse shied at the sight and the shout, and we had just enough to do to keep our seat; and anyone who knows what the streets of Jerusalem are, especially the one leading down from the Jaffa gate, will not be surprised at this. That shout will linger with us as long as we can recall any earthly sound. Our first impressions of the city were such that our feelings received a sad shock. It was near sunset, and a group of very scoundrel-looking "loafers" sat lounging about the gate. It seemed to be all the rascaldom of the Jewish and the Moslem world, and something more than that, thrust into one corner; and when our friend reminded us that we had not doffed our hat, we were muttering to ourselves, "It is the Holy City no more!" As we rode down that steep and narrow street, with skull-shaped stones, on which our horse was constantly slipping, we passed the tower of David. What a history was in the very name! The bazaars and shops were all shut, and the people sitting at their doors, dozing here and there over their coffee and their pipes. The transition from David's tower to the Psalms of Israel's sweet singer was very easy and natural; and when we dismounted at the narrow door of the Damascus Hotel, we seized the hand of a friend and repeated these lines—

"Jerusalem, within thy gates  
Our feet shall standing be."


It was necessary that we should exchange for a little our canvas home for apartments in "the Damascus," and when we entered that night our little vaulted chamber, with a hook driven into the centre of the roof, on which to suspend a lamp, it was not easy to fall asleep on the rushing tide of thought which overflowed the soul. We lay down exhausted with Syrian fever, and for several days saw nothing but the vaulted roof and the hook, on which, when wakening up one morning, we affirmed again and again, most obstinately, that Judas Iscariot hanged himself! The fever was at its height, *but we were in Jerusalem*, and we had much reason to be thankful.



So much has been written about this old capital, and there are so many controverted points to be settled, that we shall attempt nothing more than simply describe what we saw during our stay in the city. Our object was not to make measurements, start theories, indulge in speculations, discuss this site and the other; all this we left to the Exploration Committee, who have a great work to do in Palestine. Our object was to receive impressions, and these we will try to convey as simply and as briefly as we can.

## CHAPTER XI.

Holy Sepulchre. Sacred Fire at Easter. View from the Mount of Olives. Church of the Ascension. Bethany. Spot where Jesus wept. Gethsemane. Jerusalem at Night. Bishop Gobat. Haram es Scheriff. Mosque of Omar. Wonderful Rock. Mosque of Aksa. Substructures. Top of the City Wall. Captain Wilson's Arch. View from the Governor's House. Convent of the Cross. Valley of Hinnom. Pool of Siloam. Palace of Caiaphas. Sabbath in Jerusalem. Loneliness of Jesus. Via Dolorosa. Festival of the Maccabees. Excavations under the City. Walling Place.

 HERE was no place we visited more frequently than the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and at the end of every visit we came away with an oppressive sense of confusion, as if we had been hurriedly wandering through some immense museum and had been lost and bewildered in the variety of objects and the number of apartments. It is a large group of buildings dating as far back as the days of Constantine, so that even independent of the tradition which connects it with our Lord, it is a place of historical interest. Its traditional connection, however, with the three great events, the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of our Lord, has made it the source of attraction to all Christendom. Seated on the paved court in front of this large building were sellers of crucifixes, rosaries, and all kinds of relics, trinkets, and ornaments designed to be mementoes of the place. On entering the building itself, we were rather surprised to find a number of Turkish guards squatted on a carpet-covered bench, or divan, to the left, and quietly enjoying their coffee and nargilehs. We were scarcely prepared for this in a Christian temple, even although we had observed, before entering, that a minaret stood at each end of the building, and though the crimson flag of Turkey, bearing the richly embroidered crescent, was gaily

floating from the grim old citadel, the Tower of David, on the heights of Zion. The flag floating there was humiliation enough, but the presence of a Turkish guard at the entrance of the Holy Sepulchre was a still lower depth, if not for the Jew, at least for the rival sects of Christians in the East. This guard was stationed there to keep them in order when their mutual jealousy happened to break out in deeds of violence, which is not seldom the case. The guard after all did not seem to have much to do, judging at least from their corpulent appearance. Jealousy comes by fits, and these perhaps for the season were over. A tall, stout Moslem who, we were told, was the key-keeper, was the only one who made himself officious, and we would certainly be at no loss to recognise him were we ever revisiting the city. Representing the power of the Sultan in the East, he keeps the Church of the Holy Sepulchre under lock and key.

Leaving the Turkish guard smoking and chatting on the divan, the first object of interest that is pointed out is a marble slab on the floor. This is the stone of unction. According to tradition, the body of our Lord when taken down from the cross was laid on the stone here and anointed for burial; the real portion of the rock is supposed to lie below this piece of marble, and is placed under it for the sake of protection, lest the pilgrims should carry it off piecemeal. This part of the building is common to all sects; it is under the special guardianship of no one more than another, so that there is no cause for strife or jealousy about this spot. All the pilgrims approached this slab with the greatest eagerness, and prostrating themselves before it, kissed it with much apparent devotion.

A little to the left, a small circular spot on the floor is enclosed by a railing, not unlike a large cage. This marks the place where the Virgin Mary is said to have stood, some say when our Saviour was taken down from the cross, others when His body was laid out for burial. This is under the special protection of the Armenian Church, and, on one occasion, when

we lingered about the spot, some three or four priests came forward to the railing carrying their sacred vestments, in which they began to array themselves. They manifested such a spirit of levity, laughing and chatting one to the other, and as we had also the impression that our presence was not agreeable to them, we did not wait to see the performance.

But the great object of interest is the Holy Sepulchre itself, which occupies the centre of a large circular space formed by the Rotunda, which is the main feature in this group of buildings. It is about seventy feet in diameter, and has a broad gallery, supported by eighteen massive piers. This part of the buildings was formerly supported by pillars of white marble, but in the terrible fire of 1808 these were completely destroyed. The domed roof of this Rotunda is in a miserable state of dilapidation ; it is so rent in various places that the blue sky is seen gleaming through, and numerous pigeons are continually flying in and out. This may be an advantage in the dry months of summer, but the heavy rains must make sad havoc on a roof so rent and battered, and which, if not repaired, must by and by fall in. Other parts of the Rotunda are not in a much better condition. There are screens, tawdry decorations, and pieces of patchwork intended to conceal the marks of decay, but these only deepen the impression of shabbiness and neglect. The reason is, the Rotunda is free to all the sects, it is the special property of none, and such is their mutual jealousy, that nothing like a common effort can be made to repair this part of the buildings. Right under the centre of the dome is a small chapel, which, according to the belief of millions, contains the body of our Lord. The chapel, if indeed it can be thus designated, is twenty feet long by eighteen broad ; it has been characterised as a "shapeless edifice of brown marble;" probably on examination this brown marble would turn out to be plain white and yellow stone. It is surmounted by a small cupola like a crown; a blue screen richly embroidered with stars is thrown across the roof; the necessity for this will at once be

obvious to our readers, after the reference which has been made to the dilapidated condition of the dome, open in many places to the rain and the fowls.

Notwithstanding all our convictions that this was not "the place where the Lord lay" (a feeling that was deepened by every succeeding visit), we must confess that it was with a certain degree of awe and reverence that we approached this spot, which has been regarded with so much veneration for so many ages, and by such multitudes throughout Christendom. In front of the little chapel, there is a marble platform ascended by a few steps. A seat and a parapet run along each side of this open space. Here pilgrims leave their shoes before proceeding further, and wait their turn to be admitted into the innermost shrine, which cannot hold more than three or four at a time. Passing from the platform, you enter the first apartment, called the "Chapel of the Angel," because it was here, according to tradition, that the angel sat on the stone, and announced to the astonished disciples that the Lord was "risen indeed." The fragment of this stone, about eighteen inches square, stands on a pedestal in the middle of the floor. It is affirmed, however, that the real stone was stolen by the Armenians, and is now to be seen in the building under their charge—the palace of Caiaphas, beyond the Zion gate. The narrow door, with a curtain hanging over it, admits you to a small recess. This screen is drawn aside, and you enter, dazzled at first by the glare of nearly fifty gold and silver lamps, suspended over what is said to be the tomb of Jesus. The place is filled with incense, and more than brilliant with the many lights which are kept constantly burning. As for the roof, it is hard to say what it is, it was so blackened with smoke. Even here, where imagination has done so much already, there is a great deal left to be supplied. One would require at least to convey here, in fancy, a large portion of natural rock, of which there is nothing to be seen either above or below, or on the sides of the inner shrine. What is said to be the tomb occu-

pies the whole of the right side, and is raised about three feet above the floor. You cannot now literally obey the command given to the angels, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," for a marble slab, rent in the centre, and worn at the edge by the frequent kissing of the pilgrims, covers this so-called sepulchre, which now resembles an altar more than a tomb, and really serves the purpose of the former. There is a great profusion of tasteless, tawdry ornaments about it: vases with artificial flowers, relics, pictures, and a representation of the resurrection in *bas relief*. On the supposition that this is actually the place where there was a garden, "and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid," no one would be at a greater loss to recognise his new tomb than Joseph himself, could he possibly now see it in the glare and glitter of lamps, lights, and gaudy ornaments, which betoken a lavish expenditure, but an utter want of taste. Six or seven times did we visit this tomb, and we always found, with the exception of our last visit, the same Greek priest standing in the corner. He must have considered us quite a devotee, and he never failed to sprinkle us with rose water. No words were ever exchanged between us, but he began to give us a quiet friendly look of recognition.

How many different parts of the world that man must have seen represented in the foot-sore and travel-worn pilgrims, who have knelt and kissed the edge of that marble slab in that little apartment, not so large as a very small bedroom, for the space in front of the tomb is only three feet in width, and six feet in length. There is no other spot in this world where so many countries, languages, and climes have been represented; and could we believe that it is really the tomb of our Lord, there would be no spot on earth that would have greater claims to be visited and honoured by our race. Could the pilgrims from all quarters of the world, and from the days of Constantine, who have passed through that narrow door, be formed into one long line, what a sight it would present! What a variety of charac-

ters, social position, colours, languages, and climes would be there—from the mightiest prince to the humblest peasant, from the fair Circassian to the jet black Indian, from the snows of Siberia to the sunny south, from the tropics to the pole!

On the last visit we paid to the sepulchre we were disappointed in not finding the now familiar face of the Greek priest in the corner. He was on this occasion succeeded by a priest belonging to the Latin Church. The reason for this temporary change was soon explained. Several pilgrims in connection with that church were about to return home, and had sundry articles which they wished to be blessed at the sepulchre before leaving the city. A woman, after kneeling for some time, kissing very fervently the marble slab, presented two bundles to the priest, which he placed upon the top of it, and sprinkled with holy water, muttering over them some words he read from a book. A succession of pilgrims followed in turn, and had their various articles, which they would carry with them, blessed in the same way. A young man sat on the platform outside, with two large packing-boxes hooped with iron bands. Each of them was a good weight for a stout porter, and they were too bulky to be carried inside. When all the other articles had been blessed, the priest came out with holy water and a book from which he read some brief formula of prayer, and sprinkled the boxes. We were much impressed by the earnest devotion manifested by many of the pilgrims. In the above cases we had seen the superstitious side of the picture, and probably there is about as much of the one as there is of the other. The Latin priest having finished his work for the time, and dismissed the members of his communion with his blessing, another priest, belonging to the Greek Church, took his place in the corner, and went through the same process with a number of female pilgrims from Russia. This was really an affecting sight. It was the farewell of the poor women to the sacred spot, to visit which they had travelled so far, and suffered such privations. They bathed the cold marble with their hot tears,

and kissed it again and again before they could withdraw, moving backwards on their hands and knees, till the door-screen fell and shut out for ever from their sight the tomb of their Lord, for such they regarded it to be in their heart of hearts.

On retiring from the first small apartment, called the Chapel of the Angel, we observed two holes, one on each side of the wall, and it at once occurred to us that it was through these apertures that the holy fire is communicated to the pilgrims by the Greek patriarch at the celebration of Easter. On inquiry we found that it was so. There is not, in connection with any form of faith in modern times, a greater delusion, a more flagrant imposture, than this so-called miracle of the holy fire. The votaries of the Greek Church believe that it is kindled at the sepulchre by the Holy Spirit, who is said to descend at Easter, when the whole space of the Rotunda is crammed with pilgrims, who for a time give way to frantic fury and excitement, more resembling bacchanalian orgies than anything in connection with Christian worship—running, shouting, screaming, and piling themselves up in the form of a pyramid on one another's heads. A way is opened through the crowd by the Turkish guard, and the "bishop of fire" is led, or rather dragged, into the Chapel of the Angel, and the door closed. The wild excitement and tumult become greater than ever. The appearance of the fire is delayed, and the multitude, believing that it is the presence of the Turkish soldiers that causes the delay, rush upon them and drive them from the church. By and by the flame appears flashing out of the aperture, and the great struggle of the day now takes place for the honour of getting the first taper lighted, the belief being, that the pilgrim who succeeds in this is secure, not only of his eternal salvation, but also of special honours in heaven. It is like a life or death struggle; in not a few cases lives have been lost.

In 1834, when Ibrahim Pasha was present in the gallery of the Rotunda to witness the festival of the holy fire, a panic took



place in the vast crowd, and the name of Christianity was disgraced in the presence of this Mohammedan prince. Although he narrowly escaped with his own life, he bravely assisted others, and was shocked when, on the evening of that day, he heard that four hundred had lost their lives. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre presented the ghastly appearance of a battlefield. Perhaps the most offensive part of this celebration is when the "bishop of fire," as he is called, is borne out of the sepulchre in an utterly exhausted and fainting condition, as if he had been overwhelmed by the presence of the divine glory. This is the very climax of a huge imposture, which is a disgrace to the Christian world. The more enlightened members of the Greek Church would be glad to get quit of it. The late Emperor Nicholas was desirous to abolish the impious profanation, but the time had not yet come—the shock would have been too great for the popular belief. The Latin Church has discarded it as a ridiculous and superstitious ceremony; but considering the spirit of rivalry, there may be a little of "the fox and the sour grapes" in this feeling. Before thus characterising this celebration, the Latin monks would do well to think of the absurdities which their own church still sanctions, such as the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius at Naples. The Armenians take no part in the festival of the holy fire, but this is still the great attraction to multitudes of pilgrims who flock to Jerusalem.

Directly opposite the sepulchre is the entrance to the Greek church. The impression we retain of that building is a lavish display of gilding and glitter, the glare of ornamentation—several pictures of saints—gold and tinsel—barbaric splendour. The Greek Church has even more than the lion's share of the ecclesiastical wealth and holy places in the East; all other sections of the old apostolic church seem to be dissenters. The Greek communion is the hierarchy, and the splendid convent of the Russians actually looks like a taking possession of the whole land. Even the Latin Church has just enough to do to hold up

its diminished head in the presence of its great rival, which, from the monopoly it has of the holy places, has thus obliged the other sects to multiply the number of these, in order to retain any position or influence in the eyes of their respective followers. The Syrian, Coptic, and Abyssinian Christians have very poor and humble-looking chapels at the back of the sepulchre. The Armenian Church, embracing many wealthy merchants, has acquired a more commanding position in the Rotunda, and so has the Latin Church; but notwithstanding all its aggressive efforts, it occupies a position little better than that of a dissenting chapel, overshadowed by a cathedral that has all the worldly attractions which wealth and aristocratic influence can give it. Hence the unseemly rivalry that exists between all these old sections of the Holy Apostolic Church, as it is called, especially between the Latin and Greek, around what they believe to be the sepulchre of their common Lord. At first when we saw these chapels, belonging to various sects of Eastern Christians, all under one roof, and clustering around the tomb of Jesus, we thought it a fine idea, representing the unity of His Church—"one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all;" but it is not by mutual love that they have been thus brought and kept so long together in this sacred spot. More religious rivalry and bitterness exist here than in any other part of the world, but yet we could not help thinking that the very grouping of these chapels around the sepulchre, is expressive of an actual unity in the faith, and points to a time that is coming, when all Christian Churches shall be drawn more closely together by the love that enshrines the precious truth of Christ in all their hearts, and unites them all around His cross. "He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel."

Although we saw no vestige of rock whatever in the small apartment said to contain the tomb of our Lord, there is, nevertheless, a large supply of this material in and around the immense pile of buildings; and no similar quantity of rock has

been so cut and carved, twisted and dug into, for the purpose of forming a grand central museum, or rather a confused jumble of holy places. We were at last brought face to face with the native rock in the grotto, which is said to contain the tombs of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, and also in that dismal vaulted chamber which is shown as the prison of our Lord. In the chapel, too, which is known by the name of the "Invention of the Cross," from the tradition that, when the Empress Helena came to Jerusalem, and caused a strict search to be made for the cross on which our Lord suffered, it was found, along with two others, in the vault which is now the object of so much veneration to the pilgrims. There is also native rock in the Chapel of the Elevation of the Cross at Calvary, which is reached by a flight of about twenty steps. At the upper end stands an altar, and under it a marble slab with three holes indicating the places where the three crosses were fixed. The spot where the cross of Jesus stood is marked by a glory of silver gilt. Near this is another opening in the marble to show the rent that was made in the rock below by the earthquake. In the vault under this apartment the fissure in the rock can be seen extending from the ceiling to the floor. It has been caused, doubtless, by some convulsion of nature. This chapel of Calvary belongs to the Greeks, but they have not been allowed quietly to enjoy the honour, for the Latins have also their Chapel of the Crucifixion; and if they cannot, in this part of their property, show you the place where the cross stood, they at least claim the spot where He was nailed to the accursed tree. In their church, which is very much inferior in size and decoration to that of the Greeks, they point to a hole in the wall, at the back of which stands a portion of the pillar at which our blessed Lord was scourged. This is not visible, but a monk thrusts a stick into this hole, and strikes with the end of it the Pillar of Flagellation, as it is called.

But this is endless. In short, you must conceive of holy

places in the air above and around you, for the rock is said to have been cut away in some parts, so that the real spot now exists in the air! You have sacred spots behind marble slabs, and walls, and pillars, in vaults and corners, in nooks, holes and fissures, upstairs and downstairs, in dripping grottoes and cellars; and you get confused, bewildered, and even shocked at this pitiful jumble of superstition, devotion, and fraud. It looks as if all the holy places in connection with the Christian faith had been somehow or other thrown together and shaken out on this half-acre of ground. In this small space it is said there are seventy stations, more or less important, to which pilgrims can be led, such as the block of black marble that indicates the centre of the world, and the spot where the head of Adam was found—the altar of Melchisedec—the chapel of St. John—the spot where Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene—the altar of the penitent thief—the chapel for the division of garments—the sweating pillar. But enough; we forbear, lest in the very enumeration we should be thought to be dealing lightly, not merely with these pilgrim stations, but with the truth itself, of which, to say the least, the most of them are a caricature. On leaving the church, our guide led us through various ruined hospitals in the neighbourhood, pausing at a tree to which strings, rags, bits of ribbon, and cloth were attached, presenting a strange medley amid a few green leaves. He gravely assured us that this tree marked the spot where the ram was caught in the thicket, when Abraham was about to offer up his son, Isaac. Our readers will not be surprised, when we asked him to take us at once to the Mount of Olives, that we might breathe the fresh air, and see, at least, the real soil of the country, and the grand old external features of nature that do not change.

On getting out of the tangled mass of buildings, we turned into the Via Dolorosa (the Street of Sorrow), up which our Lord is said to have borne His cross when He was led out to be crucified. The street is narrow, dirty, crooked, and in some

places dark, being arched like a tunnel. This may have been the route that was taken on the morning of the crucifixion. You cannot hear the name of the street without emotion; and as you walk along it, the various incidents in that mournful procession rise vividly before you. Here again these devout feelings receive a shock, when no fewer than fourteen pilgrim stations are shown in this one street, marked here and there with stones or indentations in the wall, where this or the other incident connected with the crucifixion, and a great deal more than this, took place—stations at which Jesus is said to have halted when He bore the cross, and the spot where that instrument of torture was laid upon Simon the Cyrenian are pointed out. We paused at the spot where Veronica stood weeping when her Lord passed bearing the cross, and where she took a handkerchief and wiped the blood from His temples, torn by the crown of thorns. Our guide asked us to look up at an arch which crossed the street. A house with two windows was built upon it, and that, he affirmed, was the house of Dives, at whose gate Lazarus had sat. Strangely enough, at this very spot the poor fellow was sitting whose stentorian voice had so startled us when first entering the city at the Jaffa Gate, and who now made the street ring with the same appeal. Dozens of hungry dogs were also prowling about. We entered a small chapel, called the Chapel of the Scourging, where there are several pictures representing this scene of torture—passed what is said to have been the pool of Bethesda, and went out at Saint Stephen's Gate, called in honour of the first martyr. The rock is pointed out in the neighbourhood where he was stoned to death. Turning a little to the right of this, we were struck with the immense blocks of stone at that part of the city wall not far from the Golden Gate. No one at all acquainted with his Bible can look on these without being reminded of the words of the disciples addressed to their Master—"See what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" We crossed the dry bed of the Kedron, rode along the

valley of Jehoshaphat, examined some of the rock-hewn tombs in this vast cemetery of the Jewish race, where so many generations lie buried. It is literally strewn with grave-stones. The tomb of Absalom is a conspicuous object, and no Jew passes it without some expression of contempt. We struck into a narrow path, which David the king, in his great sorrow, took when he fled from the city on account of the unnatural rebellion of his son. The two roads, the upper and the lower, on the Mount of Olives, are as old as the history of the country itself. They are scarcely worthy of the name of roads; they are mere bridle-paths, and very rough in some places. These were roads long before the days of Joshua, and the one that the king took, when the poltroon Shimei came out and cursed him, is probably the only one that ever led over the brow of the hill. Bearing a heavier burden of sorrow, our Lord frequently struck into the same path, but more frequently into the lower one leading to Bethany. The view from the summit of the Mount of Olives, taking it all in all, in its physical outlines and in its historical associations, is one that cannot be surpassed in point of interest to the eye of the Christian pilgrim anywhere in the world. Standing upon that shoulder of the ridge which has received the distinctive name of Scopus, and looking towards the city stretching before you, what a rushing tide of memories is borne down that valley lying between you and the opposite heights of Zion, from the days of Melchisedec, priest of Salem, to the times of the Messiah, and from that to the age of Moslem predominance! What mighty events fill up this space in history and now rise up before you as you stand on that eminence where Rome gathered her resistless legions to lay the doomed city in the dust! The scenery in itself is strikingly grand, picturesque, and wild away down by the Dead Sea; but we refer more to the historical associations of this wonderful view. All history gathers around that central spot of mighty interest. There is Jerusalem, solitary and widowed, on its throne of rocks,—its annals altogether unique, for it is inwoven

as no place on earth has been with the closing scenes in the life of Christ, and with His great sacrifice of love on the cross. That view is quite a study, and is in itself quite sufficient for one visit to the Mount of Olives. But as our time is limited, we ride on to the Church of the Ascension, climb to the top of the minaret, and look away to the wilderness of Judea, the Valley of the Jordan, the Mountains of Moab, and the Dead Sea lying at their feet like lead, cold and grim. There are numberless points of interest all around; in short, every height and knoll, every ravine, crag, and village has its sacred story, its records of patriarchs, prophets, and kings, or its fragments of blessed memories in connection with *THAT LIFE* of wondrous love and beauty. Our eye fell at once upon a singular-looking, isolated hill, like a truncated cone. This is the celebrated Frank Mountain, a famous position in the history of the Crusades, the ancient Beth-Hacerem of Scripture, the Acropolis of the country in the days of Herod the Great, from which the best view can be obtained of that tangled mass of rocks, glens, and caves among which David sought shelter when he was hunted by Saul like a partridge upon the mountains. Again we looked at the city, and lingered on the view, and again we turned our eyes on that tempestuous, billowy sweep of desolation stretching away down to the Dead Sea. What a history closed in around us from behind and before! and what a commentary on the words—

“Sorrow tracketh wrong, as echo follows song,  
On, on for ever!”

For a long time we lingered over that view, truly most wonderful in whatever way you regard it, whether in its merely physical aspects, or in connection with historical associations. These grand old features of nature, the everlasting hills on which He looked; these spots on this ridge which He hallowed by His presence and prayers; these mountain tracts over which He walked, are, after all, *the holy places* to which we can always turn with reverence and confidence. Jerusalem

has been trodden down of the Gentiles ; not one stone has been left upon another that has not been overturned. Zion is a ploughed field ; the modern city has been built on heaps, and all within the present walls has been entirely changed ; but in these deep ravines all round the rocky plateau, and on these heights that enclose it, you have great landmarks, which remain always the same. It matters little to us as to the certainty or uncertainty of the so-called Holy Places that are built over with stone and lime, so long as we hear the thrilling names of Kedron and the Mount of Olives, so long as we look upon these rocks and stones, and heights and cliffs, and narrow pathways on which He looked, and over which He must have walked, and which are the same at this moment as they were in His day, with this exception, that the trees are now very much fewer. The main features of the landscape are the same as when David lodged on this ridge, and took his way down to the wilderness to find shelter in some of its rocky strongholds. All these are really the Holy Places in this land. It was with a feeling akin to disgust, that we looked upon a mark on a stone which was pointed out to us in a little mosque in the old Church of the Ascension, as the last footprint left by our Lord when He ascended on high ! But it is strange that this footprint should be shown as a sacred spot in a mosque, and that the followers of the Prophet should look upon it with reverence. On asking if the footprint was not associated with Mahomet, the reply was given again and again, that the impression was left by the foot of our Lord !

A short ride brought us to Bethany, a small and very retired village of some thirty miserable huts. Before we were aware, we found ourselves on the roof of one of these, such is the very uneven nature of the ground. On looking over into the little court below, we observed two women : one was nursing a child, the other, in the spirit of Martha, was busy preparing the evening meal, against the return of her husband from the field. The village is beautifully situated in the midst of patches of corn



and olive trees. In the days of our Lord it must have been a sweet and quiet retreat from the city, at the close of many a sorrowful day. It is so secluded that even yet, although not above two miles distant, you feel as if you were two hundred away from the crowded haunts of men. Of course, the remains of what is said to have been the house of Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus were pointed out; but, apart from these altogether, we were quite convinced that we might be treading on the very site of that once happy homestead, which was highly honoured with the friendship of Christ, and frequently hallowed by His presence. Before entering Bethany, we were conducted into a cave said to be the tomb of Lazarus. Poor as this village now is, it was the scene of a mighty display of divine power, which will only be surpassed in grandeur and extent when they that sleep in the dust of the earth shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth.

On our return to the city we took the road on which our Lord proceeded from Bethany to Jerusalem in triumph. Palms were then abundant on the road side, and the people took the branches and strewed them on the way on which He was to pass. The air rang with their shouts of joy. The whole scene was vividly before us, as we took the same narrow path. Much of it has been cut out of the rock, so that there can be no doubt whatever as to the identity of this approach to Jerusalem from Bethany. The city is for a time shut out of view by a long bend which the road takes, and by a shoulder of the hill. On getting into the angle of this bend, the city bursts upon our view. In the days of our Lord, at this point in the descent, the object in the city that would meet His eye would be the Temple; now it is the Mosque of Omar. The spot where Jesus beheld the city, and where He wept over it, must lie within a very narrow compass, so that of all sacred places this is one that can be most easily identified. Whatever uncertainty may exist as to Calvary or the sepulchre, here at least is a spot of thrilling interest to every Christian heart, regarding which there can

be no doubt; where Jesus wept tears of divine pity over that city which had rejected Him, after He had stood again and again in the midst of it, with His heart full of love, and His hands full of blessings, till His locks were wet with the dews of the night. This is one of earth's most holy places. A memorable passage of Scripture serves to identify it; and never did we turn with deeper interest to any verse of holy writ than when we stood at that part of the road, with the city lying spread out before us as on a map. New light seemed to stream from the words: "And when He was come nigh, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen. . . . And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it" (Luke xix. 37 and 41). A fitting close for the visits of that day was to enter the garden, now called Gethsemane, enclosed by a white-washed stone wall, and trimly kept. On riding up to it shortly before sunset, we felt disposed not to go in. There is something thrilling in the very name, and all our scruples were soon overcome. Notwithstanding the trim French style in which the enclosure is kept, we could not but linger about the eight old olive trees, scathed, gnarled, and twisted by the storms of many ages. We yielded ourselves up to the solemn memories which even the mere name of the place cannot fail to suggest. If we were not on the very spot itself, we could not be very far from it, where His sweat was as great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Before leaving home, we were frequently told by friends that very likely the result of our visit to sacred places in the East would be an actual diminution of interest, not only in the places themselves, but in the sacred narrative. Surely this is one of the most groundless fears. We can truly say for ourselves that the very reverse has been the case. Fully convinced of the truth before, our convictions were deepened at every new memorial place—the very external features of the

country gave us a new and deeper insight into the life of Christ, and made it stand out before us with greater reality and power. There were some points in His experience that we could now understand better; at all events they were pressed more into our thoughts, when looking at the very places where He had moved day by day. As we strolled up the Mount of Olives where He had often walked, or stood at the side of the old wells by which He Himself as a weary pilgrim had often sat,—as we sailed on the Lake of Galilee, or wandered by its forsaken shores,—as we moved about Nazareth for a few days, and gazed upon the scenes that filled His soul with delight,—that beautiful life of true goodness was more a present reality. It could not fail to be so as we passed through the land with which it had been so closely identified,—it grew around us and was not so much a dim shadow in the distance. We knew before that the life of Christ must have been a lonely one, but our feeling as to this was greatly intensified when we stood at the place which is called Gethsemane, and the scene of agony rose up before us. There was of necessity a sublime isolation in that life. "All forsook Him and fled. Of the people there was none with Him." None could be with Him. His very prayers were uttered in solitude. "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." "He went up into a mountain apart to pray."

Another element in that wondrous experience which we could now better appreciate was our Lord's intense love of nature, as shown in His quiet walks through the corn fields, over the hillsides, by the margin of the lake, and also in all the beautiful illustrations which He drew from birds, flowers, trees, and from every department of His own glorious creation. In short, a visit to these scenes should be an education to every Christian heart.

Our tent was pitched on the Mount of Olives, but it was deemed advisable to have our sleeping quarters in "The Damascus." Fain would we have lingered on that ridge by moonlight, but the gates of the city were shut at sunset, and we had not

the privilege of entering at any hour in the night. On reaching St. Stephen's Gate, the signal gun of sunset was fired; we had just saved our distance; a few minutes longer and we would have been shut out. The whole city, in a little, was given up to darkness and to dogs. There is not a single stray lamp in the whole city, and we have no recollection of ever seeing one when out at night. Lanterns might be seen glimmering here and there in the narrow, dirty lanes. In short, it would be dangerous to venture into the streets at night without a lantern. It would certainly not be deemed respectable. There would be danger from the dogs, who act as scavengers by day and watchmen by night; there would be danger from the Turkish guard, who would certainly lay hold of a person without a lantern, as an evil-doer bent on some deed of mischief; there would be danger to the Frank from some fanatic fakir or dervish, who would think he was doing the prophet a service by secretly stabbing the Christian dog in the dark. No respectable person thinks of going out to the streets at night unless accompanied by a servant bearing a lantern. The visitor has no inducement whatever to go out of doors after sunset. Night makes Jerusalem the darkest, dullest, most melancholy place in the world—not a light to be seen in any windows, no attempt whatever at evening entertainments. A concert or a soiree in Jerusalem! That would, indeed, be something to talk about, and would be more than a nine days' wonder. The sun sets, darkness soon comes down, and wraps all in its sable curtain. All go into their dwellings; what they do there we had no means of knowing, but the night-life outside is pretty equally shared with the cats, the dogs, the lizards, and the rats. Hyenas and jackals, on the outside, prowl about the very gates. One of our red-letter evenings in the city was a night that we spent with Bishop Gobat and his amiable and accomplished family. Every member in that happy circle tried to make our visit truly delightful, and so it was—the memory of it will long be fragrant. The national melodies of Germany were sung

with great spirit, and it was indeed strange, at least for Scotchmen, to hear the music of their native hills wedded to their own songs, and sung with so much taste and feeling on Mount Zion! Our finest lyrics, that have immortalised the Doon, the Ayr, and the Afton, were as familiar in that German home as they are at our own fireside. One of the visitors was asked to conduct family worship, and the passages read were most appropriate. These were Psalms cxxii.-cxxxv., with several passages towards the close of the Book of Revelation, describing the beauty and the blessedness of the New Jerusalem. With what deep emotion we all joined together in singing, before parting, the beautiful hymn, beginning with the words—

“ Abide with me, fast falls the eventide ;  
The darkness deepens : Lord with me abide ! ” &c.

One of the young ladies presented her album, with the request that we would write something in it, as a memorial of our happy evening. Most cordially did we comply with the request, delighted at having an opportunity of leaving a memento of our visit. We now add the following lines from our national poet as expressive of our earnest good wishes for that happy home circle :—

“ O Thou dread Power, who reign'st above,  
I know Thou wilt me hear,  
When for this scene of peace and love  
I make my prayer sincere !

“ The hoary sire—the mortal stroke,  
Long, long, be pleased to spare,  
To bless his little filial flock,  
And show what good men are.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ When soon or late they reach that coast,  
O'er life's rough ocean driven,  
May they rejoice, no wanderer lost,  
A family in heaven ! ”

On our way to “ The Damascus ” the streets were pitch dark—not a light anywhere to be seen but that which glimmered from our own lantern, and which only served to make the

darkness more visible. We spent another pleasant evening at the house of Dr. Chaplin, the excellent medical missionary in Jerusalem, to whom we were greatly indebted. If his eye should chance to fall upon these few words, he will regard them as the expression of a grateful heart.

Not much more than ten years ago, any Christian would have been instantly put to death who would have attempted to enter the sacred enclosure of the Haram es-Scheriff, or the Noble Sanctuary, where the temple stood, and which is now partly occupied by several mosques, amongst which the great object of interest is the Mosque of Omar. The gates of this sacred spot were guarded, not so long ago, by the daggers of black dervishes; and since the days of the Crusades, up till a very recent period, all unbelievers have been strictly excluded. Several have been severely pelted with stones, and otherwise abused, for making a rash attempt to enter within its precincts. Since the Crimean war, more tolerant views have been growing in the East, and about 1857 the Haram was opened on the payment of a large baksheesh. An order, also, was necessary from the Pasha, and the attendance of a *cawass* or two, as an official protection from the fanatic guardians of the holy places. Before we visited the Noble Sanctuary, we had a fine view of it from the roof of the governor's house. This enclosure, probably at this moment the most remarkable spot in the city, the identity of which is not disputed, contains about thirty-six acres, in the form of a square, and the moment the traveller sees it from the roof of the governor's house, or from any other point that commands a view, he perceives at once that the beautiful dome in the centre of this area is the building that gives dignity to the city, even much more so than St. Peter's to Rome, St. Sophia's to Stamboul, or St. Paul's to London. Whatever disputes have arisen about the holy places, no doubt has ever been cast upon the Temple Hill, now crowned by a dome which we have never seen equalled for grace, airy lightness, and beautiful proportion. Next to Mecca the place

it occupies is the most sacred spot in the Mohammedan world. The view of it from the governor's house (the old castle of Antonia) is very striking. The tall cypresses, and other trees, of which there are many here and there, and the patches of grass and flowers, give it a quiet and secluded appearance in keeping with the name it bears—the Sanctuary. Having complied with all the necessary arrangements, both as to baksheesh, the Consul's letter, and *cawasses*, we started very early one morning to visit this spot so sacred in the eyes of Moslem, Christian, and Jew. Our *cawasses* appeared with their swords and silver-mounted staffs of office, and preceded us, with something like state dignity, through one narrow lane after another, striking at every step the skull-shaped stones, with the lofty air of men entrusted with some high commission, after the fashion of some self-important "beadle of the parish." It was with very mingled feelings that we passed through one of the gates and found ourselves in the open space that must have been trodden by Jewish kings and princes, by priests, prophets, and apostles: and, above all, by the Lord of life and glory Himself. Here and there we trod upon the native rock which must have been a part either of the approach to the Temple of Solomon, or one of its courts. The Mosque of Omar stands in the centre of the Haram on a large platform of marble, and on reaching this we laid aside our shoes and put on the slippers with which we had provided ourselves. The sheikh, or chief-keeper, a tall, stout man, with an immense turban, and a rod of office, directed us into the Dome of the Rock. The first thing that struck us on entering was the dimness of the light, and for a time we felt as if we could see nothing at all distinctly. There are fifty-six windows of the richest stained glass, and above these are numerous extracts from the Koran, in large Turkish letters, all round the building. The dome is supported by four very massive piers and twelve arches resting on pillars.

Within this outer range there is another series of pillars, and everywhere the eye falls on beautiful arabesques, rich tracery,

and porcelain tiles of bright colours. The impression which the whole gives is that of massive strength and airy lightness combined. As the morning advanced the rays of the sun streamed through the painted glass, and produced an almost magical effect as they fell upon the richly-coloured tiles; whilst pier and pillar, floor and roof, threw back the many-tinted hues. Much as we had read about the place, we were greatly taken by surprise at the effect produced by the sun's rays falling on so many colours, and giving many parts of the building the appearance of a rainbow. We were still more astonished when, on looking round, we saw the huge rock itself over which this beautiful building has been raised. Our attention was now wholly turned to this piece of native rock, as rough and unpolished as any sea-side boulder. From north to south it is about sixty feet in length and nearly the same in breadth, and rises about five feet above the surface of the marble pavement. This floor is twelve feet above the general level of the area, so that this remarkable piece of native rock projects seventeen feet above the ground. It is surmounted by a high wooden screen of lattice work, to protect it from any profane touch. Had we never heard of this rock, our first impression would have been that it was the tomb of some illustrious individual. The moment we saw it, we ceased to give much attention to any other part of the building. We stood rivetted to the spot, convinced that there is a wonderful history connected with that mass of unhewn stone, now for ages in the keeping of Moslems. A canopy of the richest crimson is hung over it. There was no permission given to pass within this screen of lattice work, but we had no difficulty whatever in seeing the entire rock. On a part of the surface there is a slight indentation, and the Moslem believes that to be the impression which was left by the Prophet when he stepped into Paradise. This and other traditions regarding this rock make it an object of profound veneration to the followers of the Prophet, who believe that it is suspended in the air! To the Jew and the Christian this



rock is no less an object of interest. It is indeed very remarkable that it should have been permitted to stand so high above the general level of the place, when the surrounding plateau has been cut away, and when, in other parts, mighty substructures have been raised in order to widen the area at the building of the temple. The Jewish and the Christian tradition is, that this is the rock on which Abraham was prepared to offer up his son Isaac; that at a period long subsequent to this it became the property of Araunah the Jebusite, who made use of it as a threshing floor; and that David the King purchased it for an altar when the plague swept away so many of the people; and, finally, that this famous rock was the altar of burnt offering in the ancient temple. That it has a history, such as no other rock in the world possesses, there can be no doubt, and this history will be all the more wonderful if Mr. Ferguson's theory regarding it turn out to be correct, that the cave under the rock is the real sepulchre of our Lord! This cave is reached by a flight of steps, and is capable of holding about fifty persons. Its average height is about seven feet. At the entrance there is a curious projection, called "the tongue of the rock," from its resemblance to this organ of the body. If that tongue could but speak what a history would be disclosed!

There are various recesses cut in the rock, where it is said Abraham, David, Elijah, and Solomon prayed. On stamping the foot upon a piece of marble about the centre of the floor, a hollow reverberating sound is produced, plainly showing that there is a deep cavity below. The Mohammedans affirm that under this floor is the "Well of Souls," the entrance to Hades; but no examination has yet been allowed of this unknown region.

Research here might throw light upon a number of controverted points. The Exploration Committee have much important work before them in the Haram, if they could only get permission to begin. The Mohammedans affirm that the mosque contains the scales for weighing the souls of men—the shield of their prophet—the pomegranates of David—the birds of Solo-

mon—and the saddle of the famous steed Borak; also the original copy of the Koran, the parchment leaves of which are said to be four feet long. With the exception of the shield these relics were not shown during our visit, and even if they had been produced they would possess but little interest compared with the rock.

Our guide next conducted us to the Mosque of Aksa, supposed to have been built by the Emperor Justinian, in honour of the Virgin Mary, and converted into a mosque when the Saracens became masters of the country. It is a long barn-like structure, supported by many beautiful pillars. Two of these, which stand very closely together, are actually worn and indented by pilgrims, in their efforts to pass between them—the belief of the faithful being, that if a man can pass between these pillars he is sinless, and if he cannot force himself through, this is held to be a proof that his sins have not yet been forgiven.

Such was the ridiculous notion expressed to us as we stood admiring the beautiful pillars. Our stout Moslem guide did not attempt to pass between them. He certainly would have stuck in the passage. On asking him to try, he shrugged his shoulders and said he had gone through once, and that was quite sufficient for a lifetime. He must have performed this feat many years ago. This circumstance, however trifling it may appear, serves to show the woefully defective character of the Mohammedan creed as to the evil nature of sin, and the divine method of forgiveness. Somewhere about this building we were indeed astonished when our guide led us to a little mosque or sacred apartment called the Mosque of Issa, or Jesus. A small marble sarcophagus was pointed out, bearing His name, and said to be the one in which He was buried. It was too small for this, but the Moslems who were present got over the difficulty by saying, if it was not His tomb, it was His cradle. It was indeed strange to find such an object of veneration in this place.

Next to the rock itself in the Mosque of Omar, nothing in

the whole sacred enclosure struck us so much as the stupendous substructures, or vaults, dome-shaped, and supported by massive piers and pillars. When the platform on Mount Moriah was at first prepared for the temple, it was necessary to raise, in some parts of the hill where it sloped suddenly down, immense substructures for the purpose of obtaining a wider and more level area. This must have been done at prodigious labour and expense, not by filling up the lower parts of the hill with earth or solid masonry, but by the erection of arched vaults upon lofty columns. The Mosque of Aksa stands on a part of the platform which has been thus artificially raised. There is no work of man in the whole enclosure that filled us with greater wonder and admiration than these underground structures. In moving amongst solid columns and piers, and under these lofty domes, we were led back to the days of Solomon, for we have no doubt that some of these substructures belong to the reign of that illustrious king; and they are in every way worthy of the other great achievements which have been associated with his name. A portion of these vaulted erections have received the name of Solomon's stables. They resemble great rock galleries supported on massive stone pillars. These are not to be compared in point of antiquity with some of the Egyptian buildings, but they possess a far higher interest, as forming the foundations of the first great temple that was erected in this world for the service and the honour of the one living and true God.

We strolled about every part of the enclosure, without being hurried, and without the slightest interruption, walking amongst its cloisters, colonnades, porticoes, and beautiful cypresses, which are said to have been brought from Stamboul as the badge of Saracenic power, and to shew, according to the proud boast of Saladin, that even a greater than Solomon has been here.

We ascended to the top of the wall at the Golden Gate, near the projecting pillar, where the faithful believe their Prophet will be seated at the judgment of the great day. We sat for a

long time under the shadow of our white umbrella, looking at the Mount of Olives, and the various rock-hewn tombs, and white grave-stones, in that great valley of the dead. Right before us, as we looked, a funeral procession was slowly wending its way to a newly-made grave, up yonder beside the brown earth and the heaps of stones. In all likelihood it is the burial of a Jew, who has come from a far country, to lay his bones amongst the kindred dust of many generations.

On descending from our lofty position, we walked across the enclosure, and came out at a gate on the opposite side of that from which we had entered. A short walk brought us to the "Place of Wailing." Through a narrow door, leading to a private house, we obtained admission into a small court, and then, by means of a very rude and frail ladder, we went down into a deep excavation that has been recently made under the direction of Captain Wilson of the Exploration Committee. This subterranean cutting led to the discovery of an arch, which may yet have a most important bearing upon the vexed questions connected with the ancient topography of the city. The man who occupied the house provided us with lights, and after we had descended a considerable way into the oppressive gloom, we found ourselves standing under a finely-formed arch of solid masonry. Our feet had scarcely touched the ground, when a rumbling noise above startled us, as if a portion of the roof was falling in. The keeper of the house, who accompanied us, explained to the dragoman that this noise was occasioned by rubbish thrown down through an opening in the roof; so that unless measures are taken to prevent this, the excavation so lately made, attended with such striking results, will again speedily be filled up. It is impossible to describe our feelings as we stood under that ancient arch, with a wide span, and a breadth, it is said, of forty-five feet. It appeared to us to be but one of a series of arches springing from the old temple wall, and spanning the valley between the lower and the upper part of the city. Further excavations have only to be made,

if this be possible, to lay bare the whole series of arches. May not this be "the ascent" which was made by Solomon, leading from his palace to the temple, and which the queen of Sheba is said to have admired so much? Be this as it may, it is very evident that the arch which we saw spanned a valley or a depression in the city, which has now, to a great extent, disappeared, having been filled up with ruins. As we stood with our glimmering tapers shedding their feeble light on the thick darkness, we threw our mind back into the distant past, and there rose up before us a gorgeous procession passing over that arch, with music and banners, to the temple, and we heard, as it were, the tramp of many feet. Not long were we permitted to indulge our fancy, for another rumble of rubbish from the roof startled us from our dream. Emerging once more into the welcome light, we wrought our way through one gloomy lane after another, littered over with filth, and broad enough to allow a man and a camel to pass. By the payment of a second baksheesh, we were permitted to resume our old perch on the roof of the governor's house. From this we obtained the finest view of the city, and could now better understand the natural divisions of Zion, Acra and Bezetha, and the trench running between these heights, called the Cheesemonger's Valley. It was not a raised map, not a model in miniature that now lay before us, but the actual city itself, with its old grey walls, and its thousands of white domed roofs, standing out against the clear sky, not in dull monotony, but everyone giving its own character and colouring to the picture, its minarets sparkling here and there with a silver crescent. Take the view in mass or in detail—and there is no other view of a city like it in the world—not for beauty or magnificence, but for position, and contrasts, and varied representative bits of architecture, and, above all, for the historical associations that cluster around it. But even apart from this, the view is unique, and cannot fail to linger in the memory for ever.

One afternoon we visited the Convent of the Cross, situated

in a lovely dingle but a short ride from the city. The convent is in connection with the Greek Church, and seems to be but a recent erection—a new holy place but lately added to the long list of these. A service was going on in the church, and the chanting and reading were as nasal and metallic as ever. One of the priests took us to the back of the altar, and having lighted a taper, showed us the cavity where the tree had grown from which the wood of the cross was taken! Of course the tree grew somewhere, but how the Greeks have discovered that this is the place we cannot tell; and this, we suspect, is rather a difficult matter for themselves. There are some inventions of this kind too absurd even for the most credulous, and we rather fear that this Convent of the Cross will turn out to be a failure. It is, however, in a lovely place, made bright in the summer with roses, and this of itself cannot fail to be an attraction to travellers. On returning, we rode past the Pools of Gihon, observing here and there watch-towers in the gardens and in the cultivated fields. Our way led into the deep ravine of Hinnom, the scene of many idolatrous abominations and cruelties, more especially during the reign of Manasseh. The sides of this gloomy gorge are honeycombed with caves, which served as tombs, and which have also, at various times, been the wretched abodes of men.

On entering this glen, it was very pleasant to see the wind-mills and the neat and kindly-looking row of alms-houses, which Sir Moses Montefiore has generously built for his poor brethren. They have a cheerful appearance on the crest of the ridge, and a few old Jews, who had found shelter and support in the evening of their days, were sitting at the doors overlooking the valley. The sight did much to take away from the repulsive associations of a place which in Scripture has a name synonymous with hell itself. The reason of this, we presume, may be found in the fact, that in this gorge Moloch had his bloody altar, and the smoke of his cruel rites, in the observance of which children were made to pass through the

fires, blackened the sides of this glen. This, in addition to the natural gloom of the place, might well suggest the appropriate appellations, Gehenna and Tophet. To the right, the Field of Blood was pointed out; and from the place where we stood we could only see one solitary tree, and this, of course, in the popular belief of eastern Christians, is associated with the terrible fate of the traitor. The valley is rugged, desolate, and bare, but, apart from its associations, not more so than some of our Highland glens on a wintry day. Near the well of Enrogel, it joins the valley of the Kedron. It was with deep interest we looked down the sides of this famous old well, where, it is said, the sacred fire of the temple was concealed during the captivity in Babylon. It is upwards of 120 feet in depth, and resembles the shaft of a coal pit. It is walled up with large hewn stones, and covered with an arch which bears the marks of a remote age. A little further on towards the city, an aged sycamore tree marks the spot where Isaiah, by the command of Manasseh, was put to death. A hundred yards further on brings us to the Pool of Siloam, the most famous of all the fountains about Jerusalem, although only mentioned three times in holy writ.

The distinguished prophet who perished in this neighbourhood speaks of Shiloah's waters that "go softly;" and another refers to this fountain as near the king's garden; so that the gardens that are blooming at our feet are the remains of the same old royal enclosures mentioned in the above passage. The third and only other allusion to this fountain in the Bible is in connection with the noted miracle of our Lord, when He said to the blind man, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." Standing by this pool, and looking up to the grey walls of the city, it requires no play of fancy to see the poor man who received this command eagerly groping his way to these well-known waters; and you follow him back to the city, his face radiant with delight, as he gazes in wonder at all the varied objects of interest around him. One could not be here without thinking also of the blind poet, our own Milton, who sang of Siloa's

brook, "That flowed fast by the oracles of God." We descended by a few rude steps into a small excavation in a rock, and from the water picked up a few stones as memorials of our visit. This cavity was likely formed for holding the surplus water of the pool. The village of Silwân, or Siloam, but a short distance to the right on the slope of the hill, has a bad name. A few of its inhabitants gathered around us, and seemed to think they were quite entitled to a baksheesh since we had presumed to pick up a few stones. To avoid dispute upon the matter, we made as quickly as we could for the side of the wall, with the view of reaching the heights of Zion, and entering the city by the gate which bears that name. Before passing through this gate, we paid a visit to a group of buildings which were spared, it is said, along with some others, when Titus destroyed the city. Be this as it may, one thing is certain, that the group of buildings is very ancient; and a special interest attaches to them, because the lower part has been long believed to contain the tomb of David, and the large hall above the vault has been long regarded as "the upper room furnished" in which Christ observed the last passover with His disciples. It is also affirmed that the Apostles were assembled in this same room when the Holy Spirit was given. As if all this were not enough to dignify any single group of buildings, it is added that the remarkable column is here to which the Lord was bound when He was scourged—that the Virgin Mary died within these walls—and that Stephen, the first martyr, was buried here. We were shown something like a tomb, with a covering thrown over it, which was dignified with the name of David's tomb; but, on further inquiry, we found that the real tomb was under this, and that as yet no one but Moslems had been permitted to see it. Another building near this, within a high wall, has received the name of the palace of Caiaphas; and here tradition has grouped together a strange medley of sacred relics. Those who are curious in these matters are shown the very stone that covered Christ's tomb, and which was



transported to this place in a way not very creditable to the honesty of the Armenians who are in possession of it—the prison in which our Lord was confined (there is another in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre)—the fireplace where Peter stood and warmed himself when he denied his Master; and if our readers are able to preserve their gravity, we may mention that the very pillar is pointed out on which the cock stood that morning, when it was the unconscious instrument of reminding the Apostle that he had thrice denied his Lord. In giving these traditions, we are merely stating what we heard, and as illustrations of relic-making and hunting in the East. The tomb of David, we know from Scripture, was well known in the days of the Apostles, for Peter referred to it on the day of Pentecost; and, notwithstanding all these absurdities, it is not unlikely that the vault connected with this group of buildings may actually contain the sacred spot.

On looking over the low wall where the lepers' huts are built, many of these poor creatures came out, with their faces sadly disfigured, and their hands nearly eaten away by this terrible disease. They are huddled together in a row of low huts beyond the city wall. Their appearance threw us back to the days of our Lord, and brought up many incidents in the Gospel narrative, when He showed such tender compassion to this class of sufferers. We could not look on them without being reminded of the words which so frequently passed from His lips, "I will, be thou clean." No form of disease could be a more appropriate type of sin.

It was Saturday evening, and we closed the work of the day by turning into the Jewish synagogue. This quarter of the city can be smelled afar off, and the odour is anything but fragrant. The services of the day were over, but many Jews were sauntering about; some were seated in groups here and there reading from their sacred books. In this city, where the population cannot be much more than 18,000, there are three different days observed for Sunday—the Mohammedan has his Friday,

the Jew his Saturday, and the Christian the first day of the week.

On our way back to our hotel, we turned into the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It was now towards evening. There was service in the Latin church, at which many strangers from a distance were present. A procession was formed, and they went round all the sacred spots of special interest in the building, bearing lighted tapers, and singing as they moved from one spot to another. They gathered round the stone of unction and the sepulchre; they went up stairs to Calvary, and had a service at each of these places, and some others.

Next day was Sabbath, and we enjoyed the service very much in the Episcopal Church on Mount Zion. It was the day that is held in commemoration of the advent of the Holy Spirit, and we heard an excellent discourse on this subject from Dr. Barclay, the resident clergyman. The Lord's Supper was also administered, and it was with no ordinary degree of interest that we took part in that sacred rite, which was instituted at first not far from the spot where it was now observed. It was, doubtless, in this immediate neighbourhood that our Lord said, "This do in remembrance of me"—where He completed the great work of redemption, and gave Himself a ransom for the sins of the world. All differences of sect and creed were merged into one happy experience that Jesus was known of us in the breaking of bread. A number of young people, chiefly Jews, were admitted to the fellowship of the Church, and, altogether, it was a most refreshing and delightful service. We spent the rest of that day on the Mount of Olives, sometimes sitting under the shadow of some of the old trees that dot the hill side, or on a jutting piece of rock, reading those passages of Scripture in which this locality is mentioned in connection with the life of our Lord. We were surprised to find the number of references to this holy mount, and the visits He made to it. We had often read the same words before, but they now stood out with new life and beauty.

Every peculiar habit in the life of a great man is always regarded with special interest, and helps to throw light on his character and career. It may be assumed as a fact, and a very striking one, that our Lord, during the whole of His public ministry, never spent a night in Jerusalem. It cannot be gathered from the sacred narrative that He ever slept in a walled city. When He attended any of the great festivals, He left the crowded streets before sunset, crossed the Kedron, and spent the night on Olivet, or in the quiet retreat at Bethany, where He was always sure to find a friendly welcome. The following passages seem to prove to a certainty that this was a fixed habit with our Lord. One of the chapters of John's Gospel begins with this announcement: "Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives." The verse that closes the preceding chapter contains the statement, "Every man went unto his own house." It was near sundown, and the gathering shadows of approaching night called every man to his own home. Jesus had none in the city: He went to the Mount of Olives. Referring to the same habit of retiring from the city towards evening, one of the evangelists informs us regarding another visit our Lord paid to Jerusalem: "And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the Mount of Olives."

On the night before His death, after He had instituted the commemorative feast of love which was afterwards to bear His name, and having taken an affectionate farewell of His disciples, we read in that touching story of betrayal, "He came out, and went, as he was wont, to the Mount of Olives." On that sacred ridge, over which His blessed feet had so often walked, there was some favourite resort which was known by Him and His disciples as "the place," so that when the traitor headed the band that was to seize his Master, he knew where to find Him, for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples. Any one acquainted with the customs of the East will see nothing at all strange in this. At certain seasons of the year the

people prefer to sleep in the open air on the roofs of their houses, or in some temporary erection in the fields, for the sake of enjoying a more cooling breeze. When we reached Gaza, after leaving the desert, we were informed that many of the people were preparing to quit the town, and camp out by the seaside. The friends that we met there from our own country were about to follow their example. But for the circumstances which compelled us to sleep at "The Damascus" during our stay in Jerusalem, we would certainly have spent our evenings on the Mount of Olives, where our tents were pitched. The fact therefore that our Lord retired from the city at sunset cannot be taken as indicating anything unusual on His part; but, at the same time, while this habit was quite in keeping with the customs of the country, there is something, to our mind, very touching in it, when read in connection with His own words, betokening a sad and solitary life—"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." We turned in once more to the "place which is called Gethsemane," and lingered about it till the silver crescents on the minarets of the mosques were glittering in the rays of the setting sun. Entering at St. Stephen's Gate, and proceeding up the Via Dolorosa, we passed once more into the Chapel of the Scourging, and came under the arch which has received the name of "Ecce Homo!" as this is said to be the place where Pilate brought forth Jesus, saying to the multitude, "Behold the man!" We examined once more the various stations of that narrow, gloomy street; these served, at least, to bring up very vividly to our mind the affecting incidents connected with that sad day in the life of our blessed Lord, when He carried His own cross through the streets of this city; and we clung with heartfelt gratitude and confidence to the precious truth that He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows.

The following Monday was a holiday amongst the Jews, and the scene we witnessed near the tombs of the Judges was similar

to that which met our eyes on our first approach to the city. Many families sat on carpets spread upon the bare, brown earth. They were all dressed in their best attire, and had brought provisions for the day. This festival, we were informed, was in honour of the patriot brothers, the Maccabees. The excavations in which the tombs are situated, could only admit a few persons at a time. The people patiently waited their turn and went in, kissed the tombs, muttered a few words of prayer, and withdrew. Many came out with their faces bearing the marks of a deep sorrow. Great attention was paid by the whole crowd to a mother and daughter who went in, and stood for a considerable time. They were dressed in deep mourning, and were evidently of high rank. The daughter had a stately bearing, and a face of lustrous beauty; but it was the marked expression of that countenance that struck us so much. There was high-souled daring in it as she came out from the tomb of the patriot brothers. She might have passed for Judith, or Deborah, or the Maid of Orleans. The women looked up to her as to some superior being, and during the short time she remained on the ground, she was treated with the most marked respect.

We next visited the Tombs of the Kings, at several of which lamps were burning. The visitors knelt, kissed the cold stones most fervently, and prayed with an earnestness which was truly affecting to behold. Strange it is that a people so patriotic should be without a country; and is this fondly cherished patriotism in all lands, and through all suffering and privation, not a token that this country so passionately loved is yet to be their own? One poor woman had a wild and grotesque appearance, reminding us of Meg Merrilees. At times she threw herself on her knees; then rose and assumed the most tragic air, tossing her dishevelled hair over her shoulders, extending her arms towards heaven and uttering the most solemn appeals, accompanied now and again with the most piercing shrieks. Sometimes she would hold her head with both hands, on which

there was a profusion of rings. Seldom have we witnessed a more touching display of grief. Her reason was evidently affected. She struck the people with awe and terror, and no one ventured to address to her a single word.

Leaving this exciting scene we rode on to the huge rock cave of Jeremiah, and were shown the dungeon in which it is said he was confined, and the apartment where he wrote his "Lamentations." From this we passed to a narrow entrance near "The Damascus" Gate, leading to the excavations under the city. The opening is so small that we had much more difficulty in getting in than we had in passing between the two pillars in the Mosque of Aksa. These excavations are of immense extent, and were evidently used at one time as quarries, from which, in all probability, stones were taken for the building of Solomon's Temple, and other gigantic undertakings. We had a good guide and an excellent supply of tapers, so we remained for a long time under the city examining these quarries. We entered many of the recesses, from which huge blocks have been taken. It is more than likely that the immense stones to which the disciples called their Master's attention in the words, "See what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" were cut out of the solid rock under the city. Some huge blocks have been abandoned in an unfinished state, as if they had not been required. Small niches here and there were blackened with smoke, and we concluded that these had been made for holding the workmen's lamps. We also came upon two or three springs of deliciously cool water. It is supposed, and it is not at all unlikely, that Solomon obtained from these quarries the stones with which to build his magnificent temple. They were measured, hewn, and prepared to fit exactly the places for which they were designed in that building. This may serve to explain the statement made in the following passage of Scripture, so far as the mason work was concerned: "And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither ham-

mer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building" (1 Kings vi. 7).

No one would ever think of leaving Jerusalem without visiting the Jews' Wailing Place, where for sixteen centuries or more, the wail of the scattered nation has gone up to the God of their fathers. There is not one stone of the ancient temple above ground, so that, according to our Lord's predictions, it is literally true that not one stone has been left standing upon another. All has been thrown down. The foundation wall, however, that was raised from the depths of the ravine in order to widen the platform, is still to be seen, and at one part of this very ancient structure, the Jews are permitted to assemble, that they may utter such lamentations as the following:—"Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever; behold, see, we beseech Thee, we are all Thy people. Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste. Wilt Thou refrain Thyself for these things, O Lord? wilt Thou hold Thy peace and afflict us very sore?" "Why hast Thou cast us off for ever? Arise, O God, and plead Thine own cause!"

It was on a Friday afternoon when, after threading our way through dirty streets and passages, we reached a long paved court, with the high wall of the Haram on the one side, and a blind wall forming the back of modern houses on the other. At this part of the Haram there are five courses of large bevelled stones. The masonry which rises above this is of a much more recent date. The stones in the lower courses have a look of hoary grandeur about them, and are of immense size, varying from twenty to thirty feet in length, and from five to six feet in depth. The scene which we witnessed here was very affecting. About a hundred Jews were present, from the child of two or three years old, to the venerable patriarch of fourscore. The photograph of this touching scene is, doubtless,

familiar to many of our readers. Some were sitting with their backs to the modern wall, and gazing intently on the large blocks of stone before them. We passed and repassed, but they never withdrew their eyes from this object for a single moment. They looked as if their eyes would pierce that massive wall. Ever and anon they would utter, in plaintive tones, some appropriate passage from their sacred writings. Many were eagerly engaged in reading from their Hebrew Bibles. At one corner a small group was made up of grim faces, which bore the marks of stern controversy more than of grief. This was to them the place of wrangling more than wailing. They were deep in some disputed point. Ere we left, however, every one of these disputants kissed the stones, and bowed their heads in sorrow. A little, toddling child, with lustrous eyes, was lifted up by an aged man, whom we took to be her grandfather, to kiss the stones. Placing the bairn on her feet again, he spread out his hands as far as he could reach them on the old walls, his white beard covering his breast. He laid his head in one of the great rents, and groaned forth his anguish in some such words as these—"O Lord, how long!—how long, O Lord, how long!" It was just such an attitude as we could conceive Isaiah or Jeremiah assuming over the ruins of their temple. Another old man, toothless and wrinkled, stood tottering over his staff, and gazing with tearful emotion, with his head on his breast, and muttering some words of prayer. He reminded us of Bible pictures we had seen of Eli the high priest, going out to hear how it fared with Israel in the battle. A group of women, who were very deeply affected, brought vividly to our mind a picture we have seen somewhere of the captive exiles by the river of Babylon. They sat with their hands clasped round their knees, and their heads bowed down in silent sorrow. A pale, elderly woman sat apart by herself, rocking to and fro, and forcibly recalled to our mind the sad scene which we once witnessed in a lone cottage, when it was our painful task to break the terrible news to an aged widowed mother of the




sudden death of her only son. She heard in silence, without a tear; but the rocking motion of her frame showed how deeply she felt the blow. Some at that wailing place were not much affected; their grief seemed artificial, and assumed for the time; but, on the whole, it was a very mournful sight, and one in which there was, doubtless, very much genuine sadness. We could not witness it without feeling, in some respects, a kindred sorrow. The whole nation, from every part of the world, has been represented in that paved court, extending to some forty yards in length. No other land in the world has another sight like it.

“Thy saints take pleasure in her stones,  
Her very dust to them is dear.”

“If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chiet joy” (Psalm cxxxvii.).

## CHAPTER XII.

Excursion to the Jordan and the Dead Sea. Armed Escort. Our Horses and Mules seized. Triumph of Lord Clarendon's Seal. Off to Jericho. Bath in the Jordan. Dead Sea. Physical Aspects of the Ghôr. Convent of Mar Saba. Row at Bethlehem. Grotto of the Nativity. Solomon's Pools. Hebron. Abraham's Oak. Cave of Machpelah. Moslem Fanaticism. Another Business Transaction. Glass Manufacture. Valley of Urtas. Locusts. Bethlehem Revisited. The Well of David. Rachel's Tomb. Return to Jerusalem. Farewell.

“OU must be sure and get an armed escort before proceeding to the Jordan,” was a caution we heard frequently repeated. It was a part of our contract that if such an accompaniment were needed, Ibrahim should provide it; so we requested him to make all necessary arrangements. The risk after all, in our case at least, could not be very great, for our dragoman was satisfied with two brothers from Bethany, who engaged to take us a round of places, including the Jordan and the Dead Sea, an excursion which would occupy about a week. When we looked with some degree of hesitation on our armed escort, Ibrahim assured us that “*some one man in this world be as good as fifty mans.*” Of course we were left to draw the inference. The two brothers were indeed the most powerful-looking Arabs we had yet seen, and were said to occupy some position of trust in the district. The truth was, when it suited himself Ibrahim saw no “bad way” and no “bad Arabs,” and as it fell to him to provide the escort, he was as sparing as he could be. Had it been our duty to do this, we would have heard no end to the dangers of the journey, and Ibrahim would not have risked his canteens for the best half-dozen men in the country. His own pocket was now involved in the matter, and the way became at once very

good, no "bad Arabs" and "*some one man be as good as fifty mans.*"

When all arrangements were made for our departure, a rather serious hitch, so it seemed at first, took place on the morning when we were about to start. Ibrahim, at the head of all the servants, including old Mustapha, whom he had taken into council, presented himself in a towering passion and scarcely able to speak for excitement—"Horses, mules, all away! stolen! thieves!" he gasped out. Our first impression was that our armed escort had run off with them, and that this was the first act in the little drama of our expedition. By and by, however, we learned partly from one and another, that all our horses and mules had been seized by a band of Turkish soldiers, and marched off to the citadel by order of some military official. Ibrahim and all our men had followed, remonstrating, pleading, coaxing, but in vain, and in his view of the case, they were all "dead gone!" and it might be weeks before they could be got, or we might never see them again. On hearing this, we thought our dragoman or some of our attendants had been guilty of some indiscretion which had provoked the ire of the authorities, but all most vehemently protested they had done nothing. It was curious that not one of them could see anything that could be done in the matter further than simply to submit—"God had willed it, and so it must be." We resolved to seek redress at once from our Consul; so, then and there, forming ourselves into marching order, we proceeded to the Consulate. He had gone to Beyrout on urgent business, and would not return for several days; but he had left a most active substitute, who spoke English well, and whom we took to be a Greek. He heard our complaint, and entered most heartily into our case. From him we learned, for the first time, that, on account of serious disturbances in Turkey, almost all the soldiers were being removed from Syria to meet the emergency, and that such was the state of the Sultan's finances that his troops could only be removed from

one place to another by seizing horses and mules, no matter where they could be got. This was the reason why our horses had been marched off. He told us, that for several days before all the donkeys belonging to the *fellaheen* in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem had been seized, for conveying the troops and baggage to the seaboard, without any reason offered or payment given. He presented a most gloomy picture of the state of Turkish finances. "But to *the point!*" he said, "to *the point!*" the definite article in this case receiving a more than usually *definite* and emphatic pronunciation than it does even from a foreigner. "To *the point!*" and he rubbed his hands with something like satisfaction, and felt quite delighted at the prospect of a tussle with the Turks, and certain of victory. He told his cawass to get ready; and this Consular official soon appeared with his immense staff of office, mounted with a large silver head, and shod with an iron spike. His dress also bore marks of some "brief authority." On getting to the street we all fell into the form of a regular procession, and set off to the citadel to lay our complaint before the military Pasha. The cawass strutted before us, making his staff ring upon the stones, as much as to say, "The British lion is roused, and he'll do it." He was, at least in his own estimation, the "organ blower," and a great deal more in this business. On passing up the street to the Tower of David, a couple of soldiers came up to a peasant who was driving a donkey with vegetables to the market. Without the slightest parley they tossed the panniers on to the street, and drove the donkey off to the barracks, leaving its owner uttering lamentations and wringing his hands. His beast had exchanged masters, and the poor man was left to gather up the scattered produce of his garden as best he could. He had no redress, but his case gave us an additional stimulus to present our claim, with an urgency that would take no denial and brook no delay.

On reaching the military quarters, we were shown into an open court, with divans placed round the sides. Here we found

the Pasha and a number of officers smoking. After the usual salaams, the Vice-Consul opened the business in the Turkish language. Had we understood what he said at the time, it would have been very difficult to have maintained anything like gravity; for, by a species of exaggeration quite admissible in the East, we (that is, the writer and his friend) were represented as important personages of illustrious descent—in short, nearly related to her Britannic Majesty, and occupying prominent positions of influence in the empire. The consular agent proceeded to ask if his Highness was prepared for war, which might inevitably follow such an insult offered to the British flag, or to pay damages to the amount of several thousand pounds! The outrage committed would doubtless disturb the friendly relations between the Porte and the British Government! His Excellency continued to smoke with truly Moslem gravity, and we thought for a time he was bent on giving us a practical illustration of one of Carlyle's everlasting silences, when at last he deigned to ask if it was not true that our government, during the Crimean war, had seized upon merchant vessels and pressed them into the service for carrying troops? The Greek met this by stating, that if this had been the case, it was for the purpose of serving the Sultan in his great need, and of protecting the Turkish power. He gently hinted that gratitude for all this would prompt the immediate release of our horses and mules. "Is it true," he now appealed to us, "that your Government seized merchant vessels wherever they could find them, and pressed them into the service for carrying troops?" Of course, we assumed our most indignant look, and made an emphatic denial of the charge, assuring his Excellency, through our agent, that all the vessels which had been employed for this purpose were regularly chartered and paid for. Another long pause ensued, during which a black slave, on a signal being given, brought a newly-filled *nargileh* to his Highness, who resumed his smoking, and dropped a few words now and then to the officers about him. The representative of British interests

fast losing all patience made another appeal to the Pasha as to the dangers that might arise out of this business and getting no reply, he said to us in English, "Come! come! we will go, —the Turks will have to pay a large fine for this." We were just about to withdraw, when happily we bethought ourselves of a paper which was kindly procured for us before leaving for the East, from the Foreign Office, and signed by Lord Clarendon, then Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Thanks to the clerk in that department, who affixed, perhaps in a moment when some bright thought of love or of patriotism warmed his heart, a more than usual breadth and depth of sealing wax to this document, which brought out the British lion and his mythical companion, the unicorn, in bold relief. This formidable-looking paper, which simply recommended us to the kind offices of all Her Majesty's Consuls in the East, was handed to the Pasha. Of course he could not read a word of it, but he understood that enormous seal of red wax with the grim old lion. That seal spoke for us; it was our talisman, and again we say thanks to the clerk who affixed it! It made a deep impression on the Pasha, for he ordered coffee and pipes; and notwithstanding the sundry indications which our dress gave of the tear and wear of the desert, some parts of it being in a most dilapidated condition, he seemed to believe that, after all, we might be what the Vice-Consul had represented. Be this as it may, whilst we sat and sipped our coffee we had the satisfaction of seeing all our horses and mules marched off under the charge of the mukhari. It was the triumph of that bit of red wax over Turkish incapacity and misrule! A day was lost, but it might have been worse. Trifling as this incident may appear, it serves to show how matters are managed in the East. We bowed our acknowledgments as well as we could in Eastern style, and retired. It was scarcely possible to restrain our attendants within due bounds in the presence of the Turkish soldiers, when the order was given to release our horses and mules. A triumph was gained; of course the cavass had

achieved it, and he looked a few inches taller when he returned, and his staff of office was brought down with more emphasis than ever upon the bullet-shaped stones on the street. Frequently did he strike the fire from them as he strutted along. It was a proud occasion for the Vice-Consul; the feeling was contagious, for when we were fairly out of sight of all Turkish officials, we could have thrown our cap up in the air for perfect joy.

Next morning we started on our journey, and were not long on our way till we saw the appropriateness of the Scripture expression, "*down from Jerusalem to Jericho.*" We passed again through Bethany, where we halted for a little. Traveling, as we did that day, over the desolate and rugged part of the country, called the "Wilderness of Judea," we could now understand much better many incidents in the life of David, and also the frequent allusions in his Psalms to this district. He had found shelter amongst the rocks and caves which abound here, and there is scarcely any object in nature more frequently referred to in his songs than the rock. As, for example, "When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I;" "The Lord liveth; and blessed be my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation." The mere references to the "rock" in the book of Psalms would fill several pages.

We passed many suspicious-looking places, caves, gorges, high precipitous banks, and the dry channel beds of fierce mountain torrents, far away down in the deep defile, so that the road suggested more than once to our mind the parable of the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves. It is just the very road to furnish lurking-places to such characters. Ibrahim, though professedly a Coptic Christian, knew nothing of that touching story till we told him; and when he heard it he said, suiting the action to the word, "Bad road—much cut-throat—plenty robber?" It is a road that suggests at once robbery and dens of thieves.

We passed a deep ravine, the narrow path leading by the edge of a terrible precipice. The brook, which runs in the rainy season, was dry. This is supposed to be the "brook Cherith," where Elijah was miraculously sustained. The wild and rugged scenery was in keeping with the stern character of that great prophet. Frequently was the parable of the good Samaritan referred to as we proceeded on our journey. Happily we did not meet with the slightest interruption, and did not require the services of anyone actuated by a similar spirit. We reached a height near the fountain of Elisha, and here, for the sake of coolness, we pitched our tents for the night. What with the intense heat, the howling of jackals, and the croaking of bull-frogs, sleep was out of the question. The season was so far advanced, and the heat so great, that it was necessary to be in the saddle and on our way very early next morning. Old Mustapha had our breakfast ready about three o'clock. Our table was spread as usual in the open air, but on this occasion under the bright stars, and with as many lanterns and candles as we could muster. We took breakfast on the very spot, doubtless, where Elijah and Elisha often conversed with each other. The sons of the prophets must often have camped out in the same place; but it is not at all likely that they ever had such an early breakfast on that hill side. We were deep in some such reflections as the above, when the bull-frogs grew much more furious in their piping at the bottom of the hill.

The sun was rising when we passed the village of Riha, the modern Jericho, the most wretched collection of mud huts that we had seen during the whole journey. The morning concert of the frogs at the fountain of Elisha was succeeded by a furious demonstration from the dogs of this miserably dirty place. They were half-starved and more ferocious than any we had yet met. The appearance of the inhabitants was quite in keeping with their dwellings and their dogs. The very name, Jericho, suggested many thrilling recollections in connection with some of our world's greatest names and events, but a few



mud huts are all that now remain to represent the name, if not the site, of that once famous "City of Palms." We could not pass it without thinking of that memorable day when blind Bartimeus sat begging at the gate of the city, and he heard the tramp of many feet as Jesus of Nazareth passed by, and left him with the blessing of restored sight.

Anxious to reach the Jordan, we cantered quickly over the plain. A gun was fired a few paces behind us, and on looking back we saw a large serpent shot through the head by one of our escort. We strained our eyes in the direction of the river, but it lies so deep, between high shelving banks of rock, that it was not till we were within a few yards of the brink that we saw its brown waters. Our feelings on seeing these were similar to those which we experienced when looking at Jerusalem for the first time. It is but a small stream compared with the mighty rivers which fill so large a space in the commerce of the world; but it is the great river of the Bible, and has been associated with events which turn all other rivers into the shade. Thrice were its waters rolled back, and a passage opened through them on dry ground. We could not have been far from the spot where the Jordan saw the Ark of the Covenant, followed by the hosts of Israel, and fled, and the event was immortalised in the national song, "Jordan was driven back! What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest, thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?" The conquering hosts went up to possess the land, for their terror had fallen upon the inhabitants thereof. Not far distant was the spot where the river was again divided; and the last walk which Elijah and Elisha had upon earth was suddenly brought to a close, when the chariot of fire carried the former up into heaven. The lonely prophet returned with the mantle of his father and smote the waters, making the solemn appeal to his father's God, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" The waters heard, and were parted hither and thither; and this solitary man was thus divinely acknowledged to be the prophet of Israel. The place could not have been far off where a much

greater event than any of these took place in the baptism of our Lord, when He was proclaimed to be the Son of the Highest by a voice from heaven, and by the visible descent of the Holy Spirit.

The pilgrim season was over, and we had the whole open space to ourselves. At the place we bathed there is a gentle slope down to the water, and in looking up the river at this point we observed it took a bend not unlike the letter S. It is remarkable for its serpent-like form, and so numerous are its windings from the lake of Tiberias to the Dead Sea, that they extend to two hundred miles, although the direct line is no more than sixty. It was, we thought, fully a hundred feet wide, and save in those places where it met with obstructions, in rocks and stones, it shot past with great rapidity. It becomes very much wider before it enters the Dead Sea. There was quite a profusion of trees, and shrubs, and low brushwood, in a tangled mass of luxuriant vegetation. In some parts the banks were covered with impenetrable jungle, where wild beasts have their lair, and where the still more dangerous sons of the desert may lie concealed when bent on mischief.

The river is so rapid that we were glad to lay hold of the branch of a tree that overhung a deep pool, and by means of this we were enabled to dip ourselves all over to our heart's content. Having finished this process we next tried the wading, where the waters rush over a shingly part of the channel, and as this was the first time we ever had our feet in these sacred waters, and was likely to be the last, we were in no hurry with our ablutions. We filled several bottles with water, picked up a few stones from the bed of the river, and lingered about the thickets, cutting sticks as memorials of the place. Few will feel inclined to laugh at us for doing so, for if there is any place where this may be tolerated without a smile, it is surely at the Jordan.

The Dead Sea had yet to be visited, and we were obliged

reluctantly to leave. A few moments afterwards, when we turned round to take a parting look at the sacred waters, they were already concealed by the high bank from our view. We saw the fringe of tropical vegetation; this when looked at from a height, resembles a huge green serpent.

An hour's ride over a wide plain, crusted with salt, in which our horse sank at every step to the fetlocks, brought us to the shores of the Dead Sea. No place did we ever approach with such strangely mingled feelings of awe and mystery as "Bahr Lût," "the Sea of Lot," as it is still called by the Arabs. Its name and its terrors had been familiar to us by reading from earliest childhood. We had learned to associate with its dreaded name all that was terrible, ghastly, and desolate. It had long been our belief that it was nature's impersonation of everything that was awful in death, and that no bird could approach it without being poisoned by its exhalations. Some of these early and erroneous impressions were now corrected by personal observation. We halted near a little rocky island, from which several birds rose and flew towards the opposite shore. We were also agreeably disappointed as to the water itself. The day was one of intense heat and bright sunshine. There was not a breath of wind, not a ripple on the sea, it lay as smooth as a mirror, and greatly to our surprise, the water was clearer than any Highland loch we had ever seen. Smollet has sung the praises of his native stream, the Leven, that fair daughter of the Queen of Scottish Lakes—

"Pure stream, in whose transparent wave  
My youthful limbs I went to lave."

But never have we seen the Leven appear in such shining transparency as did the waters of Bahr Lût on the occasion of our visit. We had some vague impression that its water must be like liquid asphalt, a mixture of brine and of tar. Could we have possibly shut out all the surroundings, and looked only at the sea that lay before us, calm and clear like a sheet of glass, we could never have imagined, from any previous impression

we had of it, that we were looking upon the Dead Sea. The water of Loch Coruisk in Skye is much more stern and grim, the blackness of darkness itself. In short, as one of our party remarked, after he had gone into the water a few yards from the shore, "The Dead Sea is too clear for comfort, one sees the bottom too well." This remark was called forth by the yawning rocks and caverns far below the surface, and which the very clearness of the water, together with all our former conceptions, served to make still more terrible and mysterious. The beach where we bathed sloped down towards the water, and was covered with smooth round stones. We picked up several pieces of bitumen as mementoes of our visit. So much then for first impressions, which tended to modify considerably some of our former ideas of the place.

We beg our readers, however, to bear in mind that as yet we had only looked at the water itself, and had tried to shut out for a little all its terrible surroundings. The moment, however, we turned from the sea to its shores, so desolate, gloomy, and grim, so silent and bare, we never received such an impression of utter desolation, and never expect to see anything approaching it. It far exceeded anything we could possibly have conceived. If there had been some exaggerations in one direction, which a few moments' personal observation served to correct, any description we have ever read of this extraordinary region had completely failed, just as we will do ourselves, in bringing out the terrible aspects of a place which, for desolation, has no parallel in the world. Here, then, can be no exaggeration. It is a scene that must be witnessed, it cannot be described.

The shore was strewn with trunks of trees, with every vestige of bark stripped off, and these, with their bare and bleached branches lying about in the most grotesque forms, added another ghastly element to this region of death. These trees had been borne down by the impetuous waters of the Jordan when in flood, and thrown up bare and peeled on the shingly beach. Of

course we bathed, and this made us better acquainted with the remarkable properties of the water. We had heard of the apples of Sodom, fair to look upon but most bitter to the taste, if indeed they could be tasted at all. This was true at least of Bahr Lât. We struck out, as usual to swim, but, from its wonderful buoyancy, any attempt at this was most awkward and ludicrous. Our hands merely skimmed the surface, and our feet flew up in the air. Our attendants on the shore laughed, and we were provoked, in an evil moment, to do the same. The result was that we got a mouthful of the water, and besides this some of it went into our eyes. It was now that we felt, in good earnest, that we were truly in the Dead Sea. It would be difficult to make up a draught so intensely bitter from any compound of sea-water. The extreme pungency is owing to salt springs and other bitter substances with which the water is impregnated. It contains twenty per cent. more of saline matter than the ocean, and this adds immensely to its bitterness and density. It possesses the latter quality to such a degree that it is almost impossible for a human body to sink. Clearness, density, and bitterness, are three remarkable properties of the water. We were not prepared for the first of these, and the other two were far greater than we expected. But for the mouthful of water our bath would have been most delicious. Some complain of a painful irritation of the skin for some time after bathing. This was not our experience, but there is an oily clamminess all over, and were we returning, we would be inclined to reverse the bathing process by commencing with the Dead Sea and finishing with the Jordan.

No trace of life has been found in these bitter waters, so far as we are aware. Mr. Tristram states in his "Land of Israel," that he discovered the larvæ of insects, but these were found only in shallow pools, and not in the lake itself. No creature, with anything like a stomach, can possibly live in these bitter waters for any length of time.

A bright day makes the gloomiest Highland glen look blythe

and cheerful; if softens and subdues the sterner aspects. But a Syrian sun flaming upon these chalk mountains, upon these sulphurous cliffs which form the sides of the caldron on which the Sea of Lot lies simmering, only serves to reveal more terribly the ghastliness of death. It is like placing a light in the hands of a corpse. This was the scene of an awful judgment that fell upon the "Cities of the Plain," and it is an interesting question, how far the means employed for this purpose may have produced the present geological and desolate aspect of this wonderful region.

The extraordinary depression of the Dead Sea, being about 1400 feet below the level of the Mediterranean; its complete isolation from all other seas, no other outlet having as yet been discovered for its waters; the extreme bitterness of these, notwithstanding the constant flow of the Jordan and its tributaries into this caldron, where they find a grave, are facts which, from a merely geological point of view, render the Ghôr and its asphalt lake the most remarkable locality on the face of the earth.

The heat was something almost beyond endurance; it flashed up like a furnace from the salt encrusted plain, from the white cliffs, from the bare trunks of trees, and from the shining shingles on the beach, which would have blistered our naked feet, had they been long exposed to them.

Ere we left, a thick haze steamed up from the lake, and in a little became a heavy mist, spreading from shore to shore. It hung over it like a vapour on a mill pond, after a rush of hot water. We saw a curious phenomenon which may serve to illustrate the intensity of the heat. This mist quivered and glowed in the fierce rays of the sun, like a dark sky gleaming in the dazzling flashes of lightning.

The evaporation in this region must be immense. It was amazing how very speedily one of the trees lying on the shore became dry, after a quantity of water from the lake had been poured upon it. It was too late in the season; the air

was stifling, and it would have been dangerous, in our feverish condition, to have remained much longer exposed to such a heat. We were therefore obliged, most reluctantly, to give up our fondly cherished intention of camping for one night by the Dead Sea. The long journey of the desert was not so trying as the one day we spent in the Ghôr, and the ride that followed to the convent of Mar Saba. Our readers must bear in mind that we were in a basin, 1400 feet beneath the level of the Mediterranean, surrounded by limestone rocks and cliffs, that flashed back the fierce heat of the sun. We had to scale one face of a hill after another, descend into deep chasms, and climb again from the bottom of a gorge, heated like an oven.

"Surely that enormous bare mountain rising before us will be the last. Can we ever reach its summit?" How wistfully we looked up to its white bald head—not the slightest trace of a green thing all around—not a tree to be seen—not a blade of grass. We take a long pull at our *zemzemia* on the way, but the water is hot and sickening, and we now find that by a cruel neglect on the part of our attendants no fresh water has been supplied at the Jordan. We press forward, and with wistful eye again look up to that bald head and make another desperate effort to reach it. The top is at last gained, and we turn and look down on Bahr Lût simmering in the caldron below. Again we descend, and again we mount, the road at times being nothing more than a narrow ledge of rock on the face of a tremendous precipice, forming one of the sides of the great basin scooped out by some terrible convulsion of nature. This is the wilderness of Judea, and we can better understand the life and the psalms of David after having passed through these scenes of wild and desolate grandeur, where the stern piety and patriotism of Elijah and John the Baptist were nursed, and where they received indelible impressions from these awful aspects of nature. This, in all likelihood, was the scene of our Lord's temptation when He was led out into the wilderness. There is perhaps no country in the world where such

striking contrasts are to be found as in Palestine. For example, the flowery carpet of Sharon and Esdraelon, the wilderness of Judea and the desolate shores of the Dead Sea. How striking and appropriate the words of the Psalmist now appear—"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." "My flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." This was the wilderness, the land not inhabited, into which the scape-goat was driven forth; and Holman Hunt's remarkable painting of this subject was vividly present to our mind.

At last we reached a bare rock on the top of a hill where there is a deep well of water. Never have we felt such exhaustion as when we dismounted and lay down under our umbrella on the bare burning mass of limestone. A most depressing fever was still hanging about us, and of course this helped to give us impressions of that ride, and of the dreary road through which we passed, that can never be effaced. Some may wonder that in our condition we could see the country at all, but the very struggle we had to see it made us look with greater interest on every spot, endeared the various places to which we fought our way all the more to our heart, and made impressions all the deeper. We lay down on that rock scarcely thinking we could ever rise from it again, but it is wonderful what a little rest and the excitement of travel in the Holy Land will accomplish. That rock, and the well on the top of the hill, will always be one of our Ebenezers—a stone of deliverance and of grateful memories. After a brief hour's rest we felt revived, and a short ride brought us to Mar Saba, one of the most wonderful convents in the world. If we should ever have the good fortune to revisit the East, we would reverse the route we took to the Dead Sea. We would descend from Mar Saba to the "great plain," for in this course we would have the unparalleled scenery of the Ghôr opening up before us, and spreading out in all its desolate grandeur. This would be like crossing the Col de Bâlme to Chamouni, to see the glorious range of Mont



Blanc, a route certainly much to be preferred than to cross it from the opposite direction for the same purpose.

A night's rest at Mar Saba set us on our feet again, so that we were in the saddle next morning on our way to Bethlehem. But this most extraordinary abode of Greek monks cannot be so summarily dismissed. It is much more difficult to describe this convent than it is to reach its beetling towers from the bottom of the gorge on which it stands. We have never seen and never expect to see anything like it as a dwelling-place of men. It is named after its founder, the distinguished Saint (Mar) Saba, who is said to have been born about A.D. 440. Tradition affirms that he wandered into many parts of the world seeking for the dreariest and wildest spot that could be found, where he might spend his life as an ascetic. He passed through deserts and gloomy solitudes, but he saw no place exactly suited to his taste till he visited the fearful chasm formed by the Kedron and by another deep ravine. This huge wall of rock, rising abruptly to the height of several hundred feet from the bed of the Kedron, and in the midst of as wild and desolate a scene as can be seen on the face of the earth, was selected by the saint for his solitary dwelling. He found a cave tenanted by a lion, which became his companion for eight years. Others affirm that the king of beasts quitted his den at the bidding of the saint. Be this as it may, the lion's lair was the first cell in this establishment, now grown to wonderful dimensions. He must have been a man of daring courage and enterprise as well as an ascetic, for, before his death, all the sides of this rocky gorge were honeycombed with caves and grottoes. Some twenty thousand devotees, more than the whole population of Jerusalem, followed the saint into this dreary wild. In the course of time these cave dwellings were covered with solid masonry, creeping gradually up the sides of the gorge from base to summit, with piers and buttresses of such enormous thickness that they terminate with domed apartments clinging to the rock, like the eyrie of the eagle. Advantage has been

taken in the lapse of ages of every projecting point and cliff on which to place a buttressed cell for a monk, or a domed apartment for pilgrims, till the number of these "loop-holes of retreat" has become almost incredible. You turn into stairs and terraces, narrow passages and courts, till you feel utterly bewildered with the vast number of stone nests and rock caves, all bound together by piers, pillars, and arches, and by heavy courses of mason work, one piece having been added to another during the lapse of fourteen hundred years. It has a much more striking appearance than the Convent of Mount Sinai, or than any other conventual establishment we have ever seen. Our cage-looking apartment was perched high up on a cliff, like a swallow's nest, which was about as difficult to reach as we found the gilded ball of St. Paul's to be some twenty years ago. Divans were spread along the sides of the wall, and one of these couches did for a bed. How truly thankful we felt when we stretched our aching limbs on the soft pallet under the vaulted roof of our cage, overhanging the most terrible gorge in Palestine. It was a great improvement on the bare rock, and the doubtful shade of our umbrella in the broiling glare of the fierce sun. Never did we feel the fascination and enchantment of moonlight so much, as when in the utter stillness of that night we looked out from our perch on that wild and grotesque scene, rendered all the more weird-like and mysterious in the lights and shadows cast upon it by the moon's pale beams. The great masses of buttressed masonry built into the face of the rock, the massive iron gates, and all the stern features of the place, had more the appearance of a vast mountain keep than the residence of a few Greek monks.

Next morning we made an effort to go round the convent, no easy task, for so many ascents, and descents, turnings, and windings have to be made. Of course, we looked into the cave that was formerly the lion's den, now built round with solid masonry, and saw the picture of St. Saba and the lion. It was hard to tell which was the shaggier and grimmer-looking

of the two. The church is decorated all over with "barbaric splendour." After we had visited a number of chapels, and passed from one turret and cave and court and stair to another, we reached the vault containing, it is said, the ghastly skulls of some 14,000 monks. A small paved court, near the entrance, was littered all over with the various relics of the place for sale. Amongst other things, we bought from the brothers a heavy beetle-looking club, and handed it to Mohammed, little thinking at the time, that we would require so soon to disarm him.

Bethlehem was our next stage, and curious enough, although this was of all places in Palestine the one that associated, most of all, the name of our blessed Lord with peace on earth, goodwill toward men, it was the scene of a violent scuffle, which we feared would end in serious consequences. We can now afford to laugh at the whole affair, as we recall it, but there was no laughing at the time. There were threatenings loud and deep, angry words and gesticulations—deadly weapons were brandished aloft, but happily no blood was shed, although the work of that day may lead to it some time or other. We had ascended the height leading to the town, our way lying through patches of corn fields, and over terraces covered with vines and olives, and had entered the court leading to the "Church of the Nativity," when we observed our dragoman assume all at once a very haughty and imperious air. Laying hold of a massive iron knocker, he thundered at the door with all his might, as if he had some old grudge to settle, or as if he wished to intimate that he was lord of the place. On our way up the hill, he told us he did not like the Latin monks, and appeared always to be on more friendly terms with the brothers of the Greek Church. Whatever was the reason, he became suddenly very domineering and imperative in all his movements, and swaggered about, very much to our amusement at first. The violent knocking was met with no response, and he was in a towering passion. Seizing the knocker again with both hands,

he beat at the door till we feared he would beat it in. At last a voice was heard from within, to which he replied in the most excited manner. The tone of voice on both sides unmistakably showed very strong feeling, and although we could not understand the language employed, yet it was very evident that fierce and fiery words now came thick and fast from both parties. In the meantime the monks had been mustering their forces inside, and had resolved on the measures they would take, for the door was suddenly opened, and a powerful looking man, for a monk, confronted the dragoman, and pointing him to the outer gate demanded that he should instantly take his departure. This only made matters worse, and when Ibrahim was becoming more and more furious, he was seized by some half-dozen monks, the turban torn from his head, and tossed to the outside. He was fairly overpowered, and forcibly ejected from the place, foaming at the mouth, and making all the resistance he possibly could. The monks secured the gate against his admission. They had another powerful enemy, however, to deal with, whose presence they had not yet taken into account. Mohammed, the young giant from Thebes, who, on entering the place, had thrown himself down for a nap, woke up in time to see his master hustled out at the door. Springing to his feet he laid hold of the club which we had purchased at Mar Saba, and rushed forward to deal a blow that might have been deadly. His uplifted arm was stayed by two monks, who sprang from behind and wrested the weapon from his grasp. He had prodigious strength, and would certainly have felled some one to the ground had he not been overpowered by numbers. It required about a dozen monks to eject him from the court. Ibrahim, meanwhile, had collected all his men on the outside, and whilst they kept thundering at the gate, the monks inside were enjoying their victory, in a state of great excitement, like so many big boys at school when they have gained a triumph over the youthful champions of some kindred institution. Their gowns, at least, had got

rather a severe handling; and as they adjusted them on their backs, and looked at the wide-mouthed rents here and there, they did so with a satisfaction akin to that which the warrior feels when speaking about the scars he has received in some glorious field of fight. As for ourselves, we stood for a time rather bewildered, and were quite at a loss as to what might be the next act in this strange drama. The thundering at the gate, meanwhile, was continued with greater violence than ever, but this only added to the hilarity of the monks. At last one of them came up to us, and explained as best he could, in a mixture of Italian, French, and German, that all this unseemly strife had arisen from the insufferable hauteur of the dragoman, and from his demanding as a right what could only be expected as a matter of grace. They had been annoyed with his haughty bearing before, and had resolved that on a repetition of the same offence they would submit to it no longer; hence the resistance which they had so successfully made, and which would serve them for talk for a long time to come. They most courteously led us inside, and kindly attended to all our wants, but Ibrahim was denounced in the oft-repeated expression, "*Il n'a pas de politesse.*"

After resting for two hours, and seeing all the places of interest about the building, we wished to take a stroll outside, and visit the Shepherd's Plain—the supposed site of their houses—and the Grotto of the Virgin. We thought the storm was all over, but it was renewed with increased fury the moment one of the monks made his appearance with us outside the gate. It seemed for a time as if he would be torn in pieces; but he knew Eastern life and character far better than we did, and his coolness in the midst of all the hubbub was most astonishing. Nothing could have been more out of harmony with all the Scripture associations of Bethlehem than this uproar. It was a place we wished to linger over in peace, but instead of this we were suddenly involved in a row to which there seemed to be no end. This is but a specimen of the bitter hate that still

agitates the bosoms of men, and of the strife that is in the world on a larger scale, in the wars of nations, notwithstanding the mission of the Prince of Peace. At last we had to tell the dragoman, that as we felt convinced he was first in the fault, and had given provocation, that if he did not keep the peace, we would refer the case to the British Consul at Jerusalem. This had the desired effect, and after all we got seeing the sights in and around the ancient home of David with some degree of quietness. No, we can scarcely say this, for no sooner were Ibrahim and his noisy attendants silenced than we were ruthlessly set upon by a number of the natives, who seemed to think that our only object in visiting the East was to purchase relics. If dogged pertinacity, however annoying, merits success in this world, the relic merchants of Bethlehem deserve to succeed.

The Grotto of the Nativity, with its gaudy decorations of silk and gold, silver and marble, and its sixteen brilliant lamps kept constantly burning, was so much out of all harmony with the simple and touching statements of the gospel narrative about the birth of Jesus, that we felt disappointed and inclined to blame ourselves at the all but entire absence of thrilling emotion, even when looking at the marble slab and the silver star, surrounded by the following inscription:—

“HIC DE VIRGINE MARIA JESUS CHRISTUS NATUS EST.”

(“Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary.”)

The air was heavy with incense fumes, and the glare and the glitter of the grotto appeared so incongruous, that we were glad to turn our thoughts to the fact itself, announced in the simple words of the angel, “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord!” We thought of the words of our old professor, Christopher North, which we heard more than once addressed to his students: “Gentlemen, the life of Christ has kept the heart of the world warm ever since His blessed feet trod our earth.” We came out, and looked with

deeper interest upon the unchanged features of nature around us—the hill sides on which David fed his father's sheep, and where he drew some of his finest poetic imagery for his immortal Psalms from pastoral life—the quiet corn fields in which Ruth gleaned, and where Boaz said to the reapers, "The Lord be with you!" and the reapers answered, "The Lord bless thee!"—the plain where the shepherds kept watch over their flocks by night, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and the angels' anthem sweetly fell upon the charmed ear of night, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

The passing breeze seemed to murmur in our ears the touching story of Naomi, who had gone out full from this place and had returned empty, leaving behind her the graves of all her household in the land of Moab. In spite of all remonstrance, Ruth, the young and fair, would follow the lonely widow wherever she went. "So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass when they were come to Bethlehem that all the city was moved about them; and they said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me."

On the evening after leaving Bethlehem we pitched our tents at Solomon's Pools, where we had another serenade from the bull frogs. The fountain from which these tanks are supplied is in the immediate neighbourhood, in a vaulted chamber under ground, where the waters issued from a cleft in the rock. We were standing at one of the chief sources from which the city of Jerusalem was supplied with water in the days of Solomon. These pools, which now bear his name, were in all probability built by his orders and under his inspection. As we stood looking at their solid masonry we fancied to ourselves the gay scene which, in all likelihood, would be witnessed here when this mighty king, after whom they have been called, came in state pomp from the capital to open them, as our own Queen

did at Loch Katrine a few years ago. These pools, three in number, were, doubtless, great works at the time they were built; but they are not to be compared with that gigantic undertaking which makes Glasgow the best supplied city with water in the kingdom.

On our way to Hebron, we saw several Jewish families travelling in a very primitive fashion. Two boxes made of rough deal boards were slung across the back of a donkey, one on each side. A mother and a child occupied one of these, whilst the juvenile members of the household were packed together in the other compartment. The father walked by the side of his home circle, thus disposed of, just as Joseph is represented as doing in pictures we have seen of the flight of the holy family into Egypt.

For a considerable time before reaching this very ancient city, we were struck with the amazing fertility of the soil, corn and vines growing in great abundance in the brown earth in the valley of Eshcol, and on the sloping terraces all around. It is still a vine-growing district, as it was long before the days of Joshua, and the gardens and the vineyards extend for a long distance beyond the town. Before entering it, we visited the famous terebinth tree, which received the name of Abraham's Oak, for the "father of the faithful" dwelt at Mamre, the same is Hebron. The name of the place is El-Khulil, "the Friend of God," a designation by which Abraham is known amongst the Arabs to this day. This was the home of patriarchal piety and worth, where the "Friend of God" had his sorrows and his joys, and where he earned the noble commendation given to him by the Almighty—"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment" (Genesis xviii. 19). It is very interesting that the Arabs still call the town by the name of this patriarch, whilst the tree of enormous girth, in the immediate neighbourhood, is also associated with his name. It was here that he sought a grave for



the first time in his life that he might bury his dead out of his sight. This place will have a special interest for the Bible student, as connected with the touching incidents recorded in Genesis xxiii., containing the first account on record of the purchase of a grave ! This was the cave of Machpelah, the last resting place of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebekah, and Leah. No doubt, so far as we are aware, has ever been mooted as to the identity of this sacred spot, where the representative sires and mothers of the Jewish race lie buried. Hebron also occupies a prominent place in the life of David. Next to the holy city itself, it is, in the estimation of the Jews, the most sacred locality in Palestine.

After pitching our tents near the Lazaretto, on the hill side, opposite the town and commanding a fine view of it, we first of all directed our steps to the great mosque which covers the oldest grave in the world of which we have any account on record. This was the only mosque in the East we were not permitted to enter. We could only see into it at some distance. A number of fanatical Moslems joined hands and formed a line right across one of the broad steps. There they stood with scowling looks. We did not understand a word of their muttered threats, but their fierce looks were enough to warn us back. It would have been dangerous, in the face of these excited men, and with a crowd of onlookers equally bigoted, to have ventured a step farther. We repeated the word *bak-sheesh*, which had cleared our way in all difficulties, even securing for us pieces of the encaustic tiles in the Mosque of Omar ; but the stern features of the fanatics at Hebron never relaxed. This was the only occasion in the East when *bak-sheesh* failed to clear our way of all obstacles. They were neither to be moved by love nor money. As we stood on one of the steps leading to the mosque we saw to our left a wall, probably as old as the days of David, with large bevelled stones similar to those in the substruction wall of the temple at Jerusalem. This ancient wall is also a wailing place of the

descendants of Abraham. An excited crowd began to gather, and we reluctantly withdrew to the rising ground at the back of the mosque, where we had a much better view of the whole building than on the front steps in the midst of a fierce crowd.

We proceeded along the ridge for some distance, and very likely over the same ground where Abraham interceded so earnestly on behalf of the Cities of the Plain, and from which he saw, shortly afterwards, their smoke go up as the smoke of a furnace.

Hebron, with its cupola roofs of white stone, similar to those of Jerusalem, has a clean and substantial look, as seen from the plain, or from any of the neighbouring heights, but you are sadly disappointed when you get amongst its narrow, tortuous dirty lanes, barely sufficient to let a man and a camel pass. We had occasion to purchase a pair of red shoes for one of our mule boys who accompanied us from Jaffa, and this led us into the shoe department of the bazaar. One would have thought that such a little matter would have been very easily settled, but we had as much difficulty as Abraham had long ago in the same place with a business transaction of a very different kind with the sons of Heth. The same thing occurred here as at Jaffa. After we had paid for the shoes, and left the bazaar, the merchant came running after us, and holding out the money he had taken as payment, said he had made a mistake. This was very likely to be the case, but it set Ibrahim in a towering passion, and rather than have any din about it on the streets of that old town, consecrated by the name of "friend," we at once proceeded to satisfy the seller, as Abraham did the owners of the field, with "current money with the merchant," not an easy thing to do in some of the old places in the East. Our little business transactions did not go smoothly either at Jaffa or at Hebron.

There are several small furnaces for glass blowing, and for the manufacture of beads, rings, and other trinkets, which are sold at places that are the favourite resort of pilgrims. On

passing through the narrow streets, on the way back to our tents, we came upon a little workshop, where two men sat near a fire, working at a variety of glass rings, large enough for the wrist, and probably intended for bracelets. The moment we entered to see their handicraft, they stopped work, and clamoured for baksheesh. We made a few purchases of their beautiful but brittle wares, thinking that this would satisfy them; but they were far more bent on getting a gratuity than on making sales. We tried to bring home some of the glass ornaments of Hebron, but they were broken on the way. The population is said to be about 10,000. The town is well supplied with water from two large pools of great depth, and built of solid masonry. One of these, at least, is as old as the days of David, for we read that he commanded the murderers of Saul's son to be hanged near the pool of Hebron (2 Sam. iv. 12).

On our way back to Jerusalem, we passed again the pools of Solomon, and went down into the valley of Urtas, supposed to be the Etham of Scripture. This has been made of late years a truly delightful and fertile spot, by a Christian Jew, who has manifested great zeal and enterprise in developing the capabilities of the soil in this valley. His experiments have shown how very fruitful this land might yet become, were it placed under a good government, and on a proper system of irrigation. It is said that this beautiful green dell enjoyed a large portion of King Solomon's attention, and was his favourite retreat. It is more than likely that the passage in the book of Ecclesiastes has a reference to this valley and the neighbouring pools: "I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water threewith the wood that bringeth forth trees." The high state of cultivation into which the gardens at Urtas have been brought may be taken as a token for good as to what this land, so long trodden down and desolate, may yet become. Such were the thoughts in which we were indulging, when we were

met with an almost incredible number of locusts on the wing. They startled our horses, and fell rattling on our umbrellas like hail. They hung over us like a cloud, and for a time darkened the air, fluttering about us as thick as the flakes in a snow storm. We had seen them in the desert in their unfledged state, when for miles they appeared like a running stream on either side of our camels; they had now come to eat up every green thing, and were about to settle down on the lovely gardens of Urtas. We left that green spot blooming like a little paradise; in a day or two afterwards there was scarcely a green leaf to be seen. During our second visit to Jerusalem, we found them everywhere. Sometimes they hung above the city, darkening the air; they clung to the walls, they fell on the roofs of the houses, from which they could be swept in thousands; and on the Mount of Olives they were littered all over the branches of every green tree, which would be speedily left as leafless as if they had been struck by the frosts of winter. The people were in great distress and alarm, for the devastation occasioned by this terrible scourge was raising the provisions to a famine price. It was pitiful to see the poor inhabitants in some of the villages through which we passed, wringing their hands, and rending the air at times with piercing cries, mingled with every sort of noise, produced by all the iron vessels and instruments they could command, in order to drive the locusts away. Sometimes we found the peasants burning damp straw, in the hope that their enemies might be scared away by the smoke. Some of the women and children were striking the bushes with sticks, but all these expedients only succeeded for a little, during which the cloud would disperse to a short distance, and then descend again to eat up every green thing. All this was a striking illustration of the words of the prophet—"The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like

the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. Before their face, the people shall be much pained; all faces shall gather blackness. They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war, and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks. . . . They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall; they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief."

They are looked upon by the people of Syria as a judgment, as one of the sorest inflictions that can befall them; and certainly they are a terrible scourge, but by a merciful arrangement of Providence they are checked, or the land would be made utterly desolate. On the other hand, in Central Arabia, the visitation of locusts is regarded as quite a merciful God-send; and the Arabs there regard them pretty much in the same way as our fishermen look upon a great take of fish. No fisherman ever rushed with greater eagerness on a shoal of herrings than do the Arabs in Central Arabia on a cloud of locusts. They eat them as a choice delicacy; they bundle them up in every spare part of their dress, and having eaten as many as they can, preserve the rest for future use. It may be said in behalf of these destructive creatures that they act as scavengers of nature, and, like storms, may serve in the long run a beneficent purpose. We never tried to eat one—had we done so we would certainly have had another proof of the truth of the adage, "One man's meat is another man's poison."

On our return to Bethlehem, Ibrahim was foolish enough to renew the old grudge, and we were obliged again to interpose. He was kept in check, but said something about taking his own time. On this occasion we had a quiet look at Bethlehem and the surrounding country from the roof of an English-looking house occupied by a German, who is doing a good work amongst the young in connection with some Missionary Society

in Prussia. It was very pleasant to hear the children singing a hymn about the birth of Christ, near the very spot where He was born, with the shepherd's plain and the hills once bright with the glory of the Lord lying before them—

“Shepherds, in the field abiding;  
Watching o'er your flocks by night,  
God with man is now residing,  
Yonder shines the infant-light—  
Come and worship;  
Worship Christ, the new-born King.”

We fondly lingered in the retired walks, and quiet cornfields and gardens about Bethlehem, thinking once more about Ruth. It did not require any great stretch of fancy to see her glean-  
ing in these fields, and wending her way homewards at sunset to cheer the heart of Naomi with the fruit of her labours, and the daily tidings of the wondrous kindness of Boaz, which ripened into the purest love. All Scripture associations belonging to this place are overshadowed by the world's greatest event, the birth of our Lord. This could not be absent from our thoughts, and the hymn of childhood came gushing up afresh—

“While humble shepherds watch'd their flocks  
In Bethlehem's plains by night,  
An angel, sent from heaven, appeared,  
And filled the plains with light.”

Tekoa, the birthplace of Amos, was pointed out to us at some distance, and also the Cave of Adullam. We thought of the wanderings and hair-breadth escapes of David, and the shelter which this cave afforded to the motley groups that followed him, but had not the least idea at the time that “Adullam” and “Adullamites” were words so frequently applied in the newspapers, as designating a certain line of political conduct, in connection with recent measures of parliamentary reform. No political news had reached us from home for a long time, and when we got back, we were surprised to hear the new meaning which was attached to this famous cave.

We drew water from the well of David, said to be the one

from which he longed to drink, when he was thirsty from the sore heat of battle, "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" Three of his mighty men brake through the hosts of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well, but their chief would not drink of it, for it had been procured at the risk of life.

As we proceeded quietly along the hill sides leading down from Bethlehem, Ibrahim was determined to have the last word with, or about, the monks, for on turning round, we saw him look up to the convent and mutter some angry threats. Alas! for the petty grudges of earth! We went on repeating the words of the noble aspiration—

"Then let us pray that come it may—  
As come it will for a' that . . .  
That man to man, the world o'er,  
Shall brothers be for a' that!"

A short ride brought us to the tomb of Rachel, which is still an object of great veneration to the Moslem as well as to the Jew, especially to the latter. The tender devotion of Jacob to Rachel is certainly one redeeming feature in his life; and as we stood at the dome-shaped tomb, we thought of that love as one of earth's most beautiful things, which made fourteen years' service seem but a few days, and of the old man's great sorrow when, on his death bed, there was nothing that rose up from the dim past, and was so vividly present to his mind, as that sad event which brought him Benjamin, but removed from him the light of his eyes. With what tearful interest we read his touching words addressed to Rachel's first born son—"And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem." The tomb is still literally in the way, and many a heart must have been deeply touched at the sight of it, and filled with tender holy thoughts of loved ones now no more. It speaks to the

heart of a love that will ever be fresh as the budding spring time, and of a deep sorrow (Benoni, the son of my sorrow) like the wail of the winter wind sighing amongst the trees. That tomb, and the touching story with which it is connected, appealed to all the better feelings of our nature. We left it with a strange sadness in our hearts, as if the shadow of death had suddenly fallen upon us, and we thought of the warm pressure of hands we would never feel again, and of the old familiar faces we would never meet any more on earth. We could enter into Jacob's grief; our parting words at the tomb of his beloved Rachel were these:—

“Oh for the touch of a vanished hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still!”

On our return to Jerusalem we spent a few days lingering about the more special places of interest, sauntering about the valley of Jehoshaphat, and gazing for hours from the Mount of Olives upon that remarkable view of the city—its surrounding heights on the one hand, and the wilderness of Judea, the Dead Sea, and the plain of the Jordan, on the other. Any enthusiastic visitor of the Holy Land must feel it to be a very grievous trial when attacked with Syrian fever, or some other disease of the country, which prevents him from visiting places of great interest that he has not yet seen, and to see which was one special object of his long journey from a far country. This painful arrest was laid on not a few in the spring and summer of 1866—in some cases it was the still more painful arrest of death. How anxiously we pled with Dr. Chaplin for the Jordan and the Dead Sea, and it was with great reluctance that he gave his consent that we should start for this on Monday, the 14th May. The author of “The Land and the Book,” who has been long resident in the country, visited the Ghôr towards the end of April, and admits that he was about a month, even then, too late. In our case the doctor had but too good reason to express his fears and urge them strongly. It was with unfeigned joy he saw us return to the city from



our journey to the Dead Sea ; but he insisted more strenuously than ever that we should not go to Nazareth by Nablous. The matter hung fire for a few days, we pleading most earnestly for Samaria, Shechem, Jacob's Well, and Mount Gerizim, etc. The good doctor was not to be moved from his point ; we thought it very hard at the time, but he was quite inexorable ; so it was decided, after a pretty keen contest, that—for that time at least—we must have “no dealings with the Samaritans.” In place of Samaria a very agreeable and interesting route was fixed upon, which would take us to the sea and give us the benefit of a thorough change of air. It was agreed that we should go back to Jaffa, take a steamer to Haifa, at the foot of Mount Carmel, stay a few days at the Convent, and then proceed to Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee, and other places of interest, as far as time and other circumstances would permit. It was the best thing that could be done. If we missed Samaria, for which we were truly sorry, we gained a few days on the top of Mount Carmel, and were brought into more immediate contact with the shores of the Great Sea, at many points of undying interest.

The last place we visited before leaving the city was the Armenian Convent, from the roof of which we had an extensive view. There was a comfortable well-to-do appearance about everything we saw in the convent and the church, and, above all, in the house of the deaconesses, or Sisters of Mercy, who occupy a part of the building. With the exception of a few particulars as to dress, they reminded us very forcibly of stout, good-looking matrons in our own country. The guide took us into one of their houses. It consisted of two apartments, plainly furnished, but very clean and tidy—the picture of perfect neatness. The Sister was busily engaged in embroidering a veil, intended to be worn by a bride on her marriage day. She showed us several of the same kind, all finished in a very superior style of workmanship. Of all sects of Eastern Christians we preferred the Armenians, and we heard from various


quarters that there are hopeful signs of an awakening amongst them. Whatever may be their views as to another world, they certainly try to make the most of this.

Having made all our arrangements for leaving the city, we rode out at the Jaffa Gate, which we had entered for the first time three weeks before. What weeks of intense and thrilling interest these had been to us! They were an experience, a memory, an education for life. These terms may seem rather exaggerated for some, but they really fail to express all the advantages which may be derived from a visit to the Holy Land. Our feelings on leaving the city were of a different kind from those we experienced when we got our first sight of it, but not the less intense.

It is more than a memory; it is a new life, as it were, to have lived even for a few weeks in that city, around which so many hallowed associations cluster. The city to which the tribes went up—where the temple stood in all its glory—the city of the Great King—the joy of the whole earth—the scene of the greatest events—the centre of the mightiest influences for good that have gone out from any part of the world to bless mankind—where apostles and prophets taught—and where the Son of the Highest lived and laboured, suffered and died. On taking our last look of the grey walls, it was like parting with a friend whom you are about to leave behind in the depths of some great sorrow which you cannot relieve, and which throws a shadow over your own path wherever you go. We descended into the valley; the last corner of the walls disappeared, the city faded from our view. Our feelings were expressed in the words—"How long, O Lord, how long? Remember Thine ancient people, still beloved for the father's sake." "Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and Thy glory." "Return, we beseech Thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit the vine; and the vineyard which Thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that Thou madest strong for Thyself."

## CHAPTER XIII.

Bad Roads. Abou Goosh, or Kirjath-Jearim. Birthplace of the Penitent Thief. Convent of Ramleh. Moslem Calls to Prayer. Jaffa again. Casarea. Haifa. Strange Quarters. Convent of Mount Carmel. Site of Elijah's Sacrifice. Ford of Kishon. Nazareth. Mountain Home of Jesus. His Childhood and Youth. Carpenter's Workshop. Magnificent Panorama. Memorable Accident. Festival of Corpus Christi. Tawdry Procession. Young Arab Chief. Beni Sakar and Adouan Tribes. Turkish Misrule. Missionary Efforts at Nazareth. Wretched Peasantry. Lake of Galilee. Tiberias. Cholera. Sail to Tell Hum. Ruins of Capernaum. On to Scheff Amar. Acre. Processions. Queer Consul. British Tars. Beyrout. Mrs. Thomson's British Syrian Schools.

OTHING, perhaps, in Palestine, strikes a stranger more at first than the wretched condition of the roads. There is not a mountain bridle path in the wildest Highland parish or glen, more rugged and desolate than the thoroughfares, if they can be called by this name, in the immediate neighbourhood of Jerusalem—the road, for instance, to Abou Goosh. It is not much better than the difficult mountain track in the pass of Beth-horon. We dropped down into a valley, over smooth slippery stones, and passed a village with a euphonious Roman name, Colonia. The ruins scattered about it have a fortress-like appearance, but the very name and object of these are unknown. This is supposed by some to be the Emmaus of Scripture. We passed it towards evening, and thought of that blessed interview which the two disciples had with their risen Lord, when they constrained the mysterious stranger, as yet unknown to them, to turn aside and tarry for the night. It was dark before we reached Abou Goosh, a village which bears the name of a noted chief, who for a long time set the whole authorities at Constantinople at defiance, and was the terror of all who passed through the district, which he regarded as his own by hereditary right. There can be no

doubt that this was the ancient Kirjath-jearim, where the ark was kept for a long time, and from which it was brought up by David to Jerusalem, in the midst of joyous multitudes, who must have gone up to the city on the very track which we followed. It was very interesting that night to read in our tent, pitched not far from the spot where the ark was lodged in the house of Obed-edom on the hill, 1 Chron. xiii., giving an account of the joyful occasion when it was removed. There was a new interest thrown around Psalm cxxxii. ; for Kirjath-jearim, the ancient name of this place, signified the "city of forests," and the minstrel King of Israel in that sacred ode, expresses his earnest desire to build an appropriate shrine for the ark of the covenant—"Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed ; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." The following words were as deeply interesting in connection with the ancient name of the place, "city of forests:" "Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah" (his native place, Bethlehem), "we found it in *the fields of the wood*." This is a very singular coincidence, and is a strong confirmation of all that has been advanced in behalf of this plain being the site of the present "city of forests."

We passed the village of Latrûn, or Modin, the birth place of the patriot brothers, the Maccabees, who flashed a sudden glory over their country by the victories which they achieved on the heights and glens and passes around their mountain home. How strange it is that instead of their name having been given to the place of their nativity, it should now be called Latrûn, "thief," or "den of thieves," because this is supposed to have been the birthplace of a very different man from any of the patriot brothers—Disma, the penitent thief ! Next morning, we found the road which we had to follow for about two hours, provokingly bad ; but this was nothing, compared with the sad havoc the locusts were making on every

green thing in the country. By and by the road became as smooth as a fine lawn, and we cantered merrily along to the convent of Ramleh, where we spent a night. We owe that place a grudge, for what with the incessant barking of dogs, the shouting of a muezzin on the minaret of an adjoining mosque, and the pains in the limbs which accompany Syrian fever, we never slept. The muezzin had a most powerful, but not an unmusical voice, and could be heard far beyond the town, calling the faithful to prayer. Four times were his calls repeated, from the afternoon on which we entered till nine next morning, when we left.

It may be interesting to some of our readers to know what these calls are, which are repeated five times every day—at day-break, noon, afternoon, sunset, and after dark. In the stillness of the night, the voice of the muezzin, which he strains to the very utmost in calling to prayer, has a very striking effect. Lane in his "Modern Egyptians," gives these calls to prayer as follows:—Having ascended to the gallery of the minaret, the muezzin repeats the words, "God is most great" (this is said four times); "I testify that there is no deity but God" (twice); "I testify that Mohammed is God's apostle" (twice); "Come to prayer" (twice); "Come to security" (twice); "God is most great" (twice); "There is no deity but God." Blind men are preferred for this office, so that the hareems may not be overlooked from the minarets. The morning call to prayer is always introduced by the words, "Prayer is better than sleep."

Next morning we were in the saddle early, and had a fine ride along the smooth, sandy plain, to Jaffa. More than once we dismounted at a small café on the way, formed by a few upright sticks, with straw matting and branches of trees twisted on the roof. These little wayside inns afforded a pleasant rest and a cooling shade; and the small cup of coffee, as thick as a syrup, was always a refreshing beverage. We rode again through the pleasant orange groves and gardens of Jaffa, and as

we passed through the sheds and booths in the market place, we were gladly recognised by a few old friends whose fruit-stalls we had patronised during our former visit. Our horses, mules, and attendants were all sent forward along the coast, to meet us on a given day at Haifa. We went in again at the Jerusalem Gate with the Saracenic arch and fountain, bored our way through the dark tunnels of streets to the slit in the wall leading to the sea, and in a few minutes we were dashing through the narrow opening in the rugged fringe of reef to reach the "Africa," which had just let off her steam about a mile from the shore. Many Syrian females were on board, and a large part of the deck was partitioned and screened off for their special use, according to the custom in the East. As we proceeded along the coast, various Bible localities were pointed out, but none had so much interest for us as the site of ancient Cæsarea, a magnificent city in the days of Paul, on the streets of which 20,000 Jews were mercilessly slaughtered, and where Vespasian was declared emperor. It is now a vast heap of ruins. As we passed these we thought of the midnight ride of Paul from Jerusalem to this famous old city, escorted by a large body of soldiers, when more than forty of his countrymen had bound themselves by an oath to take away his life. It was here that Felix trembled when Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; and it was here that the Apostle endured a long imprisonment, and at last appealed to Cæsar. Shortly after nine o'clock in the evening we reached the roadstead of Haifa, and lay about half-a-mile from the shore. Several boats came alongside, and we got into one of these; but as there was no landing stage, or anything even approaching the rudest attempt at such a thing, two stout fellows, standing up to the middle in water, crossed their arms and laid hold of each other's hands, and urged us to take the benefit of this sedan chair. Throwing our arms round their necks we were carried in triumph to the land. There was no lack of brawny arms, and in this way all who were bound for

Haifa were brought to shore. It was beautiful moonlight, and all the village had turned out to witness what is the great event of the place, and which probably happens, in favourable seasons, about once in the course of a few weeks—a steamer in the offing, with goods and passengers to be taken off in the boats. It was quite a picturesque sight; the villagers, among whom were many women in their white coverings, stood or sat on every available bit of rock that fringed the beach.

It was our intention to sleep at the convent that night, but we were too late; we had heard so much about the watchmen of that establishment, the dogs, who were never kept on chain, and who were represented as exceeding fierce, that we had no wish to encounter them after night-fall and when the place was shut up. There is no hotel in Haifa, and our tents and other necessary equipments of camp life were left at Jaffa, to follow us in a day or two. We stood by the shore enjoying the scene whilst our friends went to the village in quest of accommodation; but having done their best at this for nearly an hour they returned without success. At last an empty house was got, which we were told was being made ready for some church dignitary from Nazareth. It had evidently the appearance of being cleaned out for somebody, for the passages, stairs, and floors were all over with splashes of white-washing, which had been done that day. There were marks everywhere of such a cleansing process that we concluded there must be many fewer inmates of a certain kind in the house than before the domestic revolution began—a consideration so important that we at once decided to fix our quarters for the night in this empty house; shake-downs were provided—where they came from we never knew—and coffee was prepared at some neighbouring fire. A mat was spread on the floor, and we partook of our evening meal in Turkish fashion. We were under the shadow of Mount Carmel, so we gathered around our glimmering lights and read about the great Elijah, whose piety and patriotism have given an undying glory to this place, and to the age in which he

lived. Our apartment was without window frames, and of course there was not a single pane of glass between us and the open air. This was rather an advantage than otherwise, for the heat was great. The moonlight was streaming in, making even the rickety walls and houses of the old town, which is said to be the ancient Sycaminium, appear beautiful. Seldom do the moon's pale beams fall on a more dilapidated or dirty place. We saw very little glass about it, although tradition has fixed upon a spot in the neighbourhood as the first place where glass was made. But a truce to all complaining; we have good reason to remember Haifa very gratefully for a sound sleep after many restless nights on account of fever and fleas. The scrubbing and white-washing of our strange dormitory on the previous day had banished the one, and the sea air had greatly improved the other. Dr. Chaplin was right. Our sail of seven hours had acted as a charm, and that night we turned a new leaf. Poor as our quarters were, we certainly fared much better than Mr. Tristram and his party did on their memorable visit to Haifa some few years ago. They had pitched their tents in what seemed a very eligible spot, but the rain fell heavily, and long before daybreak they were washed out of their beds, and when they awoke found, to their horror, everything afloat. The inviting spot of the previous night was now a rapid stream rushing to the sea, and nearly sweeping away the tents.

Next morning we had a donkey ride (the first since leaving Cairo) up the steep ascent to the convent, a large square building, with a cupola in the centre, most picturesquely situated on a noble looking promontory, which is of itself quite worthy of the name, "the excellency of Carmel." The weary traveller will feel inclined to transfer this appellation to the excellent accommodation that is to be found in the convent itself, which, with its airy, clean apartments, and its cheerful look-out to the sea, is really a charming retreat. We truly felt it to be so, and during our three days' stay there, our favourite seat was under the shadow of a tree, overlooking the bluff promontory, with



the blue waters of the Mediterranean sparkling at its base. Looking from our elevation, the ridge seemed to drop down into the sea, but there is a broad sweep of shady beach, which has been for ages the highway for great armies, or for immense caravans going to or coming from the desert. We spent a delightful Sabbath under that tree, reading with deeper interest than ever the life of Elijah. The place of his sacrifice is about six hours' ride distant from the convent, and is marked by the ruins of a quadrangular building of large hewn stones on a terrace of natural rock, looking into the plain of Esdraelon. The tide of battle has often rolled over that plain, but the spot on which the altar of Elijah stood was the scene of a conflict between truth and error, mightier far in its issues than any battle ever fought on the plain below. There is no sight in Palestine more surely identified than the Muhrakha, the scene of Elijah's sacrifice. History has not left on record another instance in which any man occupied a more awful position than the prophet did at this spot, on the memorable day when he boldly confronted and challenged the priests of Baal, all the power of Ahab and his wicked queen, and where he made the solemn appeal to the God of Israel to vindicate his cause by fire. Take it all in all, there have been few more important days in the history of the world, for the interests of truth, than that on which the prophet, the king, the priests of Baal, and the thousands of Israel were assembled around this spot. It was a transaction which could not be hid; it was done in the eyes of all the people—a contest on which mighty interests were staked; and the test, perhaps, was quite unprecedented, “the God that answereth by fire, let him be God.” The site was one of the most commanding, and the position assumed by the prophet was one of unparalleled moral sublimity. An ancient spring still exists at the place, from which, in all likelihood, the trench about the altar was filled with water. In the hollow where the altar stood, a shoulder of the ridge shuts out the sea from the view, and it was to this height that the prophet

sent his servant with the request—"Look towards the sea." The man of God throws himself upon the earth in earnest prayer; the Almighty had answered by fire, will He again be entreated to answer by rain? The servant comes back till the seventh time with the answer—"There is nothing!" But at the seventh time he brings the glad tidings—"Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand." Earth has few places more full of sacred interest than the spot on Carmel, hallowed by Elijah's sacrifice, and by his earnest prayers.

Early on Sabbath morning we were present at the service in the church, and at the close of it were shown Elijah's cave under the altar, where tradition affirms he hid himself from the persecutions of Jezebel. It is at least creditable to the good sense of the Carmelites that they have not attempted to transfer the scene of the sacrifice to this place, but have permitted it to remain undisturbed on the site which, as far as we know, has never been disputed.

On our way to Nazareth we crossed the Kishon, and had little difficulty in doing so, for we found it a sluggish, muddy stream, with no pretension at the time to be a river at all. We remembered the words of Deborah when she celebrated the victory which Barak had achieved over the hosts of Sisera: "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera. The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon." There was very little *sweeping* power in that stream when we saw it, but at certain seasons it rises to a great height, not merely from the rains, but from a ground current flowing from the sea, when a westerly gale sweeps round the base of Carmel. The waters of the Kishon are driven back, and as a sand drift rapidly chokes the mouth of the river, it becomes suddenly very deep and dangerous, its channel being filled up both from above and below. It is frequently seen in such a flooded condition, and then it cannot fail to present a formidable obstacle to a retreating army.

One great pleasure in travelling in the Holy Land is the fresh interest that is excited by every new locality from the sacred associations connected with it. We pressed forward to Nazareth with as deep longing as we did to Jerusalem a month ago. An outer network of gardens, vines, and olives, announced to us the vicinity of a village or a town. This lay on the further side of a sloping ridge which we had to cross, and we were literally on the top of Nazareth before we saw it. The surrounding hills form a wide hollow or basin, and the mountain home of Jesus nestles on the slopes and spreads away down towards the bottom. The houses cling to the sides of that rocky dell like swallow's nests under the eaves. In coming down the narrow zigzag streets we often found ourselves standing on the roof of a house built into the abrupt declivity. The hills that surround the town reminded us of the "*dowie dens of Yarrow*," or of the uplands about Sanquhar, with this difference, that there was not so much soft greenness about the Galilean hills when we saw them, for they were parched and withered-looking with the heat. We rode down the sides of the basin through the narrow streets (not easily done in some places), and were glad to find the marks of a thriving town, the houses built of stone, and rapidly increasing. The population is now estimated at about six thousand. Those who profess the Christian religion form the great majority; this may be assumed as one reason for the prosperity of Nazareth, for wherever a Christian population predominates in village or town in Syria, there are certain signs of thriving and progress. When passing through the streets, we observed at once an air of greater freedom and independence about the young people and the women. The juveniles had a dash of the humorous and a buoyancy of spirits about them which we had not seen elsewhere; and the women seemed to be much less under restraint, judging from their free and easy movements going to and from the well, and the gossip in which they indulged at that favourite gathering place. It is a country town, with all the Eastern trades required

by a rustic population. We found excellent quarters at the Latin convent, and there was nothing in the whole of our journey that we enjoyed more than to sit at night on the balcony in the unclouded splendour of the full moon, and look upon the hill sides, ravines, and glens, all embraced in that small basin, and still the same as when He was a boy. The town may have changed its position since His day, but all the external features of His mountain home remain unchanged. There was no place in Palestine that brought the daily scenes and experiences of our blessed Lord nearer us than the hills of Nazareth, and the town itself clinging to the sides of these. Bethlehem had its peculiar recollections connected with His birth. Jerusalem had very much of thrilling interest associated with His brief, beautiful, blissful ministry, and with the closing scenes of that wondrous life of love. Bethany was consecrated by the ties of a tender friendship; but Nazareth was intertwined more intimately, and for a longer period, with the daily life of our Lord. So far as we know, He spent nearly thirty years in this mountain home; and there was something in the look of the hills, in the whole aspect and life of the place, that brought the Divine Man nearer our hearts and our own experience than any other spot we visited. Jerusalem has its stirring histories apart altogether from that life, and these in themselves can never fail to make that city famous; but Nazareth derives all its importance, history, fame, and attractions from this life alone, which still seems to quicken the very air, to breathe around the hills, to stir in the very streets; in short, it is revived not merely as a picture on the page of the Gospel narrative, but as an actual reality again moving before you in wondrous beauty. The fountain at the lower end of the village, called after the Virgin, was doubtless the well from which she brought her daily supply of water, just as we saw the young women of the place doing from day to day during our visit, showing a remarkable grace of form as they passed, balancing with their two hands the long-necked pitchers on

their heads. We saw many faces that reminded us of pictures of the Madonna. Not a few young mothers were accompanied by their children, just as the child Jesus oftentimes came with Mary to this very well, where He met with the children of the place, and washed His feet along with them in the surplus water, as we saw many youngsters do with great delight. You see Him pass through all the stages of childhood, youth, and manhood in this place. What a quiet thoughtfulness,—what a strange mystery,—what a divine composure must have been in that childhood! You see Him as a youth acquiring the humble occupation of Joseph, and following him, as occasion demanded, into the quiet homesteads and villages of the district to aid the Syrian carpenter, when this and the other article connected with household use, or with outdoor labour, required to be repaired. Often did we hang over the balcony of the convent and look into a little workshop right before us, combining the two occupations of a country smith and carpenter. All kinds of rude, rustic instruments were brought to be repaired, and quite a rare medley of country jobbing in wood and iron was done in that quaint little workshop. It was a sight that had great interest for us: it linked us to the far past, and to the work-a-day life of the world's greatest Man, as we heard the ring of the anvil mingled at times with the rasping of the saw, and witnessed the town's people bringing boxes to be mended, or the *fellahs* their rough implements of field labour. We thought that it was just such a workshop as that in which the Divine Workman—the Lord of life and glory—dignified human toil by labouring with His own hands, thus showing us how every department of life and labour may be pervaded by His own spirit of goodness.

There are bye-lanes, and mountain tracks, and sheep walks, and quiet country roads, all round Nazareth; bridle paths that wind over the hills. All these had a peculiar charm for us, for we felt assured that over these very bye-ways walked those blessed feet

“Which, eighteen hundred years ago, were nailed  
For our advantage to the bitter cross.”

The whole district must always have been a place for quiet, solitary musing, most grateful to a contemplative spirit; and here, for thirty years, did our Saviour live among these uplands, walking at early morn or dewy eve on the sloping sides of this dingle, or at dawn by the green dell, or through the deep ravine, or over these lovely mountain tracks leading up to yonder summit, and doubtless gazing with rapture on these very scenes that filled our souls with delight, moving amongst men, women, and working people just such as we met in that town from day to day.

On our way to a neighbouring height, in company with the Rev. Mr. Zeller, the resident missionary in connection with the Church of England—a highly accomplished gentleman, who showed us no small kindness—we passed the precipice from which the enraged inhabitants of Nazareth sought to cast our Lord down on that memorable day when He appeared as the world's greatest teacher in their synagogue. Mr. Zeller, who has long been a resident in this place, is quite of opinion that this rocky cliff is the scene of that attempt upon the life of Jesus; and he sees no occasion whatever for resorting to a precipice at a considerable distance from the modern town. We reached the summit of that hill, and the impression of the view we got from it can never be effaced from our memory. On that very height the Saviour of mankind, doubtless, gazed on the same grand features in that landscape; on the Great Sea; on the long ridge of Carmel stretching down to it, and ending abruptly in a bold promontory; on the Great Hermon, crowned with snow—the Mont Blanc of Palestine; on the Little Hermon, with the village of Nain nestling at its feet; on the isolated and dome-shaped hill of Tabor; on Gilboa, where Saul and Jonathan were slain in the “high places;” on the broad winding sweep of Esdraelon; and on all the heights that cluster around His mountain home, and which were all familiar as household words and faces to the heart of His childhood and

His youth. We have every reason to remember our visit to that hill-top, and the magnificent view we obtained from it. Mr. Zeller rode a beautiful Arab mare, a fleet and fiery creature when put to her mettle. We were mounted on one of the common travelling hacks of the country, and felt surprised, and sometimes annoyed, that the missionary kept so far a-head of us. He had a reason for this, but we did not know it till it was too late. On approaching him to put a question regarding some point in the scenery, we had no sooner come within reach of his mare than she struck out like lightning, and our poor knee received the full force of the blow, which stunned us for a time, and nearly sent us reeling over the back of our cob. Happily she was unshod, or this accident would have been attended with more serious consequences. It was such, however, that we will bear the marks of it as long as we live—rather a rough way of intensifying our recollections of a ride, which, in itself, was quite sufficient to be a memory for life.

During our stay at Nazareth it happened to be the festival of Corpus Christi; and the Church of the Annunciation, built, it is said, over the place where the mystery of the incarnation was revealed to the Virgin, had received a great deal of additional decoration of a showy and very tawdry description. We went to see the show, for it scarcely could be called by any other name, and found the chapel crowded. The women occupied a place by themselves, and sat in Turkish fashion on mats spread upon the floor. Many of them were young mothers, accompanied with their children. The men occupied the other side of the chapel, and sat or knelt. It was a bright Syrian summer day, and the heat was excessive; inside the church this was greatly increased, with the numerous lights that were burning all round the altar, and in various parts of the building, and with long wax tapers which were held by some twenty boys, dressed in white and scarlet. What with these lights, the burning of incense inside, and the flaming sun without, the place was hot and crowded almost to suffocation. The music

was the only redeeming feature in the service. At last a procession was formed, but we have only a vague impression of a great deal of gaudy colouring, white and scarlet dresses, and long wax tapers paling their feeble and glimmering lights in the blaze of the sun. We also remember a silk canopy, supported by four priests, and some church dignitary walking under it; also, a large silk umbrella borne aloft over the head of some other official who, if we mistake not, carried the host, or what is regarded as the real body of our Lord! The bells of the convent were set a ringing, and the pageant, such as it was, moved forward through a part of Nazareth belonging to the Latin Church. In our own country, what is most to be dreaded by a procession is a drenching rain—the slush, mud, and torrents of a soaking wet day. If ever the brilliancy of a procession was utterly destroyed, it was the one we saw at Nazareth; not by rain, but by the excessive brightness of the sun. It acted upon the lighted tapers as the sun does upon a fire, it put them out or made the brightest of them look very sickly. The gayest colours had a dim and draggled appearance in the blazing splendour, from which all were but too glad to escape. We could see new beauty in the words of Paul to Agrippa, when he described the light that fell from heaven, “as above the brightness of the sun.” The women were chiefly interested in the spectacle, and their dress did not by any means indicate that scrupulous reserve which we had observed in many other places. It went to the opposite extreme. The Mohammedans looked on with stolid indifference, and such a pageant would have very little influence in making any converts from their ranks to the Christian faith. The tawdry show had a strange effect upon our mind, as we thought of the life-story of Jesus in connection with His mountain home. His townsmen of old sought to cast Him from the brow of the hill on which their city was built; and we could not help thinking that such a procession was a casting down of Christ and His truth in another way.



Mr. Zeller introduced us to the young chief of the Beni Sakar, a lad of some fifteen or sixteen years of age. He was attended by a number of his tribe, and their horses were all picketed in the court attached to the house during their brief stay. When we entered the apartment where he was sitting, we were much struck with his melancholy, care-worn appearance; we could scarcely believe at first that he was the chief of the powerful tribe of the Beni Sakar. A heavy sorrow seemed to lie on that young heart; and when we heard the sad story, we ceased to wonder at the gloom that overshadowed his face. About two weeks before this, a large party belonging to the Adouan crossed the Jordan and made a sudden night attack upon the Beni Sakar, shooting the chief and several of his men. The youth rose and very cordially shook hands with Mr. Zeller, and requested us to be seated on the mats. In a few moments we were supplied with coffee and pipes. There was little said all the time we were present; it was like the meeting of a funeral party. We were greatly pleased to see the confidence which the young chief had in Mr. Zeller, and probably there is no European who has greater influence with the wandering tribes that hover about Nazareth and the plain of the Jordan, than this devoted missionary.

A gun was handed into the apartment, and this broke for a little the stillness of the meeting. The young chief took it in his hand and examined it, more with a listless and oppressive air than anything like eager interest. The rest of the party handled it, however, with something like deadly intents, into which thoughts of avenging the death of their chief and those who had fallen with him doubtless entered. In the afternoon they mounted their horses and proceeded towards the Jordan. The next great event in the history of their tribe would probably be an attack on the Adouan, attended with similar results. The Turkish government rather encourages these attacks than otherwise, as it is in this way that the one tribe keeps the other in check. The present condition of the tribes in Syria is pretty

much the same as the state in which our Highland clans were some two centuries ago, when the Campbells and the Grahams, the Macdonalds and the Macgregors, were living in a state of constant feud. As it is, the Turkish government seems utterly powerless to keep the Arab tribes in check, so it leaves this very much to themselves. All that it can do, is to buy up the help of the most powerful clan, and retain it, if possible. At the same time, it is not at all unwelcome news to the government when its own paid tribe is restrained by another, as the Sultan has little or no means of doing this for himself. In this unsettled state of matters, those who till the soil have no encouragement whatever to do this, and not the slightest security that they shall ever reap the fruit of their labours. In Nazareth, during our visit, there was a painful impression amongst the Christian portion of the population, that what with the fanaticism of the Mohammedans, the violence of the tribes, and the withdrawal of the few Turkish soldiers to the seaboard, life and property were not by any means safe. It was the feeling which our Lowland forefathers had long ago when they were in daily dread of a raid from some Highland clan, with a freebooter of a chief at their head.

Missionary labours were begun at Nazareth in 1850, by the English Church Missionary Society, at the urgent request of a number of natives; and the late lamented Bishop Bowen laboured among them for a considerable time with great zeal and success. Since then the light of the Gospel has spread farther and wider in Galilee. Three schools have been established at Nazareth and its vicinity, and small Protestant communities in a number of villages have joined themselves to the principal one at Nazareth. The community at the latter place numbers 77 taxable men, or about 150 souls. The communities at Yâfa, Reneh, Kâna, Torân, and at the large village of Shefa 'Amar, amount to about 250 souls, making altogether in Galilee 400 Protestants, scattered over a considerable extent of country, with one missionary, two catechists, and four schoolmasters.

We found an excellent friend in Dr. Vartan, who superintends the medical mission department at Nazareth, and whose labours cannot fail to be a great blessing, not only to the town, but to all the neighbouring villages.

The impressions produced by our visit to the mountain home of our Lord were an excellent preparation for visiting the Lake of Tiberias. We started shortly after noon, and had a pleasant ride; the way sometimes lying over tracts of brown earth strewn with little boulders, curiously shaped and worm-eaten, as if the sea and myriads of creeping things that could eat into the stones had been once there. Again we had to work our way through a perfect tangle of weeds, reaching oftentimes to the horses' girth, and giving sad evidence of a most fertile soil entirely run to waste. Emerging from this wilderness of rank weeds, we came occasionally upon fields of corn, where the poor peasants were cutting down their crops, in hourly terror of being attacked by the Bedouins, and of seeing the whole produce of their fields swept away. They reminded us of the workmen who built the wall in the days of Nehemiah, when "every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded." So it was with the poor peasants whom we found in the fields that were ripe for the harvest. Some of them had matchlocks slung across their shoulders, or an old sword or a couple of daggers dangling from their belt. There was an uneasy feeling all abroad as to some dreaded attack from a predatory tribe. This will help to show our readers the unsettled state of the country, and also why such large tracts of rich soil are a tangled mass of weeds. About four or five miles from Nazareth we passed a little village nestled amongst gardens and hedges of prickly pear on the crest of one of the many uplands of Galilee. This is Cana, the scene of our Lord's first miracle. The site has been disputed, but we stand by Kefr Kenna, for the good reasons furnished by Hepworth Dixon in his admirable book on the Holy Land.

Apart from Jerusalem itself, there was no place in Palestine that we were more desirous of seeing than the famous lake of Galilee. A dread mystery hung about the Dead Sea, and that had its peculiar fascination to our mind; but the sea of Tiberias was so wrought into the life of Christ, so much a part of it, that from our earliest childhood we had thought of its waters as reflecting nothing but images of love and beauty. The two seas, though in the same land, stood at opposite poles of history and feeling. We passed one upland after another, little dreaming that the lake was so near, for Ibrahim had resumed his old tale of "bad Arabs," and never can we forget the thrill of delight when, on reaching the top of a hill, we caught our first view of a small section of its blue waters sparkling in the radiance of the setting sun. It took us by surprise, and was all the more welcome and thrilling on this account. "*There's the Lake!*" we shouted, and the words quickly passed from mouth to mouth.

Of course a great deal lies in association, but we could not help thinking that there was a look of tender love and pity about it. The hill dropped down by a long descent to the water, so that the lake gradually expanded before us as we rode down. The old regal city of Tiberias, built on the water's edge, though sadly dilapidated, had the marks of fallen greatness. No ride in Palestine was so full of pleasant memories as the one down that hill to the shattered walls of the ancient city of Herod. On reaching it we found, to our great dismay, that some fourteen cases of cholera had occurred that day in this filthy place, the most of which had proved fatal. The poor people were panic-struck. Tiberias at any time must be a wretched, melancholy place, but the very mention of cholera in connection with it made it doubly more so. The unexpected news threw a gloom over our encampment that night; but the splendour of the full moon which rose over the mountains in all its glory, and the sacred memories of the place, made our tenting ground one of the brightest, certainly one of the most

memorable spots in the Holy Land. Our baggage camels were late of coming up, so we spread our rug on the stony beach, and lay down and enjoyed the scene till our tents were pitched. Ignorance is sometimes bliss. We heard a strange crackling sound among the stones, like that occasioned by the motion of a crab amongst pebbles, but it never for a moment occurred to us that we should get up, till one of our men shouted to us to rise—we had spread our rug on the top of several scorpions! After dinner we came out, and strolled about the lake for hours. The moonlight was so clear that we could see to read without the slightest difficulty M'Cheyne's beautiful hymn. The whole lake from the one end to the other was a sheet of silver, save where the shadows of the precipitous mountains on the opposite side made a dark background to the loveliest and most suggestive picture we have ever seen. Nothing since we entered Palestine brought home to our hearts, with such touching power and pathos, the divine beauty, the ministry, and the miracles of our Lord, as the sight of that lake. We could have strolled about all night in the beautiful moonlight, but the chilling dews, and occasionally gloomy thoughts about the cholera, compelled us to get under cover of our tents. But again and again we came out to take a parting look at the lake and the chalky cliffs, silvered over with the moon's pale beams. Before dropping off into sleep we read all those deeply interesting passages in the Gospel narrative that have entwined the life of Christ for ever with this sheet of water, which, though comparatively small, has been more glorified than any other water on the face of the earth. On these shores He had taught and healed, and great crowds had gathered around Him—on these waters He had walked to the help of His disciples—here He lay asleep in the hinder part of the ship, and here He repeatedly calmed the tempest by the word of His power, "Peace, be still!"

On the rushing tide of memories that flooded the soul, we tried to sleep, but in vain; so we rose at daybreak and bathed

in the refreshing waters. It was surely something to get a morning's swim in the lake of Galilee! We had scarcely dressed on the beach, when several persons approached, bearing the dead body of a man who had died of cholera during the night. They had brought the corpse to wash it in the lake, a few yards from the spot where we had just bathed.

It was with great difficulty that we could procure a boat (the only one that can be had on the lake) as the panic had increased. We succeeded, however, at last, in getting a clumsy bark and a few boatmen, but seldom have we seen more spiritless, melancholy-looking men. They seemed half-starved, and they rowed us out from under the old rickety walls of Tiberias like men under the sentence of death. Poor fellows, some of their own relations had died of the plague, and they seemed every moment to dread an attack. From their looks, it would not have at all surprised us although they had been seized in the boat. They said but little all the time, and when they did speak it was with bated breath. We had brought with us a sort of a cawass from Haifa, an old woman of a man, whose tongue seemed to be hung in the middle; and now when we wished above all things to survey the deeply-interesting scenery in silence, he kept up a constant chattering, giving an account of the most wonderful exploits in which he played a chief part. His voice was cracked withal. The boatmen listened in silence, and gave him now and then a melancholy look. It was endless. We wished to have our own thoughts in peace, and we tried to stop him with biscuits and fruit, and a piece of cold fowl. This only increased his volubility, as he concluded they were presents in return for his stories. He was quite chop-fallen when we requested the dragoon to urge him to hold his tongue. It was a heavy penalty, which nearly threw him into a fit of sickness. We dreaded lest he might be the first victim, and were really glad when he commenced his old stories again. One of our boatmen woke up from his stupor, and pointed out the sites of Magdala, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Kafirnahum. These were populous

towns in the days of our Lord, and must have given picturesque beauty and animation to these shores, as the villages do at present on the Bosphorus, or like those which have recently sprung up on the Firth of Clyde. We made for the latter of these sites, the modern name of which is Tell-hum. The beach was bright with flowers, which at some little distance we took for the rhododendron, but on approaching nearer we saw that the blossoms were those of the oleander. Not a human being was to be seen. It was utter desolation and silence, save the sound occasioned by the splash of our oars. As we drew the boat into a little bay, a young Arab, in the picturesque garb of his tribe, and with a long spear in his hand, suddenly made his appearance on a mound of ruins. Some goats were feeding among the tangled weeds at his feet. He was the only native we saw on these shores after leaving Tiberias, and his appearance was a picture which only served to make the desolation and solitude all the more oppressive. In company with the young Arab we examined the extensive ruins of Tell-hum, and picked up some marble fragments of what must have been beautiful friezes, or portions of a cornice, very probably, in the old synagogue. From the extent and character of these ruins, and from the recent discoveries made by the Exploration Committee, we have no doubt whatever that the modern Tell-hum is the ancient Capernaum so much associated with the ministry of our Lord, and which was emphatically called "His city."

It was our intention to have stayed for a day at Tiberias, but the outbreak of cholera prevented this, so we hurried back to Nazareth, and passed a green spot on the hill-side, where, it is said, our Lord miraculously fed the famished multitude. If this be the spot there is still "much grass" in the place, and it commands a most extensive view. We spent a night at Cana, and were much amused at the mode of washing adopted by the women at the well. They placed their clothes on a stone, poured water on them, and then beat them with a heavy club, turning them occasionally from one side to the other. On

reaching Nazareth we found Mr. Zeller mounted on his mare, but we were prepared this time to give her a wide berth. He kindly accompanied us for a few miles on our way to Shefa 'Amar; and when he parted with us he gave us a specimen of horsemanship equal to any that we had seen on our approach to Gaza. He literally flew over the rough and stony sides of the hill and disappeared in a moment on the other side. That performance convinced us, that all we had heard about a real specimen of a fine Arab horse was not by any means exaggerated—

“Away on the wings of the wind she flew,  
Like a thing of life and light.”

The sight made us draw a long breath, even after all that we had seen of Bedouin horsemanship. Our way now lay through a beautiful country varied with pleasant undulating wooded heights, slopes, dells, and dingles, with here and there deep ravines covered with brushwood. What a fertile country that might be made were the little hills covered with corn, and the valleys with pastures—“they would shout for joy, they would also sing.” How many happy homesteads might be there; but such a thing is not known. We met a few wretched-looking peasants to whom life seemed a burden. There is a dash of humcur even in the “*finest pisantry*” in the world, but utter dejection was stamped on the faces of the *fellaheen* who occasionally passed us armed, or who were working in the fields among their little patches of grain.

We reached that night the quaint-looking village of Shefa 'Amar, with a huge castle on one side, and an immense mound, or rather hill of manure and rubbish on the other, which must have been the gathering of many years. This strange collection was smoking when we arrived. Our tents were pitched very near the bottom of it, but as two persons had died that day in the village, who had come from Tiberias, we did not feel inclined to remain so near this gigantic dungheap, so our tents were taken down, very much to the annoyance of some of our



attendants, and removed to a more elevated plateau at some little distance. The inhabitants had large flocks of goats, and it was quite a picture to see them coming home in the evening. If there was not an angry quarrel amongst the people, there was at least something very like it; and we have still a vivid recollection of their shouts and discordant screams, as they exhibited all kinds of angry gestures that night in the midst of their goats. We were struck with the masculine appearance of the women, and at the all but entire absence of anything like oriental reserve or concealment about them, so far as dress was concerned. Next morning we took a stroll through the village. Our path sometimes lay on the roofs of houses. There was the usual number of dogs, and they were very surly. Although the village is confined within very small limits, we nearly lost our way in its narrow tortuous windings, and found ourselves brought back again and again to the same place, to the no small amusement of the people, who were watching all our movements, but who made no efforts to restrain the ill-natured dogs. The mountain mass of manure and rubbish stood us in good stead that morning, for it was the great landmark of the place, so we persistently made for it, but not without being stopped twice or thrice by blind passages and other obstructions. We found a Protestant catechist of the name of Seraphim, labouring most devotedly for the good of souls in this place. He gave us the most intelligent account we had yet heard of the religion of the Druses.

Next morning we proceeded to Accho, or Acre, along what might be made a very fruitful plain; but here, again, rank weeds hold all but undisturbed possession of the soil. The cotton plant was growing here and there, and in a very healthy condition. Many vultures were hovering about, and we concluded, in accordance with the words of our Saviour, that some inviting carcase could not be far distant. We halted by the side of a well, at which there was a covered recess, and here we sat down to screen ourselves for a little from the fierce heat of

the sun. The water was drawn up from a considerable depth by means of a wheel, a rope, and a great number of pitchers which emptied themselves into a trough, at which the passing beasts of burden quenched their thirst. When the trough was nearly emptied, the man who sat near the wheel, to which there was attached a number of little blades or shelves, moved it with his feet, somewhat after the manner of a treadmill, only, in this case, the man sat at his post. Every one turned aside to this fountain as he passed, drank, and went on his way; mules and horses, donkeys and camels, sheep, goats, and oxen, all stopped to be refreshed. It is when seated at a well that the traveller has a good chance of seeing the various phases of Eastern life. Our tents were pitched outside the walls of Acre, on the sand by the seashore. It was doubtful whether we could get into the town or not, as flying reports of cholera were producing quite a panic among the people. When we entered at the gate we were instantly stopped by the sentinel, but after some inquiries he permitted us to pass. The town had a dilapidated appearance; in short, it is a strange jumble of bazaars, ruined fortifications and official-looking buildings riddled with shot. This once important place is now sadly fallen into decay. We met a procession which is very common in the East, called the "circumcision festival;" on this occasion, there was also a wedding associated with it, for the purpose, we presume, of saving expense, and making a grander exhibition. The boy was very richly attired, at least there was a great display of gold and silver ornaments and bright colours about his dress. He was mounted on a fine Arabian horse, decked in gay trappings, and led by a groom in holiday attire. A canopy was borne over the head of the girl who was to be married, but she was so enveloped in coverings from head to foot, that she appeared more like a mummy than a bride. It is a wonder to us that she could walk at all, or that on such a hot day she was not suffocated in the process, considering the canopy and the coverings. There was a large attendance of matrons and maidens, some of whom kept fauning

the poor imprisoned girl, whilst several young men occasionally sprinkled the crowd with rose-water. A band of music produced more noise than melody. The procession stopped at intervals, and several men, dressed up for the occasion, went through a variety of sword exercises and gymnastic feats, mingled with the wit and humour of a clown, who did his best to please the spectators.

A man with a very Jewish face, which was certainly very far from being clean, requested us in broken English to follow him into what he called his office. This we gladly did, for the fierce glare of the sun was very trying, and in a little we were seated in a small projecting box of a place, right over the blue waters of the sea. It was a pleasant contrast from the hot and weary street. On expressing a wish for some iced lemonade, he hinted at something much stronger; however we kept by our first proposal, and gave him a sum that was considerably more than requisite to gratify our wishes. He gave the order to some one standing near, dressed in a loose night-gown, with a white vest buttoned over it. The iced water and lemons were brought, and some bits of lump sugar; but our host had pocketed the money, and seemed quite oblivious of all payment, although the man who had brought in all the articles, stood thrusting in his hand from behind a partition where he thought he must be concealed from our view; but we saw the whole affair, as that hand kept pulling at our host's dress for the money which had been laid out in prospect of *immediate payment*. The credit given was to be very brief. The creditor evidently thought from the position he occupied that he was concealed, so his head was next thrust in a certain length from behind, and as fine a pantomime took place as one could possibly desire to see. There were nods, winks, and scowls; and that face assumed almost every possible index of human feeling—the smile of coaxing at one time, and the angry gloom of threats at another. But our host was inexorable; he pretended to hear and to see nothing, and kept hinting to us in broken English, and

in German, that we would be much the better of something stronger. "This one day make very hot." It was as good as a comedy, only the pantomime was all on one side. The creditor knowing his man was determined, like Charlie Napier at the siege of this place, to make a breach at all hazards, so he bawled out in Turkish (words which were equivalent in meaning to the demand), "Pay me the money!" Something was paid after this to keep him quiet behind the screen, but it was a mere tithe of what the Jew had received. The scene, however, was worth three times the money, and even now we cannot think of it without a laugh. And who was this Jew who had invited us to his office? He was the representative of British power and authority. Not an actual consul, but the only apology for one. He had no real official position, but he had come to be recognised in the place, somehow or other, as the guardian of British interests.

He visited us next day in our tent, when Seraphim, the catechist, happened also to be present. A fierce theological discussion took place, the Jew fighting, of course, for Judaism, in the strictest meaning of term, and when he was baffled in argument he tried to beat his opponent by loud and angry speaking, and by personal abuse. The same day we had a visit from some half score of young British tars belonging to a man-of-war anchored in the offing. They had come ashore and were going about the sea-side, when they happened to see the Union Jack floating from the top of our tent-pole. This was enough; they concluded that English friends, whom they had a right to know and to salute, must be living here, so they made for our tent and were about to enter when Achmed stood between them and the door to prevent their admission, and somewhat angrily demanded what they wanted? Jack replied that he had a right, all over the world, to be where the Union Jack was, pointing proudly to the one floating above our tent. Without any further parley one of the tars gently pushed the son of the Prophet aside, and at once introduced himself and

the rest of his companions. They had all the frankness of British seamen, and after a conversation, which they would have prolonged to any extent, they took their departure, giving us a hearty British cheer. This mightily pleased the Jew, as it served to show the natives, he said, what power he had at his back. Was there not a war vessel in the roadstead, and had English seamen not come ashore to honour him with a visit?

We visited a Christian family in Acre, but such is the influence of Eastern feeling and habit that the wife kept closely to her own apartment. This may only be the case when strangers are present, such as we were, but we felt that there was great coldness in that home circle when the wife was constrained to keep her own side of the house, and take a stealthy glance at us as we went away.

Many of the houses still look as if they had been riddled with cannon balls. The enormous fortifications were deemed at one time impregnable, but they could not stand before Charlie Napier's guns in 1840, and the great breach then made in the wall has not yet been repaired. The whole place presents that slovenly appearance so characteristic of Turkish affairs. It was at this port, then called Ptolemais, that the Apostle Paul touched on his way to Jerusalem, in the face of bonds and imprisonment that awaited him there.

It blew rather a heavy gale when we put off, after sunset, in a small boat for a Russian steamer, which had dropped anchor about a quarter of a mile from the shore on its way to Beyrout. It is still a matter of wonder to us how the small boat, nearly sunk to the water's edge with passengers and heavy luggage, ever managed to reach the ship. All, however, were got safely on board, but not without difficulty and risk. The present condition of the harbours all along this ancient line of coast is as bad, if not worse, than the roads in the most neglected parts of the country.

Next morning we steamed into the spacious roadstead of

Beyrout, and on leaving our berth, shortly after sunrise, what a magnificent range of mountain scenery rose before us! Much as we had heard of Lebanon before—for its name is a household word in every Christian home—we were not prepared for such a glorious view. It had not come on us gradually; we had steamed into the bay before getting on deck, and now this mighty mountain mass suddenly stood revealed in all its majesty and grandeur in the bright radiance of the morning sun. When we landed some of the poor people rushed forward to carry our luggage, but certain officials beat them very severely with sticks, giving us a painful recollection of a similar scene which we had witnessed at the railway station at Cairo.

After breakfast the first visit we paid in Beyrout was to the British Syrian Schools, established a few years ago, and so successfully conducted by Mrs. Thompson. In a country where women have been so long degraded beneath the position which they ought to occupy, and where the very idea of giving them education was a thing never dreamt of, these schools have been a marvellous success and a great blessing.

On entering the various rooms we were greatly struck with the neatness, cleanliness, and good order which were at once visible everywhere, even in the midst of building operations. We examined several classes in Bible history, and were delighted at the answers we got in English from the boys and girls who have been taught this language, and who speak it fluently. But what struck us most was their knowledge of the Scriptures, as they could not possibly have had any previous idea as to the questions we would ask, for the examination was not, in any case, the lesson for the day. One boy in particular caught our attention, by the intense eagerness which he manifested, and by the readiness, frequency, and correctness of his answers. By and by this boy cannot fail, with God's blessing, to make an excellent native teacher; indeed he expressed a strong wish that he might yet be sent to Nazareth for this purpose. We were greatly pleased with the staid and attentive

demeanour of all the scholars, especially the more advanced; whilst in the singing of the hymns—


“Just as I am, without one plea,” etc.,

“I heard the voice of Jesus say,” etc.,

we could not fail to observe a deep tone of religious feeling, and we felt convinced that surely the Spirit of God had touched some of these young hearts. At all events they are placed under influences most favourable for piety. Several children were pointed out to us, the expense of whose education at these schools is met by some kind Christian friends at home. One girl interested us very much, who is in this way supported at school by the kindness of a lady belonging to Glasgow. The same good example has been followed in several instances since our return home. One of our friends who was present at our examination of these schools, was so convinced of what he saw of the good they had already accomplished, that he generously undertook to support one at Mokhtara for several years at least. We left these schools with the most pleasing impression that the instruction of these children cannot but form an important element in that process of regeneration which will yet, we believe, make that land, so long trodden down, partake largely in the brightness and beauty of the latter-day glory. This much we believe is certain, that a great and good work is going on at Beyrout and elsewhere in Syria, in connection with the education of the young; and that Mrs. Thompson and those associated with her in this noble enterprise, which at present, on account of large building operations, must entail great expense, are deserving of all encouragement and support. We do not know of any field of Christian effort where good fruit may be more speedily gathered than at these Syrian schools; and we pray God to bless them more and more, and still more and more make them a blessing!

## CHAPTER XIV.

Over the Lebanon. Early Start. Approach to Damascus. Street called "Straight." Paul's Conversion. View of the City from a Neighbouring Height. Richly Decorated Houses. Strange Contrasts. Mode of doing Business. Court of the Hotel Demetri. Christian Quarter. Massacre of 1860. Noble Efforts of Abdel Kader. Dogs of Damascus. Mr. Tristram's Description of the City. Dancing and Howling Dervishes. Inscription on the Great Mosque. Back to Beyrout. Communion Service. On Board the "Austria." Turkish Harem. Cyprus. Harem the Second. Visit to Rhodes. Ancient Street of the Knights. Delightful Sall. Chios. A Tragic Story. Barbarity of the Turks.

HE stage for Damascus (yes, the Lebanon is crossed by a well-appointed "High-flyer!") was announced to start about three o'clock in the morning, so we disappointed the mosquitoes and got up before they were half through with their savage work. Provided with lanterns for the dark streets, we had next to face the dogs, some of which were very fierce. We reached the yard from which the diligence was to start, and got a taste of the old coaching days, in the utter absence of anything like punctuality. The Mohammedan maxim about speed was carried out that morning to a provoking extent; for we might have given the mosquitoes two hours longer to their breakfast, and after all been in good time. But there is a soul of goodness in everything, it is said, and it was certainly better to stroll about that dark yard for two hours under the stars, than to fight for the same length of time with mosquitoes and the whole race of insect biters. At last we got off, when the radiance of the rising sun made Lebanon look like a mighty mass of brightly-burnished gold. The glory fell now on a pine forest, again on terraces of mulberry trees and vines, and lighted up the dark and mysterious recesses of deep ravines, and flashed on populous villages, many of which were most romantically situated on bold projecting cliffs, on the



slopes of deep gorges, on abrupt angles, or in lovely green dells; and when we turned and looked from the height to the sea, and upon Beyrout, stretching away down to the foot of the mighty mountain, and lying on the landscape like a gem in a beautiful setting, we felt the peculiar force of the expression, the "glory of Lebanon."

The road displays great engineering skill, and during the present year a traction steam-engine has been employed for the purpose of conveying goods, if not passengers, between Beyrout and Damascus! There are numerous stages on the way, and at everyone we got out, and enjoyed very much the glorious scenery. At one of these stages we were greatly struck with the appearance of Mount Hermon crowned with snow, and another high mountain with its summit also draped in white. Having reached the crest of Lebanon, we descended into the wide-stretching plain called Cœlo Syria, and before us rose, like a mighty wall, the huge sides of Anti-Lebanon. At length we gain the summit of this, and on coming down on the other side, we get our first glimpse of Damascus—the oldest city in the world—lying in a wide plain, and surrounded by beautiful gardens, with bare chalk cliffs in the background. For some time we follow the course of the river Abana, which Naaman thought was so much better than all the rivers of Israel when he was commanded by the prophet Elisha to go and wash in the Jordan. We enter a long avenue of young trees—the river still sweetly flowing by our side—we cross the bridge and are at last in Damascus, of which the Eastern poet has said—"Though old as history itself, thou art fresh as the breath of spring; blooming as thine own rose-bud, and fragrant as thine orange-flower, O Damascus, pearl of the East!" On our way we passed what is, in all probability, the spot where Paul, then a fierce persecutor, was arrested by a light which shone suddenly around him above the brightness of the sun, and it must have been more than an earthly brightness which exceeded that of a Syrian sun.

Strolling through the street that is still called "Straight," we came upon what is said to be the house of Judas, where Paul spent three days and nights in blindness and anguish of heart, and where he was brought to his knees—"Behold, he prayeth." We were attracted to the house by bits of rags, strings, and ribbons attached to the window bars, and to every part of the wall to which such things could be fastened. These were left by pilgrims, much in the same spirit which prompts some people to leave their initials on a memorial tree or ancient ruin. It was in this city that Paul first preached the glad tidings of salvation, and it was here he had such a narrow escape from his enraged enemies, to which he refers in these words, "In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands." This window in the old wall is still pointed out, and as we stood under it and looked up we saw in fancy the basket let down which held the man whose teaching was to stir the world to its depths. Notwithstanding the great antiquity of this city, going back into the mists of a very remote period—for we read that Eliezer, the faithful servant of Abraham, belonged to it—and notwithstanding the stirring events in its wondrous history, and the long array of illustrious names associated with it, the conversion of this one man in the street called "Straight" has had a greater influence on the destiny of the world than all the other names connected with Damascus.

Like all other cities in the East, it is seen to best advantage at some distance. Ascend a neighbouring height crowned by a wely or tomb, and your eye will rest upon one of the most remarkable landscapes in the world. Rich gardens fill the plain below, presenting a striking contrast to the rugged cliffs and the bare hill sides that overlook the city. Seen from this point, Damascus is really worthy of the name given to it by the Eastern poet, "the pearl of the East," for it is surrounded

by gardens which, if not trimly kept, are at least amazingly fruitful, bright with blossoms in the spring, and with all kinds of luscious fruit in the summer. This impression however, if it does not entirely vanish, is greatly modified the moment you get into the crowded parts of the city. The first day we spent in it the rain came down in torrents, till some of the narrow streets became so many canals, and it was most amusing to see the donkeys and their riders plunging in these, amid all kinds of fetid offal. It is a city of the strangest and most unseemly contrasts, as for example, you see everywhere marks of great taste and slovenly neglect; beautiful fountains and shocking filth; houses, the interior of which are unrivalled for splendour, but before you can get to the entrance you must wade ankle-deep through gutters. We visited some private houses belonging to wealthy Greeks and Jews, and the interior decorations of these were truly wonderful. The marble floors of rich mosaic work—the walls and ceilings decorated with arabesques and tracery in foliage and flowers—the highly artistic fountains in the courts, with gold fish darting about in the murmuring waters, kept cool by the overhanging branches of the orange trees, and by various kinds of flowering shrubs—appeared to us to be the very perfection of taste and of the beautiful in art; but, then, a few yards from these, on the outside, were heaps of filth and offal, and, ten to one, dead dogs floating in the gutters, which the rain had swollen. One of these beautiful houses was occupied by a wealthy old Jew. When we entered, he was taking his siesta in a little chamber off the court. The porter of the house conducted us to his master, and made known to him our wish to see some apartments in his dwelling. His face reminded us of Shylock, and he simply made a motion with his hand, to intimate we were welcome. In this house the workmanship in marble excelled anything we had ever seen. Next morning we found the same old Jew sitting in a corner of a small shabby apartment, in what seems to be the Exchange of the city, bent on making money. Several merchants, anxious

for business, accosted us on the streets, and requested us to walk into their rooms—not in the bazaars—but in connection with their own private dwellings, and inspect the different articles which they had for sale. These were generally the richest and the most fanciful products of the Eastern loom. Every day before we had finished our dinner at the Hotel Demetri, so called from the name of its owner, a Greek, we were waited upon by a dealer in jewellery and all kinds of strange nick-nacks, and his tempting wares were duly spread with the dessert for the inspection of the company. That dealer's house was a strange museum of swords, daggers, and various kinds of firearms; a perfect medley, also, of female ornaments of every description, and shawls and slippers in endless variety. When he came to the hotel after dinner, he was a sort of an itinerant epitome of all the bazaars in the city. In these you may find Damascus blades; gold-embroidered robes so stiff that they can stand alone fit for wearing only in the East; jewelled daggers and scimitars, and strange-looking firearms of the olden time, heavy with ornamentation, lying in splendid confusion amid glittering piles of Syrian silks; shawls from Persia and Cashmere; slippers wrought in gold; and printed calicoes from Manchester and Glasgow.

The court of the hotel was a pretty little bit of Damascus life. A beautiful fountain occupied the centre, where pure water from the river was kept constantly flowing. The side of the basin, in which gold fishes disported themselves, was fringed with beautiful flowers, while a few orange trees kept the place delightfully cool. Madam walked about in her high pattens in the morning, and saw that everything was scrupulously clean. It was a pity that her excellent housewife abilities did not extend to the narrow dirty streets outside. Damascus is about the best watered city we have ever seen, for everywhere the Abana is turned to good service, either in fountains, which are very numerous, or in small streams which are led off from the river, and the sweet murmur of clear water is heard every-

where. Damascus should therefore be the cleanest city in the world, but strange to say all this fine flow of water, and some 80,000 dogs to boot, fail to keep it in anything like a sanitary condition.

The population is said to be about 150,000. This is divided as follows:—Mohammedans, 129,000; Christians, 15,000; Jews, 6000. The principal manufactures of the city are rich silks, which are exported to Egypt and Persia, and coarse woollen cloth, worn by the peasants and the Bedouins. About 500 looms for the production of rich silk fabrics, the property of the Christians, were all destroyed during the massacre of 1860. Many of the houses were burned, and when we visited the Christian quarter the blackened walls of the roofless houses were still standing in several places, furnishing a sad testimony to the ruthless character of Moslem fanaticism. That quarter still bears a melancholy and desolate aspect. In 1860 about 6000 helpless and unoffending men, women, and children were cruelly put to death; many were struck down when working at their looms, and their dwellings set on fire. Many more would have fallen but for the efforts of Abdel Kader, the Algerian chief, who, although a descendant of the Prophet, sheltered hundreds of the Christians in his own house, and bravely stood between them and the furious mob, when they clamorously demanded their lives. He kept the blood-thirsty fanatics at bay, and succeeded in allaying a storm which might have been much more destructive. Mounted on his fine Arabian, one of the purest breed, with a party of his faithful Algerines behind him, who had followed him in all his fortunes, and who were armed to the teeth, it is said he addressed the furious crowd, already drunk with blood, in the following words:—“Wretches! is this the way in which you honour the Prophet? May his curses be upon you! Shame upon you, shame! You will yet live to repent. You think you may do as you like with the Christians, but the day of retribution will come. The Franks will yet turn your mosques into churches.

Not a Christian will I give up; they are my brothers. Stand back, or I will give my men the order to fire." The flames of Moslem hatred for a time were quenched. The crowd dispersed; not a man of them durst raise his hand against one who is regarded as a lineal descendant of the Prophet.

We visited the great mosque, which was built in early times as a Christian temple. It happened to be near the mid-day hour of prayer, and we were compelled to make our visit brief. When we were standing on the *madnêh* of the minaret, the muezzin, a blind man, came up to call the faithful to their devotions. It was Friday, and they were flocking into the mosque. Several fakirs stood in the vestibule, and the scowling looks which they gave us unmistakably showed that a fire of bitter hatred was smouldering within, which a spark might kindle into fury any day. The dogs in certain quarters did not seem to have any better feelings towards the Franks. Additional force was now given to the words of the Apostle, "Beware of dogs." We found this caution especially needful in Damascus. They pick up offal in the gutters, prowl and snarl amongst your feet, always with a cowed and suspicious look, sleep even in the midst of the thoroughfares, where the mules and donkeys walk over them, and when night comes down, they howl and whine about the streets, and maintain a series of fights on their respective beats. This was the case in the days of the Psalmist, for when describing the movements of wicked men, he says:—"They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city." Nothing amongst the canine tribe in the East is to be heard like the honest bark of the faithful house dog, when he gives a cheerful welcome to his master on his return home.

We can fully endorse every word in Mr. Tristram's graphic description of Damascus:—

"Yet, after the first dazzling effect had worn off, it was rather a disappointing place. Much filth, endless tortuous streets, miserable exteriors, sumptuous palaces, bustling, shabby, but

rich bazaars, repulsive smells, and piteous ruins,—these make up the Damascus of to-day.

“In the city we were taken to visit one of the wealthiest houses. After picking our way over heaps of offal, stepping over dead dogs, and kicking aside living ones, through a loathsome dark lane, we turned up a narrow entry, and were admitted at a small door. This led into a crypt-like, vaulted antechamber, through which we passed, and turning round, found ourselves on a sudden in a marble open court, in the centre of which was a fountain, surrounded by exotic trees. All round the court were rooms; and in the centre of each side an open chamber, or large alcove, up two or three steps, with a little marble fountain playing in front, and silk ottomans, work tables, and easy chairs behind. The roofing of these alcoves and the walls were marvellous in their elaborate workmanship and colouring,—the whole one mass of carved and gilded arabesque. The flooring was marble, the walls up to the wainscot marble, in elaborate mosaic patterns. Each room had a fountain in its centre, and was furnished with silk ottomans all round, lavishly strewn with brocade and silken cushions. A gallery ran round above, in front of the up-stairs rooms, which were similarly arranged. Such was probably a Jewish house in the palmy days of the monarchy. Yet in all this lavish decoration, this Oriental splendour and luxury, there was nothing to feed or occupy the mind, nothing to assist social intercourse—neither books, nor music, nor paintings—nothing, in fact, beyond good taste and polished barbarism.”\*

Whilst sitting one evening with Mr. Rogers, the British Consul, who showed us no small kindness, he said, “You must go to-morrow and see the dancing Dervishes, and on the following day, the howling Dervishes.” Our curiosity was excited; so next day shortly after noon we set out to visit the former. Their quarters are finely situated in a garden, through which flows a stream of pure water, one of the many offshoots from

\* “The Land of Israel,” pp. 612, 613.

the Abana. On our arrival, we found that we had come too soon, and had, therefore, to wait for a time—indeed, till our patience was nearly exhausted. The chief of the sect, an elderly, good-looking man, was in an adjoining apartment, and he ordered a mat to be spread for us on a wooden bench. Coffee was provided, and when he saw that we were getting impatient, he sent to inform us that the service, or rather, we might say, the performance, was just about to begin. We observed that all the Dervishes very carefully washed their feet in the runlet of water, according to the practice of all true Moslems, before commencing their devotions.

When all the preparations were complete, we proceeded to the mosque. It was unlike any other building of the kind that we had seen. There was a gallery, where a band of musicians were seated, with a set of very simple instruments, conspicuous amongst which was the darabuka, or drum. In the area there was a circular space railed off, like the ring of a circus. The spectators stood on the outside of this, whilst the inside was occupied by the Dervishes, who were now preparing to begin the real work of the day. Instead of turbans, they wore long funnel-shaped hats, very rough and shaggy, as if made of coarse wool. At length the sheikh, or chief of the community, appeared at a corner of the ring, bearing a sheepskin and a piece of carpet, which were regarded with great veneration. These were laid down upon the floor, and all, with very guarded steps, moved warily around them. The sheikh stood at the edge of these mysterious articles, and every one of the performers came forward and kissed him in succession, and the whirling began, accompanied with music from the gallery. About twenty performers were on the floor at a time, and although the space was limited, not one came into collision with another. They were dressed in tightly-fitting jackets and white skirts, the latter, when the wearers stood, hung loosely about their limbs, but when the whirling began these expanded, and filled up all the space in the ring. The movements, however,



were all so accurately made, and the respective distances so well kept, that not a single skirt came into contact with another. The music became fast and furious, and so did the whirling, which, notwithstanding the increased rapidity, was very gracefully done. Both arms were somewhat extended, the eyes closed, and the head slightly inclined to the one side. Some faces actually assumed a sort of ecstatic appearance, as if the whirler was lost in some delightful reverie. The sheikh occasionally made a few turns on the floor, but his exertions were nothing compared with those of his followers. We half expected to see some of them drop down in a fit, or in a fainting condition. On a certain signal being given, the whirling suddenly stopped. Some of the Dervishes were streaming with perspiration, but not one of them appeared to be giddy. This first set retired and made way for another, who went through the same formalities of very warily walking round the mysterious bit of carpet and sheepskin, and kissed the sheikh. This whirling was carried on by successive relays for more than an hour, when the service was declared to be at an end.

In this brief and imperfect description we have omitted many minor and minute details; but such are the general outlines of this strange sight. There was, at least, method in the madness, and the whole affair was much more graceful and decorous than we had expected. There were occasional chantings, prostrations, brief prayers, and an immense amount of whirling, and this is a Mohammedan service. That afternoon, when making a few purchases in one of the largest stores in the city, we at once recognised the owner of it, as one of the Dervishes whom we had seen performing but a short time before. Some of the principal traders in Damascus, we are told, belong to this sect of the Moslems.

Next day we went to see the howling Dervishes in a different part of the city. When we entered their court, about fifty men were going through a performance similar to that which we had witnessed at Gaza. Holding each other by the hand

they formed a circle, and kept swaying their bodies backwards and forwards, sometimes by rapid jerks up and down. The words, which the whole of them uttered at once, seemed to come from the depths of the chest. It was violent exertion, and some of them continued at it till their faces became livid, and their eyes were like to start from their sockets. A half-naked wild-looking fellow, toothless and grinning all over, the most powerful dervish in the whole company, lay dozing in a corner of the court, with a huge wooden sword by his side. At a certain point in the performance he startled us by springing to his feet, and brandishing aloft his powerful weapon, to which several small chains that made a rattling noise were attached. He was in a state of frenzy, foaming at the mouth and uttering the most unearthly yells. We regarded him as a dangerous maniac, and kept out of his way as far as we could. But all this fury was looked upon as a sort of inspiration, a divine afflatus, by the rest of his companions, whilst some few gently attempted to soothe him. In a short time we had seen and heard quite enough, but they were anxious we should return in a few hours, when, as another part of their religious services, they would cut themselves with knives, thrust skewers into their bodies, and eat broken bits of glass! It is very astonishing what these dervishes do in this way, but we were not anxious by any means to put them to the test, so did not go back. We had no desire to see an exhibition similar to that of the priests of Baal, when, in their desperation, they cut themselves with knives and lances. From all that we heard of this strange sect, we felt inclined to regard them as in some respects identified with the practices of these ancient priests.

Strange enough, when we visited the Great Mosque we did not observe the famous inscription in Greek above the principal entrance. We were hurried at the time, as the hour of prayer had arrived. Our presence then would have been an intrusion, and might have been resented in a way not very agreeable.

The truth is, we were not aware that such an inscription was to be seen, and it was too much to expect that a dragoman or a local guide (we were provided with both) would ever think of calling our attention to such a thing, even had they known of its existence. It was therefore with some degree of chagrin, when we were just about to leave Damascus, we were informed that we had missed one of the most interesting relics of antiquity in the whole city. It was early in the morning, and the "Diligence" was about to start, but knowing the power the old maxim about speed being from Satan has upon the oriental mind, we set off to the Great Mosque and saw this celebrated Greek inscription. The following is a translation :—

"Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations."

These words point at once to the fact that this noble structure, nearly as large as the Mosque of Omar, though wanting its splendour and interest, was in early times a Christian temple, in which the glad tidings of salvation through a crucified Redeemer were proclaimed; and may these very words not be regarded as a prophetic announcement, standing there in spite of all Moslem fanaticism, that the time is coming when "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God" shall yet be proclaimed within these very walls, and this and all other lands shall own Christ as their Lord and King.

Full of these pleasing anticipations we found our way back to the "Diligence," and had still half-an-hour to wait till the "time was up," although, according to announcement, this should have been nearly two hours before.

We had another pleasant ride over the Lebanon, and were even more struck than before with its glorious scenery. We reached Beyrout in the evening, and received another hearty welcome from Basool, our worthy landlord, who was more than obliging, and this is saying a great deal, but no more than he deserves. Next morning the Rev. Mr. Robertson, the esteemed minister in connection with the Church of Scotland, waited

upon us and requested us to take part in the communion service which was to be held that morning—a request with which we were but too glad to comply. It was a deeply interesting service—a gathering of Christian friends from many lands—an Evangelical Alliance on a small scale, but in the best sense of that term. All sectional differences were forgotten in the warmth of Christian affection around the common table of our Lord. It was good for us all to be there. We had another opportunity of meeting with Mrs. Thompson and her relatives, Mr. and Mrs. Mentor Mott, who have done so much for Syria in the education of the young. It afforded us also great pleasure to meet with several esteemed friends from America, Dr. Bliss and Dr. Thomson, the author of “The Land and the Book,” who are labouring in the same direction with great devotion.

So many rumours were afloat about quarantine that we were obliged to leave Beyrout much sooner than we had intended. Fearing lest we might be detained for weeks, we sailed in the “Austria” for Constantinople, Ibrahim, Achmed, Mohammed, and our good old friend Mustapha, the cook, accompanying us to the ship. He promised to “boil water” if ever we should return and take him again. We were not long on board till we discovered that we were sailing with a Turkish hareem, consisting of some five or six wives, two little girls belonging to the same mother, and a number of female servants, one of whom was a Nubian, with a face as black as a sloe. A considerable portion of the lower deck was screened off for their special use, but it was not easy to secure entire concealment on board ship, so that we had occasional glimpses of the interior life of this peculiar institution. With the exception of one, who was probably wife the first, and who was “fat, fair, and forty,” the rest were young and handsome. One, we were told, was a Circassian, very beautiful, and dressed in a superior style to the rest, but she seemed either to be sea-sick or homesick, for she kept always by herself, in utter silence, and never

joined in any of their frolics. Piles of quilts and pillows were spread upon their portion of the deck, and on these they reclined the whole day long in utter indolence, smoking cigarettes, eating sweetmeats, sipping coffee, or having some little childish frolic with one another, in which the Nubian slave was certain to play a prominent part. It was a life of sheer inanity and indolence—as near the merely vegetating process as possible. Not one of them could read or write, so that not a single book was to be seen, not a needle, not a crochet-pin, no fancy work of any kind. The lolling process on the quilts was occasionally varied by a standing posture, when they would look for half-an-hour or more over the bulwarks of the ship into the sparkling waters. The paterfamilias of this establishment was an elderly Turk, tall and spare, and with a face of imperturbable gravity. It was understood that he held an important government situation at Constantinople. He spent his time chiefly on the quarter-deck playing at chess and backgammon, smoking, and drinking coffee. He never was seen speaking to one of his wives. They never approached him, nor was he ever seen to pay the slightest attention to any of their wants. They seemed to be wholly entrusted to the care of a confidential servant, or house-steward, of the name of Hadji—a title which implied that he had made a pilgrimage to Mecca. He was a good-natured fellow, and wished to cultivate our acquaintance, but our means of communication were limited to half a score of words. There was quite a scene took place at Cyprus, which served to vary a little the monotonous life of the hareem. We arrived very early in the morning, before any of the passengers were astir. Paterfamilias had gone ashore, and when the schoolmaster is out the children will have play. We were awakened by the merry clatter of female voices, and greatly to our surprise, on getting on deck, we found that the whole hareem had broken loose, with the exception of the Circassian, and were all on the quarter-deck looking at Hadji, who was swimming round the ship. They were

clapping their hands and screaming with delight, like so many children, as they followed Hadji, who seemed to be a great favourite amongst them, in all his movements, throwing biscuits at him, which he dexterously picked up. Seldom have we seen a more expert swimmer. Sometimes he would dive under the keel of the vessel, and come up on the other side. The aquatic sports lasted for about half an hour, and no children were ever more amused than were the members of the hareem that morning, in the absence of their lord and master. They were all scrupulously screened and penned when he returned, and we never saw them let loose again. That scene at Cyprus, however, was not in keeping with our previous notions as to female reserve in the East. It is for the most part a matter of unnatural constraint, which tends to destroy the instinctive purity of a true woman's heart. What a poor, pitiful, empty life, and what an utter degradation of woman! But perhaps we should, in justice, add that we had only a glimpse of this life on shipboard, where it could not be seen to advantage, if there is indeed a brighter side of the picture.

The "Austria" dropped anchor about a quarter of a mile from the shore, and we landed along with a few more of the passengers at Larnica, a town which, as seen from the deck, in point of situation, reminded us of Rothesay. We were now on Cyprus, where that "good man" Barnabas had an estate; where the "old disciple" Mnason lived; and where Elymas the sorcerer endeavoured to interrupt the work of Paul in his mission of mercy, and was struck with blindness. It is a lovely island, but spoiled by the mismanagement of the Turks. Under the Venetians the population amounted to one million; at present it is only about one hundred and fifty thousand, the great majority being Greeks. We sauntered about the streets of Larnica, visited the church of St. John, and went into one of the best conducted schools that we saw during the whole of our journey. The teacher kept excellent order, and from the

system he pursued, he could not fail to produce good scholars. Appropriate texts of Scripture in the Greek language, printed on cloth, and in large type, were hung all round the apartment.

On getting to the ship, we found that the Turkish pater-familias had returned; all his gazelles were under canvas, and Hadji was assiduously attending to their wants. Another Turkish gentleman with his hareem had come on board at Cyprus, so that we had now two establishments representing the peculiar domestic institution of the East, and consisting of fully a score of women, wives and female servants included. Another portion of the deck, close to the former enclosure, was screened off for this addition to our number. The seclusion of the ladies on the day after leaving Cyprus became much more rigid than before, but we saw enough to convince us that the poor creatures had no amusements, no elevating influence higher than mere childish drivel, and that their life was one of painful restraint, inanity and utter indolence. The two worthies who were at the head of these establishments seemed to be inseparable. They sat for hours together on the quarter-deck amusing themselves with a variety of sluggish games, but we never saw them pay the slightest attention by word or deed of any kind to their wives or servants. We could not help contrasting the condition of these poor creatures with that of an amiable and accomplished Greek lady, who paced the deck with her husband arm in arm, enjoying the delightful sail and the pleasant converse. They were all the world to each other. Woman, certainly, is not much indebted to the Koran. More than once we observed the two Turkish worthies stop their games, take their bearings towards Mecca, spread their carpets on the deck, and go through their devotions, no matter who was looking on. There seems to be no necessity for this on the part of woman. As to any religious observance, she occupies a very equivocal position; at all events, we never saw a woman in a mosque.

On reaching the island of Rhodes we went ashore, and spent

a few hours strolling through the chief town, which bears the same name. The effects of the severe earthquakes to which this famous island has been frequently subjected were everywhere visible. The shattered towers at the place where we landed, bore painful testimony to this. It was within two hours of sunset when the gates would be shut, so we made the most of our limited time by procuring a guide, who conducted us to the chief places of interest. We went up the silent and deserted street where the ancient knights once lived. The armorial bearings of each order of knighthood, cut in marble, are still to be seen above the doors, with various other devices. The street is so oppressively silent, so utterly deserted, that fancy sets to work at once and conjures up the past. The Ritter Strasse, to our imagination, was again filled with armed knights. We heard, as it were, the clash of their arms, the tramp of their horses' feet, the sound of the trumpet, and saw the gay banners floating in the breeze. What a place this would have been for the genius of Sir Walter Scott! There was, indeed, one little flag, with red and blue stripes, and on inquiry we were told a Dervish lived there. He was not at home, but the wife came out and got a baksheesh. There seemed to be very few tenants in the whole street. It was ancient grandeur falling into the depths of silence, solitude, and decay. The church of St. John was completely thrown to the ground, the stones lying about in the utmost confusion. Our guide informed us that it was laid in ruins by an explosion of gunpowder which took place a few years ago. When the knights were resident here, they had carefully concealed a large quantity of gunpowder in some vault, and the inhabitants were altogether ignorant of this. During a severe storm this cell was struck by lightning. A fearful explosion followed, and the magnificent church of the knights, which had been latterly used as the principal mosque, was utterly demolished. Our guide showed us in various places the terrible havoc occasioned by a recent earthquake, when many lives were lost



and much property destroyed. The sun was sinking in the west, and we had to make for the gate ere it was closed for the night. On our way to it we observed everywhere tokens of departed greatness. The bazaars were still open, though nearly deserted, and we made a few purchases as mementoes of our visit. On reaching the gate, many people were sitting outside, along the base of the wall, smoking and sipping coffee. We spent all the remaining daylight in a beautiful garden, full of delicious fruit, especially mish-mish, or apricots, of which we took a large supply on board for future use.

We never expect to have more enjoyment in the way of sailing than we had for a day or two after leaving Rhodes, and where we passed one famous island after another so celebrated in ancient song and story. The bare, rugged sides of Samos reminded us of Skye. It was startling to hear such names as Samos, Coos, Chios, Icaria, Halicarnassus, and Patmos. It was with special interest that we gazed upon the latter till it was lost to view in the shades of evening. When passing the island of Chios, which claimed to be the birthplace of Homer—"the old blind man of Scio's rocky isle"—we went on deck, and when strolling about observed two of the passengers, a Greek gentleman and his wife, looking most intently at the island. It was very evident that both were deeply moved. We found them most agreeable companions, and on taking a seat beside them in the beautiful moonlight, the gentleman, in a subdued and solemn tone of voice, informed us of the cause of his emotion. Pointing to the island, he said—"That was my home, my birthplace, but I have not been there since I was two years of age." He told a touching story, which made a deep impression on all who heard it. His father had been a merchant, and was most successful in business, whilst the mother, endowed with a rare combination of virtues, had made their home singularly happy. Previous to the year 1822, the island had enjoyed great prosperity, and the peaceful inhabitants, contented and happy, had no desire whatever to embroil

themselves in the revolution which then took place, and which ended in the establishment of the kingdom of Greece. In the spring of 1822 a number of Samians landed on the island, and either persuaded or forced the inhabitants to join the insurrection. It has been already proved that the Chians had no wish for any change in their political condition; but the Turks had long regarded their great prosperity with envy, and now that they had got some pretext for resorting to violence they subjected this beautiful island to the horrors of a massacre unparalleled for its barbarity in modern, or perhaps even in ancient times. An army of Moslem fanatics landed on the island, and the work of indiscriminate butchery began. Within two months 25,000 Chians had fallen by the edge of the sword, and 45,000 were dragged into slavery. In about six months, out of a population of 110,000 only 2000 were left. "When the massacre took place," said our friend, "my father was from home on business. My mother, and all the members of the family in the house at the time, fled for their lives. A faithful female servant ran off with me to the mountains, and got separated from the rest of the household. For two nights that domestic lay concealed with me in the woods, and at last succeeded in finding the rest of the family. We all escaped to a neighbouring island, from which, with difficulty, we got to England. Since that I have never had a foot on Chios, but intend to sail for it as soon as we reach Smyrna."

There was little wonder that both our friend and his lady should be deeply affected on looking at this island. He had been very fortunate. God had been a father to the fatherless, and had raised up for him kind helpers in England, who sent him to one of the excellent schools in connection with the Society of Friends. There he received a first-class education, and ultimately rose to represent a large commercial firm in the East Indies, where he had been residing for several years. He had made what he regarded as a competency for life, and was now travelling in the East with his excellent and accomplished

lady, whom we also took to be a Greek. It was a deeply affecting story, but doubly so as told by him in the beautiful moonlight, and in the immediate neighbourhood of the island itself. There is nothing more tragic in all the pages of Homer than the tale of woe to which we listened that evening on the quarter-deck of the "Austria," as the mountains of Chios rose before us and the lights on the shore glimmered in the distance.

## CHAPTER XV.

Gulf of Smyrna. Quarantine. Unnecessary Alarm. Niobe in Tears. View of Smyrna. Field of Troy. Lazaretto of Abydos. Cold Reception. Strange Medley. Uncomfortable Quarters. Insect Population. First Night of Quarantine. Russian Pilgrims. Slave Market. Scene at Bathing. The Doctor's Difficulties. Babel Renewed. Sabbath Services. All Nations Represented. Melancholy Thoughts. Free Once More. A Bit of Doggerel. Visit to Dardanelles. Immense Guns. Off to Constantinople. Magnificent View of the City. Shores of the Bosphorus. Scutari. Scene at the "Sweet Waters." Bazaars. Princes Islands. Farewell to Stamboul. Disappointment at Athens. Homeward Bound.



WHEN steaming up the Gulf of Smyrna, that arm of the sea set in the midst of beautiful scenery, and just when we had matured our plans, as we thought, for visiting some of the seven churches of Asia, we were quite taken aback one morning, very early, with the announcement that we must go into quarantine. Sure enough steam was let off, and our good ship, the "Austria," had dropped anchor. The captain and all the officers were fine specimens of hearty, honest Germans. Never have we felt more at home on board ship than we did on the "Austria," with the frank, obliging, genial-hearted captain and his brother officers, all men of kindred spirit, who stood in favourable contrast with the official hauteur and assumed dignity we had met elsewhere. On getting on deck the captain informed us that shortly after midnight, when within a few miles of Smyrna, he was obliged to stop and put back, but that he intended to try again. Accordingly the anchor was lifted and we steamed up the gulf in the bright sunshine of a lovely morning, and in the midst of scenery unsurpassed for placid beauty. We had only proceeded a few miles, when on passing an official-looking building, a small boat bearing the ominous yellow flag at the

bow put out, and the quarantine officer demanded where we came from. Our captain replied, "Trieste." It was at this point in the gulf where we had been stopped during the night, but strange to say, we were now permitted to pass and proceed at once to Smyrna. The small boat with the yellow flag pulled back to the shore, and the captain and officers enjoyed a hearty laugh and rubbed their hands with glee at the success of their password. It was indeed true that the "Austria" had sailed from "Trieste" *at the outset* of the voyage, but since that she had touched at Alexandria where cholera had broken out, and all vessels coming from that port were placed under quarantine. The success of "Trieste" was but of short duration, for when we lay to, about a mile from Smyrna, another yellow flag made its appearance—fussy-looking officials came on board—our ship's papers were demanded and examined, when it was seen that we had touched at Alexandria—this was enough, we were ordered into fifteen days' quarantine. This we thought most unreasonable, as no case of cholera had occurred till after the "Austria" had left Egypt. All on board were in excellent health, as the ship's surgeon testified. He never had less to do during any voyage, so that he could really bring in an excellent bill of health. The captain, too, pled our cause with great fervour, but all this availed nothing to the administrative wisdom of the quarantine officials. Our plans were all upset. Ephesus and other places of interest vanished from these like a dissolving view. Letters and parcels of books, entrusted to us by friends in Beyrout for parties in Smyrna had all to be sent ashore. The case of a lady on board, who was accompanied with a pretty little girl, her daughter, was very hard. She belonged to Smyrna; had been absent several weeks at the marriage of a relative somewhere on the Lebanon, and was now returning home. She had not lately been near Egypt any more than ourselves. Her distress was great when she saw from the deck her own dwelling on the shore, but was not permitted to land. Her husband and some other members of her

family came from the town in a small boat, but they were not allowed within speaking distance. An affecting pantomime took place, so much so that we were glad when it was over for the poor lady's sake, who was hysterically frantic at times, and when the violent emotion subsided she stood like Niobe, dissolved in tears. As for ourselves we sat on deck in rather a squeamish state of mind, notwithstanding the glorious panorama that lay spread before us—the city, in the form of a crescent, stretching from the shore up the hill like an amphitheatre—minarets glittering here and there, and large spaces where the tall dark cypresses stood out in striking contrast against the bright blue sky. These, with the houses, domes, minarets, and towers formed a beautiful picture.

The summit of the hill is crowned with a castle, said to be built on the site of the ancient church, and where tradition affirms Polycarp suffered martyrdom. We can say nothing of the interior of the town, but report affirms that its narrow, tortuous streets are very dirty and unhealthy. As seen from the bay, few towns have a finer or a more picturesque appearance. Its population is estimated at about 150,000, and its trade, especially in fruits, is very considerable. During the fruit season long strings of camels may be seen entering the town from all parts of Asia, and the whole place is then full of stir and bustle. Figs, raisins, and every kind of oriental fruit, as well as silk, cotton, sugar, indigo, opium, and skins, are exported in great quantities. Some idea of the extent of its trade may be gathered from the following statistics:—The number of vessels that entered the harbour in 1855 was 1805, tonnage, 420,438; those that cleared, 1771, tonnage, 411,157, exclusive of the steam navigation. Steamers ply to Constantinople, Marseilles, Malta, and other ports in the Mediterranean.

The quarantine officers had decided that all on board our ship should spend the term of fifteen days in tents on a bare island, without the shelter of a tree; but, at the urgent remonstrances of the captain and surgeon, it was ultimately

agreed that the time should be spent at Abydos on the Hellespont. We pled hard, in the name of our party, to be allowed to remain on shipboard, and the surgeon and the captain did all they could on our behalf, but in vain. A quarantine officer came on board to see that all the regulations were carried out, and under his superintendence we sailed for the Dardanelles towards the evening of a lovely day. The hills to our left, in the radiance of departing day, seemed like velvet of a deep purple. If a glorious sunset and a most beautiful landscape could have brightened our prospects, our enjoyment at the time, and our hopes for the morrow, would have been of the most delightful character; but all our arrangements for extending our journey had been upset, and from all that we had heard of Lazaretto life, we felt convinced that we were going into "durance vile." Next day we reached the Dardanelles, and however gloomy our forebodings might be, the scenery was truly grand. The plain of Troy was at no great distance, but notwithstanding all the classical interest attached to this famous place which Homer has immortalised, there was more interest felt and expressed as to the whereabouts of the Lazaretto than about the scenes of those ancient struggles of which the world has heard so much. Fort Europe was passed on the one side, and Fort Asia on the other, then the town of Dardanelles; and in a little we saw to our right, close upon the shore, a low-lying square of one-storey wooden houses, with red-tiled roofs, and with a bare and utterly blind wall facing the sea. The monotony of the dead wall was indeed somewhat relieved by a house of two storeys in the centre, at the entrance. This was the Lazaretto of Abydos, and it had anything but a pleasant look. It was built, we were told, during the Crimean war, as an hospital—hurriedly got up for sick and wounded soldiers.

An immense number of steerage passengers were on board the "Austria," many of whom were Mohammedan and Christian pilgrims returning home, and who must have been very

sparing of soap and water for many weeks. All were put out in small boats. The two Turkish gentlemen were very fussy about their hareems, reminding us of the movements of a hen when, greatly to her surprise, the ducklings she has just hatched take to the water, and she runs about in helpless consternation and terror. We were the last to leave the ship, as we still cherished some lingering hope that we might be allowed to remain on board, and complete our term of quarantine there, but the health officer was inexorable, and all our party were obliged to turn out with the rest. On stepping ashore from the little boat, we observed a short, thick-set, waddling Turk, with a tarboosh, and immensely wide trousers which would have held a winter's supply of potatoes for a small family. He had a long white wand in his hand, and when we were told by the captain that he was the highest official in the place—a sort of pasha—we approached him with the view of making ourselves agreeable, and so offered to shake hands; but the Turkish Falstaff started back several feet, as if to avoid the thrust of a rapier, and held out his rod to keep us at arm's length. We were quite unprepared for this sudden manifestation of alarm. He shook his head, rolled his eyes upwards, shrugged his shoulders, raised his hands, with all the fingers widely extended to their utmost in the form of a fan, and the palms turned towards us in the most imploring manner. Every finger, every feature of his face, every gesture of his little thick-set body, every harsh guttural he uttered, was an urgent command for us to keep at a distance. Never did we experience till that moment what must be the feelings of a poor leper or plague-smitten wretch when he is shunned by all. We of course had the plague spot, or at least were suspected, and we must not come any nearer. On better acquaintance with this official, we named him Pasha Waddler. Our period of confinement (fifteen days) must have reduced his weight very considerably, as he was obliged to step out a little more sharply than usual. Several subordinates, who acted as guards, and who also went



about constantly with rods in their hands, were associated with him in the management of the place.

We turned from the pasha, not in the most pleasing state of mind, to the heavy wooden gate, like a jail door, facing the sea. On passing through this and then another gate, our heart rather sank within us when we saw the nature of the accommodation, which was not only limited but wretched in the extreme. Half a score of passengers, in many instances, were thrust into one small hut. We looked round to take stock of the place, and it was a strange sight, for almost every nation under heaven was represented there. Everyone had come ashore carrying something. Much of the luggage had a very ludicrous appearance, and the various costumes were quite a study. The "Austria" was the first ship put in quarantine for the season. She had soon a companion in tribulation; for shortly after we had arrived a Russian vessel was also detained, and her passengers joined us, thus increasing the number of inmates to between five and six hundred, when there was not accommodation for the half of that number. The passengers from the Russian vessel were mostly pilgrims, and many of them were in a wretchedly filthy condition.

The one-storey wooden huts were built round the enclosed space in the form of a square. There might have been to each of these a cheerful look-out to the sea, but instead of this there was a long dead wall. The small windows were grated, and they all looked into the court upon a mass of tangled weeds which reached higher than our knees, and through which we had to make footpaths by treading them down. These prickly weeds were in a withered and decaying state, and had a most sickening smell. It was evident that the place had been opened at a moment's notice, and nothing had been done to put it in anything like a cleanly condition. Any consideration as to comfort was quite out of the question. It was opened just as it had been left some twelve or fifteen months ago, and that must have been filthy in the extreme. There was not the slightest

semblance of any article of furniture in the small apartment, which we were but too happy to secure by the payment of a pretty round sum, even for the bare floor and walls. Two American friends, who joined us at Beyrout, occupied another corner across the passage. The Greek gentleman and his lady happily secured a third. As our room was the largest, it was agreed that this company of six should dine together in it, for the sake of more space and friendly intercourse. But where was the dining-table? There was not one in the whole place. This was no inconvenience whatever to a Turk or an Arab, or to any Oriental, but not so to any one brought up with Western ideas of living. Necessity is the mother of invention. We got a few planks, the window sill did for a support at the one end, and a mason's trestle, which was much about the same height, served the purpose of legs at the other. The question never occurred to us till our table was erected where our meals were to come from. It was well we had dined before leaving the vessel, for there was no food to be had in the Lazaretto that night. After all this was no great hardship. Could we not go and sleep? Easier said than done in such a place. All the insects of a certain kind that prey upon man or beast were represented there in myriads. Then there was no bed to sleep on. The Turks and the Arabs beat us in this respect, for they brought carpets and rugs without number, and they could wrap themselves up in these and go to sleep. The Lazaretto was no inconvenience to them. Saving the restraint, it did not take them much out of the ordinary rut of their daily life. It was very far otherwise to Europeans. We went supperless to bed and hoped to forget all sense of hardship in the land of dreams, but we were sadly mistaken. When we saw some half score of individuals huddled together in small apartments we thought we had secured a great advantage by having only two in our room; but when the time for sleep came we were inclined to take a different view of the case, for had there been some half-dozen, or even more to squat upon

the floor, the ranks of the *light infantry* and the *sharpshooters* would have been broken up into more manageable divisions. Next to a brain fever, or a conscience on fire, they are about the worst enemies to sleep which any poor mortal can possibly encounter. There is no need of an alarm clock in such a place, and if one does not acquire the habit of early rising there, he may be given up as utterly hopeless on this matter. The next best thing we could do after getting up in the morning was to rush out to the cooling waters of the Hellespont, and try how far we could swim across. This privilege was obtained not without considerable difficulty and liberal baksheesh. Our example was followed ere long by many; but the *work of slaughter*, which seemed to be a favourite pastime to some before they took to the blue waves, cannot be described. All this may be very shocking to some fastidious readers, but the truth is we have not said half so much as Mr. Kinglake has done in his admirable book on Eastern travel, entitled "Eothen." There was a cemetery but a little way off, and one of our American friends, in moments of despondency, used to point to it and give us the cheering assurance that we would all have a place there before the expiry of the fifteen days. If not killed by disease, we would be devoured by vermin.

The first night of our confinement written protests and complaints were drawn up, and signed by every one of our party. These were forwarded to the British and American Consuls at Dardanelles, and to Lord Lyons, Her Majesty's ambassador at Constantinople. There was any amount of grumbling and protesting—in short, for the first few days we could think of nothing else that we could do. Some of the replies to these complaints were very emphatic and indignant, and afforded no small amusement after dinner. The following extract from one of these will serve as a specimen:—

"The Lazarettos of Turkey are, as they ever were, in a disgraceful state. They are only and truly types of everything Turkish—types of the decaying institutions of a degraded and

effete race, which is only now and then galvanised into some spasmodic efforts by outside pressure, the re-action which follows only manifesting more and more clearly the utter helplessness of government and people. The final agony of the mongrel Tartar race encamped in Europe cannot be far off, and it is a consummation most devoutly to be wished, in the interests of the superior race whose efforts at progress are now stifled in the throttling grasp of an Asiatic horde!"

This was received with plaudits to the echo, and the writer of this Johnsonian passage was unanimously voted a most sensible fellow. At all events, we found him most generous, and his timely supplies of books and newspapers did much to relieve the tedium of our confinement. Any parcel or letter from the outer world was handed to us at the end of a pair of very long tongs, and any written message that we had to send out was taken up in the same way. When our warm-hearted captain came to speak to us, he was permitted to do this only through the bars of the outer gate. There was a store in a corner of the square where a few necessary articles could be purchased. The transactions were all conducted at a small window by means of a long shovel, on which the money was placed, drawn inside, and thrown into the water. The same instrument, containing the various articles required, was again thrust out at a wicket. On the third or fourth day a few rickety beds were sent up from a hotel at Dardanelles, from which, also, we drew our supplies of food, such as it was, at a ransom price. In the Lazaretto, as well as elsewhere, "money answereth all things;" and how much better we must have fared than hundreds who were entirely dependent on the small store! It is still a mystery to us how many of the poor pilgrims managed to subsist during these fifteen days. On several occasions, by the kindness of a few friends, we were enabled to minister to their wants.

On the second day of our imprisonment a most amusing scene took place in connection with our swimming in the

Hellespont. Such an aquatic sport seemed to be a thing unknown before at the Lazaretto. There is a narrow space that runs along the whole front of the building, sloping down towards the sea. This was the only place for a promenade, where the wall afforded a temporary shade at certain times of the day, and where one might enjoy the cooling breeze of the sea. But the gates leading to this terrace were kept locked. Many a wistful look we cast through the large key-hole at the narrow slip of green and the sparkling waters outside. The guards could not resist the offered baksheesh, and we had the gratification of seeing the big key applied to the lock, and in a little we were outside along with an American friend. If the guard could not resist the baksheesh we could not withstand the sight of the tempting water, and the next thing to be done was to get under the blue waves as speedily as possible. We were not aware that there could be any possible objection to this, so we prepared for a dive. Our New York friend was just in the act of undressing, when his movements caught the eye of the guard, who rushed forward in the most frantic manner, shouting and flourishing his stick to stop the bathing, and to all appearance with the conviction that we were about to make our escape, or attempt it at least by swimming across, as Leander did to visit his beloved Hero on the other side. The guard, by his shouts, brought all his comrades in the establishment. But they were too late, for, the moment they approached, America disappeared in the water, and they stood shouting and gesticulating on the shore. To bathe in the sea seemed to be about the last thing that would enter the head of a Turk. This was such a luxury that we resolved that when the doctor made his appearance we would do our best to get his sanction for a daily swim. He came next morning and went round the place, but it was with the greatest difficulty we could obtain his permission to bathe in the sea! It was at last, however, reluctantly granted, on the condition that the privilege should be confined solely to ourselves, and that we

should exercise it early in the morning, before any of the inmates were out of bed. This arrangement, of course, obliged us to rise about daybreak, but this was not the slightest hardship *in such a place*. Somehow or other the fact of our bathing got wing, and others soon followed our example. A Turkish pasha at last complained to the consuls at Dardanelles, and called upon them to put a stop to the practice, on the ground that his hareem was so near, but how anyone in that establishment could see through a dead wall is a mystery. Before the expiry of the term of fifteen days we had the pleasure of seeing that the practice was pretty generally followed ; and to this we attribute, in a great manner, the absence of disease in the Lazaretto during our visit. Nothing, however, would have been heard of bathing in the sea had it not been introduced in the way we have described. Some had not been washed for years, and they would remember the Hellespont in the future, if for nothing more than the bath they got.

The doctor's inspection of the place was a very curious affair. He was invariably preceded by Pasha Waddler, who kept all at arm's length with his long white rod. A clear space being thus formed, the doctor would look at any one on the sick list (happily there was no serious case) at a most respectful distance. He was very timid and fussy, and his restless uneasy look was enough to make any nervous person unwell. After all there was great cause for anxiety on the part of that poor man, for had cholera broken out in the Lazaretto, where so many were huddled together in small apartments, the consequences would have been fearful, and the secret dread of this might account for his extraordinary reserve and nervous timidity. Had such a fatality occurred, what could have been done amongst so many ? The great wonder is that, in the filthy and overcrowded state of the place, there was not a violent outbreak of some deadly disease. The medical man was so powerless, and had so few of the necessary materials at his command to meet any emergency, that he could not possibly

supply us with the slightest modicum of any disinfectant, not even chloride of lime, but at a high price, even although the smell of the place at times was intolerable. Disease might have broken out in the ship, but this was much less likely to be the case than in the Lazaretto, and had there been any victim of cholera, it would not at all have surprised us if the doctor had been the first. Poor man! The shadows of it seemed always to rest on his face.

The captain came frequently to enquire for us at the gate, and to converse with us for a little through the bars. He told us a queer story in which there may be a little exaggeration, but even admitting this, it illustrates the terror which seizes even the medical mind when there is an outbreak of cholera in the East. A seaman had become unwell on board a ship that was in quarantine. The doctor approached the vessel in a small boat, but would not go on board; the poor sailor was brought upon deck and placed at the bulwarks. He was asked to show his tongue, and the doctor still retaining his seat in the small boat, examined that organ through a pocket telescope! The captain grew red in the face as he laughed heartily at the bars, and added, "I have heard of a Lazaretto doctor attempting to feel a pulse by means of a long white wand!" These may be exaggerations, but they point to the great necessity for reform in quarantine arrangements.

One beautiful Sabbath morning, the Turk who was generally employed as an auctioneer when any special articles were offered for sale, was making a greater shouting than usual as he went round the square. At last he stopped, and a crowd collected. On stepping forward to see what he had got for sale, thinking it might be a gun, or a sword, or some piece of dress, we were greatly surprised to see two fine boys from Nubia, jet-black and well formed, exposed for sale. They were standing upon two stones, with their backs against the wall that enclosed the well. The auctioneer expatiated on their good qualities in the most approved form of oriental exaggeration. A Turkish pasha,

who flaunted about the place in a flowing robe of purple silk, examined the boys very carefully. He evidently had a longing eye after them, but the price asked was, in his opinion, too high—sixty pounds for each! The auctioneer did his best to effect a sale, but, saving the pasha, no one seemed inclined to make an offer, and as he would not come up to the price that was asked, the boys were sent back to their old quarters. They appeared quite indifferent as to what might be their lot. The pasha in purple would, in all likelihood, secure them before he left. It was the first time we were ever brought face to face with slavery, and we did feel a strange sensation, a peculiar tingling in the blood, when we saw these two smart, handsome boys standing with their backs to the wall, in the midst of a crowd, to be sold to the highest bidder. The sight was new to many besides ourselves in the Lazaretto, and evidently took them by surprise. Our American friend said, with great emotion, as he saw the two boys step down from the stones which served as an auction-block, "Thank God! that's a thing of the past in my country;" and most fervently did we add an emphatic "Amen!"

Again and again did we try to write sermons, but this was utterly impossible, for the Babel confusion and noise, not to speak of any other annoyance, most effectually put a stop to this. There were no organ grinders or London cries, but we had something much worse for anything like meditation. A muezzin, whose voice might have been heard on the other side of the Hellespont, went round the square calling the faithful to prayer. He was generally followed by an auctioneer pursuing his noisy vocation in Eastern style—that is, by rushing round the square displaying the goods he wished to dispose of, and shouting at such a pitch as if he wished to get bids from the *dead* rather than from the living. There was no end to the discordant combination of shouts till long after nightfall. These were occasionally varied by the uproarious singing of the pilgrims, the unearthly intonations of the howling Der-



vishes, and the nasal chants of the Greeks. About thirty female pilgrims were from Russia, and the only agreeable thing about the place was their singing. They sat on the ground, with their heads bent forward and their hands clasped round their knees, and in this posture they sang some of their sweet melodies every evening at sunset. These were very touching, and had a far-away, plaintive, home character about them, but home as yet far in the distance. None could listen to them without being thrilled with emotion.

There was no lack of life or variety in the Lazaretto. As to the latter, this seemed to be endless; and after the lapse of fifteen days, we had not even then seen all the varied phases of life and character in the place. There were French, Greeks, Turks, Maltese, Chinese, mongrel specimens of Hindoos, Arabs of various tribes, Jews from every clime (these were the dirtiest of the lot), Russians, Poles, Greek monks, Russian pilgrims, male and female, who had travelled from the far-off steppes of that vast empire, and were returning home with their little tin flasks filled with water from the Jordan; a mendicant from Siberia, three hareems, two Turkish pashas, and other officials; Nubians from the Nile, slave boys and girls, Abyssinians and natives of Morocco, Circassians, Syrians, Armenians, wandering fakirs, rough-looking Bulgarians, Albanians in their picturesque dresses, Persians with long, shaggy, funnel-shaped hats, Germans, Americans, a couple of Scotchmen, and a solitary gentleman from the south of the Tweed. For a time we thought Ireland was represented, but on examination our friend supposed to be from "Erin's green isle" turned out to be a Greek, a native of Crete. There was, at least, a striking family likeness. We had some very suspicious-looking characters amongst us, and the less that is said about them the better. All these formed a strange piece of mosaic work in the motley pattern of Eastern life, spread before us in a very limited space.

If all our attempts at sermon-making were utterly vain, we

succeeded better at preaching ; and, during the two Sabbaths we were in the Lazaretto, we conducted a religious service in a small "upper room" occupied by our Greek friends. The audience was very limited, but none who were present will ever forget those little gatherings at Abydos for prayer and exposition of the Word. On both occasions a compact body of about sixty Moslems were going through their various prostrations, with a kind of military precision, right under our window.

Sometimes we were inclined to think we had got into prison, and in a moment of abstraction we were led to ask ourselves what we had done to deserve this treatment ; but after night-fall, when we heard all the jumble of discordant shouts, mingled with Greek chants and Bulgarian songs, our chief feeling was, that somehow or other we had become the inmate of a lunatic asylum !

We will often think of the little bit of shingly beach in front of the Lazaretto, where we walked for hours together at "dewy morn and dusky eve," and in the sweet moonlight, with a young American gentleman. The promenades were delightful, even although they were secured by a considerable *douceur* to the guards every time we turned out. At length our term of confinement expired, and we got permission to leave. It was quite a scene to witness the Lazaretto disgorging its very motley contents of passengers and baggage. We sat down and let the stream of life flow past. It was a strange sight. Every one had something to carry, and not a few ran with beds and bedding on their shoulders, and a *great deal more* ! It is certainly not a difficult matter for a man to take up his bed and walk in the East, for it is but a quilt and a coverlet. One of our friends had been very kind to the Russian pilgrims in providing for their wants, and in token of gratitude they sang one of their sweet melodies at the door of our apartment. There was a general shaking of hands, accompanied with congratulatory smiles all over.

If any of our readers should ever happen to be confined at Abydos, which we fondly hope will never be the case, it is more than likely that they will find the following bit of doggerel, written with a blacklead pencil, still legible on the wall above one of the grated windows—

Oh! surely 'twas an adverse fate  
That drove us here in spite or hate,  
And threw us into limbo—  
With rueful looks we stand and stare,  
The very pictures of despair,  
At Turks with arms a-kimbo.

There's nothing here but din and dirt,  
*Egypt's plague on every shirt—*  
Whole swarms of insect biters.  
Blest be the day that set us free!  
And sent us back once more to sea—  
Escaped from Turkish vipers.

After all, now that it is over, we would not have missed that little bit of Lazaretto experience for a great deal. We might have travelled for years and not seen such a thorough concentration of the varied phases of Eastern life. At the same time it is matter of thankfulness that our American friend's prediction, as to the adjoining cemetery, was not fulfilled. There can be no doubt whatever that such a mode of huddling together so many passengers from various ships in a small space, must tend to the spread of disease rather than to its prevention.

The first thing we did after we were set at liberty was to get a small boat and row down to the town of Dardanelles to express our thanks to the British and American consuls for their kind attentions. They were not permitted to approach within speaking distance of us during the whole fifteen days we were in the Lazaretto, but they very kindly sent books, newspapers, and letters, and did all they could to lighten the dreary days of our confinement. It came to an end at last, and considering all the horrors of the place, matters might have been a great deal worse.

They took us to see one of the large forts built on the shore. Some of the guns are of enormous size, especially those for throwing stone shot. These stones are so large that a charge of more than three hundredweight of powder is required for every shot. When it does strike a ship the effect must be something terrific. When returning to the "Austria" our Greek friends passed us in a sloop on the way to Smyrna, where they expected to find a boat to convey them to Chios. The lady who had been obliged to leave the former place, when she was in sight of her own dwelling, and go into quarantine, and who then reminded us of Niobe, now looked much brighter in the prospect of being more successful on this occasion of getting home. Salutations on both sides, very significant of joy and gratitude for our escape, were exchanged, and should we never meet again, the Abydos experience will ever be a mutual memory and a bond of union. The "Austria" was permitted to proceed on her way, and the red-tiled roofs of the Lazaretto were soon lost in the distance, but not before a very clever song, improvised for the occasion, was sung on the deck, to the no small amusement of those who had suffered imprisonment.

Long before we reached Constantinople, we were eagerly on the look out, as we had heard so frequently such glowing accounts of the magnificent appearance of the city when seen from the Bosphorus. We steamed past Seraglio Point and the beautiful mosques of Stamboul, with their graceful minarets, and dropped anchor right in front of the city, when the radiance of the morning sun lent additional charms to this truly wonderful scene. We have seen nothing equal to the view of Constantinople, as witnessed from the deck of our steamer that bright morning. Nothing really can be finer than the situation of the city, with its three districts of Pera, Galata, and Stamboul stretching up the slopes of its seven hills, and sweeping round the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn like a crescent. It was a master stroke of genius to fix upon these slopes as the site of a great capital. What a magnificent

sweep of sea and land scenery does the eye take in from the shores of the Bosphorus, across the Sea of Marmora, to the snow-crowned summit of Olympus ! Look away up the Golden Horn, crowded with vessels of every kind, from the huge merchantman to the light and graceful caiques, mere skiffs, but highly ornamented, and of which there are thousands darting about amongst the immense shipping, where the flags of all nations are floating in the breeze—then look down the narrow channel of the Bosphorus in the direction of the Black Sea, and take in the many beautiful villages running up the slopes on either side from the water's edge, studded with gorgeous palaces of white stone or marble, and that view, take it all in all, is, probably, unequalled in the world. This was our impression at least. It is a wonderful combination of nature and art. If you wish, however, to retain the impression, you must only look at the city from the deck of the ship, or from one of the fairy-looking caiques. The moment you enter the narrow, steep, dirty, ill-paved streets, in many places filthy in the extreme, you have a very different side of the picture, which acts as a wet sheet to the rapture of your former impressions, and if you have any turn for poetry, it is more than likely that you will repeat the words—

“’Tis distance lends enchantment to the view.”

The sanitary condition is such that you cease to wonder so many thousands were swept away by the last outbreak of cholera, when the shops and bazaars were shut up, and all business suspended for several weeks. We spent eight days in this truly wonderful city : strolled through the immense bazaars full of glittering wares ; ascended several times the fire towers of Galata and Stamboul, from which a magnificent view is obtained of the city and its environs ; visited all the principal mosques ; spent a forenoon within the walls of St. Sophia, and, after all, came away with but a confused conception of its grandeur, having occupied the most of the time in

examining its pillars, taken from some of the most celebrated temples of the ancient world. One night we witnessed a fire on a large scale, no unusual thing in the Turkish capital, where so many of the houses are built of wood. It was very near Myseri's Hotel, from the roof of which we saw the narrow streets surging with frantic men carrying water in goat skins. These, and a few hand engines, seemed to be the only appliances at the service of this immense fire brigade. All who lent a helping hand, we understood, would be exempted from the payment of city taxes for that year. It would fare ill at the year's end, we fear, with the municipal treasury, for the whole city seemed to be running wildly about. What with the rushing and the shouting of a fiercely excited crowd, carrying torches and water, and the yelling and howling of dogs in the dark and narrow streets, whilst the lurid flames shot upwards and fell in showers of sparks, the scene was as like Pandemonium as any thing we have ever witnessed.

We spent a pleasant day at Therapia; sailed across in a caique to the other side; ascended a high hill crowned with a mosque, from the minaret of which we had a splendid view of the Black Sea, the Bosphorus, and the Sea of Marmora, and all the varied elements of magnificent scenery embraced within that wide range. Steamers are constantly sailing from one place to another on the Bosphorus, and we frequently took advantage of these to visit the beautiful villages that line both sides of that narrow channel. In the most of these steamers we found that the engineers were from our own country. There was an attempt lately made to supersede these by natives, but the collisions and other accidents became so numerous that the old hands were recalled, and we presume that even a Turk would feel rather nervous if he found himself in a steamer which was not more or less under the control of one of our countrymen, especially on the crowded waters of the Bosphorus.

We sailed to Scutari, landed and inspected the immense hospital. The old formal guide who was with us seemed to

feel a thrill of emotion as he pointed to Miss Nightingale's apartment. "*Yes!*" he repeated, "*that was her room.*" We felt a glow of honest pride as we looked at the apartment where that lady won such undying honours by her self-sacrificing devotion. The cemetery where so many of our soldiers lie buried is a quiet retired corner on the beach, where the murmuring waves of the sea of Marmora form the dirge of the brave, and fall mournfully upon the ear. Privates and officers all lie buried together; they fought and fell on the same field, and have found a common grave on the same shore. The simple records on many of the grave-stones are very touching, and the very name of Scutari must still send a pang to many a home circle for those who shall return no more.

On Friday we witnessed the state procession which accompanies the Sultan when he goes to the mosque. It was an affair of oriental splendour. All the various races in the empire were represented in their peculiar costumes, and this had a very striking effect. When the Sultan rode through the crowd that lined both sides of the street, there was profound silence; not a word was spoken at any point where he passed, and the people looked on as solemnly as if they were engaged in an act of worship.

On the afternoon of the same day, we visited the famous "Sweet Waters," near one of the fine palaces of the Sultan on the Bosphorus. It was something to see hundreds of the very *élite* of Turkish ladies, seated on their quilts or riding about in their gilded coaches, and attended with black eunuchs. Frequently a single carriage would contain a whole harem, consisting of three or four wives. The most of the ladies came in beautifully ornamented caïques. Thousands of quilts were spread upon the pleasure-ground, and on these the fair visitors sat in groups, and enjoyed themselves after their own fashion with sweetmeats, cigarettes, sherbet, and ices. There was a little music here and there, but, as we thought, very inferior. Few husbands were present, so that the ladies seemed to have it all

their own way. Many strolled about the grounds, but by far the greater number sat upon the sofa quilts. The scene was one of unrivalled brilliancy and variety as to colour. All wore a loose covering of very light material, that enveloped the whole body from the shoulders downwards, and this loose "over-all" was either wholly of the brightest scarlet, crimson, mauve, purple, orange, or green, of every possible shade. These colours were seen to great advantage in the bright radiance of the setting sun, and the cambric head-dress, white as the driven snow, served to bring them out in striking contrast. As to the ladies themselves, they had a very *wax-doll* appearance, arising, we presume, from the listless, indolent life of restraint and confinement which they lead. Very few, if any of them, and they formed the very highest class of Turkish hareems, were able to read. They are kept as if they were mere children, and as such they live and die so far as education is concerned. They had gay clothing which presented a wonderful display of rich colours; and when the bright rays of the setting sun fell on the varied groups, it was the most dazzling scene of the kind we have ever witnessed. Few, if any, of our countrywomen will be disposed to envy these ladies. What would any wife or mother in our own country think were she compelled, by a system established by the law and the religion of the land, to admit two or three wives into the home circle, and obliged to speak of each of them as her "co-wife," or to use this phrase when introducing them to strangers? This term signifies in Arabic, "the one that has supplanted me—taken my place," as Jacob did when he deprived his brother Esau of his birthright.

The bazaars of Constantinople would themselves require a volume. We must dismiss them for the present with a single sentence. Nowhere in the world is there such a gorgeous display of ladies' slippers; and the bazaar devoted to this single article is a sight more than sufficient to excite the envy and admiration of those who are most fastidious about their feet.



The wonder is that feet can ever get into such articles, or that it should ever have entered into any human head to have produced such elaborate ornamentation for that part of the body.

The Princes' Islands form a favourite resort of the Franks residing in the city, and steamers crowded with passengers are frequently plying between these and the Golden Horn. It was beautiful moonlight when we happened to be at Prinkipos. Our American friend, of Lazaretto memory, proposed a ride round the island, and for several hours after midnight we cantered along by the side of the sparkling waters. If his eye should ever fall on these pages, that moonlight trip cannot fail to be a bright spot in his recollections of the East.

Next day found us crossing for the last time the long wooden bridge that spans the Golden Horn between Galata and Stamboul. That bridge when crowded with passengers, as it is very frequently, is one of the most strikingly picturesque thoroughfares in the world. The vast number of tarbooshes that flit past you are in themselves quite a sight. Once more we ascended the fire-tower of Stamboul and gazed intently round and round, till the wonderful view was more than photographed on our memory. The last visit we paid was to the depot of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and it was cheering to find so many tokens of progress, so many translations completed, and so many translators still at work. May the Word of the Lord, the only sure means of the world's progress have "free course, and be glorified!" Some excellent Christian friends whom we had the pleasure of meeting at Bebek take a deep interest in the operations of this society.

We sailed from the Golden Horn in the French steamer "Nil" for Athens. On the day after leaving Stamboul, we had a delightful sail amongst the "Isles of Greece." The very names of these awakened stirring recollections, for all of them had a place in ancient song and story. On approaching Athen we were greatly struck with the resemblance between the pro-

minent heights around that city and our own Arthur's Seat, the Calton Hill, Salisbury Crags, and the Castle Rock at Edinburgh. In point of situation there is no city more deserving the name of "Modern Athens" than our own Scottish capital.

Great was our chagrin when, on dropping anchor at the Piræus, we were told that there would not be time to visit the city. In some respects we felt more disappointed at not being permitted to visit Athens than we did when we received the first announcement of our fifteen days' quarantine. We had been distinctly assured that there would be time enough to take, at least, a rapid run through the city, but on arriving at the Piræus we heard a very different story. It was indeed a grievous disappointment to be so near the capital of Greece, teeming with so many historical associations, the birthplace of the most illustrious philosophers, patriots, poets, orators, statesmen, artists, and historians of ancient times, and yet after all not to get even a hurried stroll through its streets. In no very pleasant frame of mind we engaged a small boat and sailed to the tomb of Themistocles, who did so much to improve the naval power of Athens, and especially the harbour, near to which he was buried. Heaps of ruins are now partly under water, a proof that the sea must have been gaining not a little on this coast. The day was one of broiling heat, and as our expectations had been sadly thwarted, we speedily returned to the ship, and resumed our seat under the awning on the deck. Many a wistful look did we cast upwards to the picturesque heights that overlook the city, and we tried to divert the bitter current of our thoughts as best we could, by thinking of Paul's visit and his famous oration on Mars' Hill. After all, we had great reason to be thankful: if we missed Athens, had we not been several weeks in Jerusalem? If we did not stand on the Acropolis, had we not passed a week on Sinai, and strolled again and again over the Mount of Olives, and seen the most sacred places of undying interest linked for ever to THAT LIFE, the most beautiful, blissful, and benign ever spent

on earth, and to the most thrilling memories that can stir the heart of man? Consoling ourselves with these reflections better thoughts came upon us; cordial thankfulness took the place of chagrin, and we had another day's charming sail amongst the Greek islands, so wildly grand and rugged that they had an awe-inspiring look.

Our next halting place was Messina, in Sicily, where we landed for a few hours, and were much pleased to see one of the finest streets in the town—Strada Garibaldi—named after the illustrious patriot. At the very mention of his name, the guide who conducted us to various places of interest could not possibly conceal his emotion, although he strove to do so till he became more confident in our own sentiments. He spoke of Aspromonte as a great calamity, but hinted very significantly that it was the beginning of the end. He expressed his conviction that another rising was not far distant, and recent events have fully confirmed his views. By and by he threw off all restraint, his eye kindled, his face flushed, and he spoke of France as the evil genius of Italy and her patriot, whom he designated "the real king in the hearts of the people." Suddenly he bethought himself, and dropping the subject became moody and silent, not, however, without a quivering of his lip and a scornful flashing of his eye. He politely apologised for so far forgetting himself, as he said; but, in spite of all his efforts at restraint, Aspromonte was hissed out between his firmly set teeth more than once before we parted.

The great abundance of bright-looking, luscious fruits was truly astonishing, and we invested in this article to an extent that was almost alarming. On returning to the "Nil," the deck had all the appearance of a bazaar or a fancy fair, for quite a crowd of vendors had spread their glittering and tempting wares on every available space, and a good stroke of business was done in nick-nacks, trinkets, and female ornaments of every description. Many of these were made from the lava of Etna, finely cut and polished, and set in gold.

On the second day after leaving Messina, we had another fine view of the island of Caprera and the lonely dwelling of the patriot. Arrived at Marseilles, we took the first train to Paris—dined in the Grand Hotel du Louvre, where a most unhappy couple, seemingly husband and wife, sat opposite to us—the most memorable picture of splendid misery we have ever seen. Notwithstanding all the profusion of rings and jewellery, and rich attire, it was evidently an ill-assorted union. Their looks haunt us yet, as they rose in sullen silence from the table and swept out of the magnificent hall, leaving the most painful expression on our mind of jealousy and despair. A rapid run to Calais—and in a little the white cliffs of Dover were seen rising through openings in the mist. The sky was dull and heavy. What a change of climate as compared with the bright and cloudless East! The train from London brought us home after midnight, and whether it was owing to the darkness, the unseasonable hour, or to our semi-oriental appearance, or to all these combined, true it is, that at our own door our faithful domestic failed to recognise us, and took us at first to be a telegraph messenger. As we stood in silence she was about to shut the door, which had been reluctantly opened, when our well-known voice startled her, and awoke all the youngsters, who rushed down stairs, and gave us an instant and a joyous welcome.

There had been sore sickness in our absence, but, thank God! the home circle was still unbroken, and five months had been crowded with new scenes, experiences, and incidents which will be more than a memory for life.

At this point we part with our readers who have kindly accompanied us all the way, and making our *salaam*, according to Eastern fashion, we bid them all good bye for the present, hoping to meet them some other time.

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