

scarcely human tones—howling a certain form of words, of which “Allah! Allah! Lá, Lá, Lá!” were all I could distinctly hear. Their gestures were more and more frantic, until at last they reached a point of absolute frenzy! When any of these poor deluded devotees fell to the ground insensible, a spectator was always ready to take his place. This scene is often kept up by the same dervishes for three days and nights in succession, without rest or food, except short intermissions now and then for pipes and coffee! Such is the effect of fanaticism! In commencing the *zikrs*, the performers (*zikkeers*) were *seated*, and nothing extravagant was observable in their demeanour: gradually, however, their brains became completely intoxicated by intense excitement. Some *zikrs* were performed round tall masts—called *súrees*—secured with ropes, upon which lamps were arranged in fanciful designs. The *zikkeers*, who were chiefly of the lower orders, had no distinguishing costume, and they all wore turbans. There were hardly any women amongst the crowd. This festival was instituted by Sultan Murad, the son of Selím (better known as Amurath III.) A.D. 1598—or 996 of the Hegira. It is held on the return of the pilgrims from Mecca, lasts about a week, and is often falsely described as a *fair*; on account of the swings and merry-go-rounds, and the booths for selling sweetmeats, dates, cakes, beans, &c., which are stationed here and there. A bright moon shed her pale rays over the more retired portion of the *Uzbekéh*; whither, after satisfying our curiosity as travellers, we gladly turned our footsteps.

The following day was Sunday, and with thankfulness did we avail ourselves of the opportunity of attending divine service in our own tongue, and according to our accustomed form of worship. We rode along some narrow *alleys*, communicating with each other by low gateways, which are closed after sunset; and dismounted at the residence of the Reverend Mr. Lieder (a German Missionary), where a large room is fitted up as a chapel. Mr. Lieder has a slightly foreign

accent, but reads and preaches remarkably well in English. He gave us a good plain sermon—probably not his own composition, for I had heard it before. The subject was Jacob's interview with Pharaoh, on that patriarch's arrival in Egypt.

Monday, December 12th, was the last and *great* day of the *Moo 'lid en-Nebbée*. Immediately after breakfast an open carriage conveyed our party to that part of the *Uzbekééh* considered most favourable for viewing the ceremony of the *Dósch*; near the house of the Sheikh El-Bekree, who presides over all the dervishes in Egypt, and is the reputed descendant of Abu Bekr e' Sáadééh—the friend and successor of the Prophet, and father of his favourite wife, Ayesha. An immense crowd had already assembled—such a motley concourse as can be seen in Grand Cairo alone! There was no disorderly conduct, for drunkenness is not a prevalent vice in Mohammedan countries. Certainly, however, two stones were thrown into our carriage, but no one was hurt. We had scarcely stopped when a dervish came up to ask alms, holding towards us a boat-shaped metal bowl. His embroidered red cap was in the form of a sugar-loaf, his black hair hung down each side of his swarthy face in greasy ringlets, he wore a full white shirt, and had three rows of large black beads round his neck. Then appeared one of those dervishes who obtain their livelihood as water-carriers: his earthen jar slung across his shoulders by thick cords, was adorned with charms and trumpery ornaments. There were several of these water-carriers among the Mecca pilgrims: some of them carried skins instead of jars. We had two hours to wait, but the time did not *appear* so long. There were Arabs; Syrians—(the wealthy traders of Damascus); happy, honest looking Nubians; Turks in richly embroidered capotes; a fair proportion of Europeans; Egyptian ladies enveloped in their black silk *habaraks*, over robes of blue or rose-colour; females of the middle class, dressed entirely in white, except their plaid or striped *miláyehs*—

(a sort of wrapper, similar to the *habarah*)—of silk and cotton mixed : some of these were of cotton only, while the poorest women still wore the blue linen *tarhah*. Flags were flying, and *zikrs* were performing round poles and masts firmly secured by ropes. There were sherbet vendors, games, jugglers, and merry-go-rounds ; men were carrying enormous trays of bread and cakes ; bouquets of roses and geraniums, fruit, and toys were offered for sale ; as were also some curious dish covers, made of plaited palm leaves, and pointed at the top ; women bore their dirty infants on their heads in baskets, or astride on their shoulders ; the haughty Bedouin of the Desert, guiding his noble steed with difficulty through the dense multitude, was seen—tempted by the occasion—for once to mingle with his more civilized fellow men ; nor must I forget to mention one *charming* figure of a dervish, dressed in what is called a *dilk* (a patched coat made of cloth of all sorts and colours) ornamented with silver : his conical cap and petticoat were made of patches in like manner ; and he held in his hand a staff, to the top of which shreds of coloured cloth were attached. In short, every variety of costume that can be imagined met the eye ; the least attractive of them all were the military uniforms. People were seated on mats, or high up among the branches of the trees. We saw too the European Consuls and their families, each preceded by a *kawass* (janissary), enter the house of the Sheik El-Bekree ; whose tent—of blue, red, white, and yellow stripes ; and supported by poles painted green and red—was pitched close by. At last we became aware that the ceremony had commenced. Some hundreds—I could never learn how many—of dervishes, and I believe others also, lay down side by side and close together upon the ground ; their backs upwards, their arms crossed beneath their foreheads ; and the following procession passed over them :—First came two men carrying green banners ; then a serpent eater, devouring a live snake, and accompanying this disgusting act by the most frantic gestures ; thirdly,

a man with a kind of mace upon a green pole, followed by a couple of standard bearers—and lastly, the Sheikh of the Sáadééh himself, on *horseback*! He was held by two attendants, one of whom walked on each side of him and guided the horse. This procession passed twice over the same prostrate devotees. The Sheikh had, as he advanced, merely a black or very dark green *tarboosh* on his head; but on his return, he wore also a turban of the same colour. He was an old man, and seemed half stupified. His aversion to performing the Dóseh was so great, that for several years he positively refused to do so, except by a deputy—who was *blind*: that individual died, and since then the Sheikh has yielded to the entreaties of his dervishes. It is asserted that by some supernatural power, and the repetition of certain prayers, these deluded fanatics can endure the tread of the horse without being injured in the slightest degree. *The truth* is not easy to ascertain; but we saw many of them lifted from the ground quite insensible, or in convulsions! On the whole, there could not be a more repulsive spectacle, or one more degrading to the better feelings of humanity. The performances of the *dancing* dervishes may be witnessed every Friday at Old Cairo. *These* men are all of one sect, though of different nations. Travellers who desire to obtain correct information respecting the dervishes in general, are much puzzled by contradictory reports.* They are said to have some just notions of spiritual religion, in spite of their gross superstition and unhallowed rites. A great many of the dervishes in Egypt are Turks and Persians: there are also a few Nubians among them.

Illness prevented my seeing more of the wonders of Cairo. In the mean time most active preparations were going on for our speedy departure, and our collection of Egyptian curiosities was sent off to England.

* See Lane's "Modern Egyptians," and Pococke's "Travels in the East."

My party visited some of the old Mosques, and obtained an order to enter that of El Ez'her, in which is the University. The attendance of a *kawass* was also necessary, for Christians are by no means welcome within those learned walls. Indeed, notwithstanding all due precautions, the students were evidently so annoyed by this intrusion, that their demeanour became violently excited. They jumped upon the benches, vociferating in loud and angry tones: one of them even struck Miss —— with a book; and the Sheikhs of the College, the *kawass*, and the guide, had great difficulty in restoring order. This College is considered superior to any other in the East, and students who flock thither are gratuitously supported. Owing to the rapacity of Mohammed Ali, who seized upon the property of the Mosques, the funds of this establishment are very much reduced, and the professors are allowed no pecuniary remuneration. The building is of considerable size, and was erected at different periods. There is an asylum for blind men attached to the University: many of them are likewise admitted as students.

The next excursion they made was to Matarééh, a little beyond which is the site of Heliopolis—the On of Scripture. Mr. and Mrs. Lieder accompanied them, and the ride there occupied about three hours. They described the road as being the prettiest they had seen near Cairo. It passes through the richest part of the Land of Goshen—redeemed from the Desert by Ibrahim Pacha. Near the mounds of Heliopolis is a garden where once grew some *balsam* trees, said to have been originally planted there by Cleopatra, who brought them from Jericho. This precious drug no longer grows in either of these localities: it is now cultivated near Mecca, whither the plants were eventually removed from Matarééh. It is to this balsam—or balm—that allusion is made in the Bible. “And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes, and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead

with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry *it* down to Egypt." * The old sycamore with hollow trunk—beneath whose branches tradition asserts that the Holy Family reposed on the occasion of their flight into Egypt—and the well at which they are said to have slaked their thirst, are still shown to travellers.

Of the ancient city of Heliopolis, so celebrated for its learning—within whose temples it is supposed that Moses was instructed *in all the wisdom of the Egyptians*, and where Plato learnt the immortality of the soul—but one single obelisk remains standing! It bears the name of Osirtesen I, and is about sixty-two feet high. The seat of learning was subsequently transferred to Alexandria, as were likewise those two obelisks known by the name of *Cleopatra's Needles*. Bricks made *without straw* have lately been found at Heliopolis—which have given rise to much curious speculation; and *inscribed* bricks are constantly turning up among the mounds. The prophet Jeremiah lived for some time in this vicinity.

On Thursday, December 23rd, Mr. Lieder kindly took Mr. T. over the Citadel, so long the residence of Mohammed Ali.† The mint is also there. In the afternoon Mr. T. went to see the Pacha's gunpowder mills at Toora, about three hours ride from Cairo, accompanied by the Minister of War.

Genesis xxxvii. 25.

† The following extract from Colonel Chesney's "Russo-Turkish Campaigns of 1828 and 1829," was omitted in its proper place—

"The details of some of these attacks on the Russian redoubts, were related to the author by an individual who took an active part in these proceedings. This was Hemén Pasha, who had brought a force of upwards of 2,000 irregular troops from his government in Konia. These men were animated by the same determined spirit as their chief; whose great anxiety was to serve his sovereign by overcoming the enemies of Turkey. Hemén, in touching upon his own history, mentioned that he was one of the Mamelukes at the time of their destruction by Muhammed Ali; and his Kaïa, or lieutenant, afterwards filled up this outline by informing us that it was Hemén who had leaped his horse over the wall at

The French government send one of their most talented physicians to Cairo, for the purpose of making enquiries respecting the causes and treatment of the Plague: he is recalled at the end of five years, and another takes his place. Dr. Burguères has held that appointment for more than three years, and has had abundant opportunity of studying the manners and customs of the modern Cairenes. His professional visits to the *haréms* seem to tax his patience severely; and no wonder. First, one of the eunuchs must be summoned; and after a great deal of needless parley, that individual sets off to inform the ladies that the *hakím* (doctor) has arrived. At the end of ten minutes—generally much longer—the eunuch comes again, with a request that the *hakím* will step into an adjoining room, smoke a pipe, and drink a cup of coffee—which *performances* cause an immense delay; besides that the poor *hakím* must wait another full hour, perhaps, before he is admitted into the chamber of the invalid, who remains all the time closely veiled!

We rode to Shoobra on the afternoon of Friday, December 23rd, along a wide avenue of fine acacia trees, the favourite *promenade* of Cairo. The distance is four miles from the Bab-el-Hadid, near which is pointed out a spot famous as the scene of a fierce encounter between Richard I. and Saláh-e'-deen, and where are the remains of very ancient walls.

The weather was delightful, and I enjoyed it the more after my long *imprisonment*. The road gradually approached the Nile as we advanced towards the village of Shoobra, and at last ran close along the river's bank. Arrived at the outer gate of the royal pleasure grounds, where are

Cairo: he was, consequently, the solitary individual who escaped that massacre. The expression of Hemén Pasha's dark countenance and rolling eyes, as he related the hope he had conceived during one of the sorties from Schumla, of making the Emperor Nicholas prisoner, are strongly impressed on the memory of the author. 'Had this been effected,' added he, 'we should only have released him on the condition of his restoring the Crimea to the Sultan!'"

the Pacha's stables, we dismounted; and at the end of a short avenue came to a second portal, with a very shabby lodge attached to it. The gardens are extensive, and most beautifully kept. Chrysanthemums, roses, geraniums, and several of our greenhouse plants were in blossom; the weeping willow and the pomegranate were to be seen here and there; but the principal growth was that of the orange, lemon, and citron. One of the gardeners gave us bouquets of flowers; and some oranges, like those of Malta, produced by grafting upon the pomegranate tree. The broad straight walks radiate from centres, and some of them are covered overhead with trellis work. We started a pretty gazelle from under some trees. The Octagon Pagoda of gaily coloured glass cost 7,000 purses—the *kees* (purse) being equivalent to £5 sterling. Its interior is fitted up as a saloon, in the centre of which is a bronze fountain, and also a candelabra of carved wood. The floor is curiously inlaid, and the part that immediately surrounds the fountain forms a circular pattern of crescents and stars. The next object of attraction was the Great Fountain *Kiosk*, or according to our guide, the Pacha's *Divan*. The erection of a gas-house for supplying the lamps has ruined the general effect of the building. An enormous marble *reservoir*, containing water four feet in depth, is surrounded by balustrades, which—as well as the columns and mouldings of the open corridors—are from Carrara, and were worked by Italians. At each of the four corners is an apartment fitted up with divans: the first we entered had a painted ceiling, plate glass windows, and splendid silk hangings; the floor and panelled walls were of inlaid wood. The framework of the chairs and tables—for there was a mixture of the European with the Oriental style—struck us as being exceedingly paltry, compared with all around them, and their own rich damask coverings. Another of these rooms contained a billiard table, and in a third was a full length portrait in oils of Mohammed Ali—considered an excellent likeness. Some artists were employed in repairing injured portions of

those paintings which adorn the ceilings of the corridors : the late Pacha's portrait, *al fresco*, is conspicuous there likewise. Resting with its oars against a wall, we observed a small green and white boat, used as a sort of plaything for the amusement of the *harém*. At the opposite side of the gardens, near the Palace—a square ugly mansion—we ascended a flight of steps, bordered by terraces gay with flowering shrubs, to a platform ; whence we were assured was to be seen a view of the whole demesne of Shoobra, the Nile, and the distant mountains ; but the neighbouring trees have grown gradually larger, and have quite spoiled the prospect so far as the gardens are concerned. We had just rejoined the donkeys when one of the Pacha's carriages and four drove up ; some veiled ladies alighted from it, and the gate was instantly closed behind them. As we rode back to Cairo we bade farewell to the Nile, which we beheld no more.

The railroad now making, between Cairo and Alexandria, will—when completed—be a great convenience to travellers. It was begun several years ago by Mohammed Ali. Another railroad is also in progress between Cairo and Suez.

How precisely have the sacred prophecies been fulfilled ! “ And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof ; and I will destroy the counsel thereof : and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards. And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord ; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts.” * “ It shall be the basest of the kingdoms ; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations ; for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations.” †

We rose early on Saturday, December 24th, for our *caravan* was to be despatched betimes ; while we ourselves were to join it on the confines of

* Isaiah xix. 3, 4.

† Ezekiel xxix. 15.

Route on the Nile.

N E D I T E R R A N E A N S E A



the Desert, and be conveyed thither on donkeys. We left Cairo by the Bab-el-Hadid soon after nine o'clock, a. m.—rode past many gardens of prickly pear, orange, lemon, and citron trees; and were seated aloft upon our camels in little more than an hour. Of course we had the escort and protection of a powerful Bedouin Sheikh, with twelve or fourteen of his followers—all armed with swords; for they were not allowed to carry fire-arms. In point of *numbers*, we were a pretty formidable party. We had altogether twenty-eight camels and dromedaries—the dromedary being but a smaller breed of the camel; whatever children are taught about *one and two humps*. Our seats were made as comfortable and soft as possible; for the clumsy wooden saddles were piled with carpets, down quilts, cloaks, and cushions. We stalked away at the rate of three miles and a half per hour; and although the rocking motion is very fatiguing, and therefore can scarcely be termed *agreeable*, it was not nearly so unpleasant as we had been led to expect. We followed the broad sandy track along which the vans—*now* belonging to the Egyptian government, but *originally* to the East India Company—actually *post* between Cairo and Suez! On either side the view is bounded by sandhills; and between them and the road extends a barren plain. Our first day's journey was a short one. We encamped near some sandhills; where I picked up abundance of pretty snail-shells: snails do not thus abound in the Desert, further south, I believe. A young Nubian, nearly black, called Mohanamed, replaced Antonio as "ladies' valet;" and our *burly* cook was an Arab, Bekéh by name.

We were charmed with the unexpected comfort of our tents, of which two were for our own especial use. The dragoman and his three subordinates had another. There were mats, Persian carpets, tables, camp stools, iron bedsteads, mattresses, down quilts, cushions, and plenty of clean linen; besides all that could be wanted in the way of plate, glass, and china. Our dinners were always excellent. We had soup every day;

three or four dishes at the first course ; always one, and frequently two sweets ; followed by a dessert of oranges, biscuits, French bon bons, and dried fruits. We had wine and brandy of *our own*. The six great water casks (the Arabs carried *their* supply in skins) were filled whenever an opportunity for doing so occurred, and we were never denied the luxury of washing in *warm* water. With regard to our stock of provisions ; unless some untoward accident should happen, we were not likely to *die of famine* in the Wilderness ! We started from Cairo with sixteen live turkeys, eighty chickens, six hundred eggs, and everything else in proportion. Unfortunately for our provider, prices have been continually rising (as I have already stated), particularly upon grain, for some time past. The dry pure air had at once a marvellous effect upon our appetites ; and the *mountain* of a pilau—the omelet—no matter what was placed before us—all were perfection ! Our sleep was so sound too ! the Arab watch might sing or make what noises they pleased, but they could not disturb *us* ! The fires round which the Arabs sat were lighted at a little distance from our tents. There were usually two of them, but sometimes it was deemed expedient to light more—I suppose to give our encampment a more formidable appearance after dark. Beyond these was a circle of the heavy baggage—for Vincenzo took the trunks which contained our clothes into his own tent ; while outside of all lay the camels, divested of their loads and trappings—the latter of plaited leather, adorned with cowrie shells and tassels. These animals were led by a thick rope of twisted goat's or camel's hair instead of a bridle. One hardship alone crossed the even tenour of our Desert life ; viz., our early *breakfasts*, which were *al fresco* in every sense ! However hot the coming day might be, the cold was often intense before sunrise ; and then we had such a scramble to be dressed quickly enough ! No mercy was shown towards us if we chanced to feel sleepy : ready or not ready, down came the tents within half an hour from the time we were called ! We did not

always ride with the baggage; but Vincenzo and the Sheikh invariably accompanied us, and there was a man to lead each of our camels—or rather, there *ought* to have been—for they were very fond of making excuses to leave us tied one behind another, and wander off to amuse themselves. They took especial care to reappear at luncheon time, between eleven and twelve, when we had an hour's rest. Our day's journey seldom exceeded eight hours, and we generally stopped about half past three or four o'clock. So methodical were the arrangements, that in twenty minutes the tents were pitched and ready for our reception; and an hour had hardly elapsed before dinner was smoking upon the table!

Christmas day in the Desert! My camel was frisky, and his capering obliged me to hold fast with both hands; for a single day's experience was not sufficient to accustom one's head to such an *elevation*, from whence an unlucky tumble would be attended with serious consequences. We found great quantities of petrified wood near our mid-day halting-place; and passed a palace belonging to Abbas Pacha, which cost 100,000 dollars, and is said to be magnificently fitted up. He is fond of the chase, and comes here to enjoy it: we saw a pack of his greyhounds.* Vincenzo provided us with as good Christmas fare as we could have at home; viz., soup, roast turkey, ham, omelet, and—by way of a plum pudding—stewed prunes within a wall of rice: he also produced a bottle of Maraschino, to drink the health of our many absent friends.

We adopted the plan of winding long scarfs tightly round our waists; and I strongly recommend all travellers in the East to do the same. It is an invaluable support to the back, and prevents one's being so shaken by the motion of the camel.

While this work has been passing through the press, accounts have reached England of Abbas Pacha's sudden death; and his being succeeded by his uncle, Saïd Pacha, the only remaining son of Mohammed Ali.

Between Cairo and Suez are twelve post stations—plain, whitewashed buildings—and attached to each is a circular semaphore, also whitewashed. As soon as an Indian steam packet arrives at Suez, the number of passengers is telegraphed to Cairo. We always encamped near one of these stations. Now and then a horseman galloped past us, but we met very few people. The sunsets were *glorious*!

Our Arabs wore sandals on their feet. The Sheikh was a young man with a goodhumoured countenance, and was civil in showing us every attention in his power. His dress resembled that of other Egyptians: on his head he had a red *tarboosh* and white muslin turban. We rode past the carcasses of several dead camels, upon one of which at least a dozen vultures were feeding; and so intent were they on their repast, that our near approach did not disturb them. As we advanced, the Suez mountains became more and more clearly defined. At rare intervals we observed a solitary tree; and there is a prickly shrub (the *Spinus Christi*) that grows in the Desert, of which camels are extremely fond. Beans are the ordinary food of these animals, and coarse sacks of them were fastened behind our saddles.

On Tuesday, December 27th, we were in sight of the Red Sea, and white sails were visible in the distance. The weather was charming during the early and latter part of the day, but oppressively hot towards noon. The following morning we came to a large *khan*, the usual halting-place of the Mecca pilgrims. Here was a pool of water; to which, however, our camels seemed strangely indifferent, although they had had none since they started from Cairo. I am sure these poor beasts do not deserve the character so often given them of stubbornness and ill-temper. Although some are most kindly treated by their owners, many are exactly the reverse; and the backs of those which convey baggage are frequently so rubbed and sore, that they may well growl hideously, and show signs of displeasure while package after package is heaped upon them. Three

of our camels carried the water casks (two each); the three tents were divided between two camels; one was loaded with the bedding; &c. An ordinary load is about three hundred weight. It is difficult to break in a camel at first, as we had an opportunity of witnessing.

Before we entered the massive old gateway of Suez, we passed another *khan*; and were shown, on our right, the opening into the *Wadee el Arraba* (valley of the chariots); the place where, according to Arab tradition, the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. Suez is a wretched looking town, notwithstanding its shipping and merchandize, and all the arrivals and departures of caravans and steamers. The principal modern buildings are the English Consulate, and an Hotel: the latter is kept by an Englishman, but belongs to Mr. Sheppard of Cairo. An influx of passengers from India was hourly expected, and preparations were already made to receive them. We walked through the crowded bazaars, and bought different kinds of bread, some of which was very good. We also tasted a sort of cheese—a nasty compound of *leb*n (some milk), flour, and *barley straw* chopped fine. A large proportion of the inhabitants seem to be Nubians; but there are likewise a great many Maltese; and in short, people of almost every nation in the world may be encountered in this busy thoroughfare.

Our caravan was sent round the head of the Gulf of Suez, while *we* crossed the Red Sea—whose bright blue surface was unruffled by a single wave—in a barge belonging to the hotel. A small island lay towards the north. We could not approach nearer to the Arabian shore than half a mile; but as the water was only a foot in depth, we were soon safely landed. We loitered about for nearly an hour; willing to believe that—on the very spot we were then treading—did Moses, Miriam, and all the host of Israel once raise their voices in thanksgiving to God for their deliverance! We picked up a few shells; and what an infinite number of beautiful specimens might we not have treasured, had we been nearer

home! A long and fatiguing walk through deep sand brought us to *Ayoun Moussa* (fountain of Moses). It is in the midst of a garden of palms, sont trees, olives, tamarisks, figs, and a profusion of lovely roses—bouquets of which a man in charge presented to us: a *khan* is also here, the frequent resort of visitors from Suez during the summer months. Our tents were pitched in the Desert, immediately outside the garden wall. Two dogs—ugly creatures, it is true; but *sociable*, and evidently accustomed to be petted by strangers—came to cheer us with their company.

There was considerable delay in starting the next morning; for the camels had to be watered; and the casks, skins, and leathern bottles filled from the fountain. At last all was ready, we turned our faces southward, and “went out into the Wilderness of Shur.”* The track was wearisome for the camels—through heavy sand, covered with stones—and was about a mile from the sea. For the first four hours after leaving Ayoun Moussa we saw quantities of mica strewing the ground, some blocks of which shone in the sun like crystal.

The early part of our journey on Friday, December 30th, was very monotonous, and the heat most oppressive. We greatly rejoiced when we came to a pool of rain water, the taste of which was particularly cool and refreshing: our camels did not appreciate it, for they were provided with an ample supply imbibed on the previous day. A few hours afterwards we reached Ayoun Howárah (the supposed Marah of Scripture). A stream *does* still flow into the pool; although an author, whose name I do not now remember, asserts the contrary. We tasted the water, which was slightly brackish, but nevertheless extremely grateful to thirsty travellers like ourselves; and we could not but accuse the wandering Israelites of being in truth a set of thankless grumblers, to murmur as they did at its bitterness. Even the camels appeared to relish the water of Ayoun

* Exodus xv. 22.

Howárah, although they had turned carelessly away from the pool we had so lately passed: the animal I rode drank three bowlfuls which the driver gave him. We each secured a branch from one of the two stunted, bushy date-palm trees growing near the spring. As we proceeded, we crossed several *wadees* (water courses): most of them were quite dry. From our encampment we enjoyed a splendid view of the sea, and range of blue mountains beyond; while the camels eagerly devoured the tufts of herbage and low shrubs, which are abundant in this part of the Wilderness: some of these are highly aromatic. Vincenzo had managed to procure goat's milk for tea—a wonderful luxury!—but at the price of five piastres (about a shilling) for one pint. His vigilant eye had espied a *veiled lady* at a distance, with her flock; to whom he immediately *gave chase*. Our Arabs have wooden bowls which serve them for drinking vessels—washing basons (?)—and wherein they make their bread; which is excellent when fresh, and is baked in a hole where fire has just been burning. They cover the loaf with sand, lay sticks upon it, and over these pile a quantity of camel's dung, which soon blazes up. Their corn is ground into flour, in a similar manner to that we see practised by the peasantry *at home*—between two stones.

Our next day's journey was among sandhills and sandstone rocks of considerable size. We passed a great heap of stones—a solitary grave!—and lunched beneath the shade of some palm trees; many of them of the same stunted and bushy growth as those at Ayoun Howárah. Here was a pool of brackish water too, at which the camels drank. Several deep holes were in its vicinity, and the ground was plentifully strewn with salt. The only living creature we saw was a pretty blackbird with a white topknot. A few writers assert that *this* is the true Marah: the Arabs call the place Oosayt.

Nothing can surpass the grandeur of scenery that opened upon us as we rode along the “Valley of the Wanderers.” Rocks of stupendous

height, which apparently hemmed us in, were gloriously illumined by the rays of a finely setting sun. Another lonely grave was also here. Our tents were pitched in the Wadee Taybe (*wadee* signifies valley as well as water course)—a sandy plain, not far from the sea, and surrounded by high rocks and sandhills. Small tamarisk trees grew here and there, and the camels were glad to crop their scanty branches. Poor things! *They* are not too much pampered with delicacies!

Who shall decide whether scenes like these are more magnificent when beheld at the close of day, or in the early morning? I am utterly unable to decide the question *now*, as I was *then*. The richness and variety of colouring are so transcendently beautiful, either at sunrise or sunset in the East, it is impossible to find words to compare them! An hour's winding track brought us, by a sudden turn, upon the shore; we alighted, and had a long walk upon the beach, picking up shells and bits of coral. The sea was perfectly calm; we scarcely heard even the gentle ripple of its tide upon the hard smooth sand. A hazy mountain chain was all we could discern of the opposite coast; but on our left, and very near to us, rose the craggy peaks of Arabia Petraea. Mount Serbal—the Sinai of the early Egyptian Christians, 70,000 of whom are said to have encamped at its base, within the Wadee Feiran—was in our front. Remounting our camels, on we rode; till at last we came to a headland, and attempted to ford a bay. However, both animals and drivers were of one accord, and forced us to turn back. There was no help for it; and we most unwillingly submitted to be slowly and carefully led up and down *staircases* of smooth and slippery rock, until we found ourselves upon the shore again. With difficulty we waded through three or four other bays; much to our own amusement, and the discomfiture of the poor camels, who did not like being up to their knees in water: they are *ships of the Desert*, certainly, but not of the *Sea*! We passed the Wadee Leghan and the Wadee Shelal; and what boundless delight we felt in beholding such

unrivalled prospects! The rocks facing the sea are worn—through the lapse of ages—into the semblance of steps, turrets, terraces, and walls. Lovely indeed were the varied tints that sunset threw over the lofty sandstone crags and gullies, as we advanced with measured steps towards our resting-place in the Wadee Buddra! The after-glow was *gorgeous* that evening! Two very young kids had followed the caravan, and Salvo had taken them beneath his especial care. Their *mother* would have been a greater acquisition under existing circumstances.

We enjoyed our *Arab life* most thoroughly! The pure air was so buoyant and healthful that we felt half inclined to envy, *on the whole*, the wandering sons of Ishmael: and what a relief to be freed, even for a few short weeks, from the trammels of European society!

Early next morning we ascended, on foot, the steep and stony side of Gebel Buddra; pausing continually to admire a succession of magnificent views that each rise and turn presented. I had never beheld a nobler range of wild mountain scenery. The camels did not relish the adventure: it was hard work for them; and still more laborious for their leaders. Occasionally one of the former would fall down, or contrive to disencumber himself of his load. Both men and animals were in strange keeping with this rocky pass, whose barren peaks appeared so beautifully diversified, as we gazed upon them in the morning sunlight. The ground whereon we trod was covered with salt. From the summit we descried the Red Sea, which we saw only once again—from Mount Sinai.

Passing through the remainder of Wadee Buddra, we turned to the left, into the Wadee Magara. Inscriptions—some of which must be very ancient, while others seem to be quite modern—are cut in the face of the rock. Whether any of these tablets were wrought by the children of Israel, I leave *others* to determine. Their discovery has already led to much learned discussion; and I trust that, ere long, all doubts as to their

origin will be satisfactorily explained. A Bedouin Sheikh, with a number of loaded camels, here crossed our path: he had travelled with Vincenzo five years ago, and looked pleased to meet him again. He was conveying a cargo of charcoal—an article for which the Bedouins are famous—to Cairo. This charcoal is made from the branches of the invaluable *sont* tree; which produces gum in great quantities, and whose timber is highly prized for ship building. It is probably identical with the Gopher wood, used by Noah for the construction of the Ark; and also with the Shittim wood of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness.* The Sheikh I have just named informed us that we should find several inscriptions high above where we stood, if we felt disposed to take the trouble of climbing for half an hour to reach them; but the sun was hot; and as we were drawing near the Gebel Mohkatteb, or *Written Mountain*—where we knew we should see many more—it was judged advisable to proceed thither at once. This unexpected *rencontre* gave Mr. T. an opportunity of exchanging his camel—which was completely tired out—for another and a better one. The Arabs gathered a few wild gourds for us: they were the size of large oranges, of a pale yellow colour, and extremely bitter to the taste. “And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and shred *them* into the pot of pottage: for they knew *them* not.”*

We wandered about the Mohkatteb for at least an hour. Many of the inscriptions are marvellously preserved, if they were *verily* traced by the wandering Israelites: but if not, by whom *were* they written? They *may* be relics of the early Christians, as some travellers suppose; and this was my own first impression; but I have since heard such powerful arguments in favour of their greater antiquity, that I must patiently await the decision of more competent judges. I had, perhaps too hastily, formed

See Calmet's Dictionary of the Bible.

† 2 Kings iv. 39.

my opinion upon the appearance of these sandstone rocks themselves; whose surface, time and the action of the elements have worn, in some parts, into large holes and fissures. Pieces of curiously variegated granite lay scattered about. We descended towards the Wadee Feiran over uneven and rocky ground; the blue peak of Mount Serbal towered high above those of its neighbours; and more beautiful than ever was the after glow of sunset. A couple of friendly Sheikhs visited our camp that evening: they helped to form a very merry party, round a blazing fire, in front of the tents. The weather was so exceedingly warm that we could not bear the covering of a quilt at night.

I always found *some* amusement during the half hour that elapsed between breakfast and starting time. If any wild shrubs or tamarisk trees chanced to grow within reasonable distance, I loaded myself with food for my camel; and when *that* was impossible, I picked up bits of granite—of which there were such endless varieties!—or whatever else I could find. And then there was the *sunrise*!—upon which one never could gaze long enough—the naked rocks too, of every colour and fantastic form—and last of all, the busy scene of our encampment; where canteens were packing, camels growling angrily beneath their loads, Arabs lazy and grumbling—and Vincenzo, with *coorbash* in hand and threatening gestures, storming furiously!

I quite agree with Miss Martineau, that one of the greatest nuisances in travelling is *keeping a journal*. One is far more disposed to lie down and rest, after a fatiguing ride of eight or nine hours on a camel, beneath a burning sun; than—having made a hasty *toilette*—to take out one's writing materials. I *persevered*, however, and rejoice that I did so.

Tuesday, January 3rd. It was well that we had arrived within two day's journey of Mount Sinai, for our camels were quite worn out with fatigue: luckily, there was great abundance of aromatic herbage for them. We passed a prostrate palm tree, washed by the winter rains from

some gardens a few miles distant, cultivated by Bedouin Arabs. The extremely fine weather we enjoyed was a cause for great thankfulness; for the month of January is always included in what is considered the wet season of the year; and how many beds of mountain torrents—then quite dry—bare evidence of what *had been*! Our friends duly warned us, before we left Cairo, against the probability of our progress being thereby very seriously impeded; but time was precious, and Mount Sinai was one of the principal objects of our pilgrimage. As we advanced, we saw more rocks with inscriptions; and about noon reached the gardens to which I alluded just now. We rested near them, under the shade of some fine sont trees. Palms grew here, and also Nabbuks; the latter bear a small fruit which resembles the Siberian crab apple in appearance, and tastes like the arbutus berry. There were a few rude huts, not far from where we sat; built in the usual manner, of mud and stones, with flat roofs. This is a lovely spot—an *oasis* in the Wilderness. It is situated within a narrow ravine, on one side of which rises a lofty range of broken cliffs. Our Arabs called the place Hashwár. Continuing our way, we soon came to still prettier gardens, thickets, and plantations—of sont, tamarisk, and palm trees—whose branches frequently met over our heads; so that it was difficult, in our *exalted position*, to avoid being caught in them. The camels drank from a pool of water; and ate the bulrushes that bordered each side of a path, leading through the midst of this comparatively fertile tract. Some Bedouins, in *tarbooshes* and brown cloth *'abáyehs*, looked remarkably picturesque: they exchanged friendly greetings with our escort. The inhabitants of this valley are about fifty in number, and live in tents and huts. A woman and a young boy, who were driving a large flock of goats, ran to hide themselves among the rocks. Another female, with a bundle of sticks on her head, was less bashful; and quietly stood still to gratify her curiosity as we rode by; she wore a profusion of necklaces; and entirely concealed her features by a sort of

mask of coarse white linen, down the centre of which was a black stripe. The surrounding mountains were higher than any we had yet seen in the Wilderness. Besides goats, we saw plenty of sheep and young camels. This day passed more agreeably even than usual; so glad were we to meet with this flourishing little *territory*; to hear once more the barking of dogs, the bleating of flocks, and the merry voices of children at play. Near the last of these gardens, was an opening between rocks so smooth and perpendicular, that it almost appeared as if made by the hand of man. This *gallery* is one hundred feet long and nearly eight feet wide. Contrary to custom, we had the start of our baggage camels; and reached the place of our encampment, in the Wadee Emrich, before them; but they were not far behind. Bekééh (the cook), unused to the conveniences of an English kitchen, was in the habit of leisurely plucking his fowls as he rode along.

We had scarcely dismounted when we received a visit from a Bedouin Sheikh, whose tents we had just passed: he politely invited us to dinner, but we pleaded fatigue as an excuse. Mr. T. made him a present of tobacco. His dress was of very handsome striped silk, in which red and yellow were the prevailing colours. We had completely turned Mount Serbal, which now appeared under a different aspect, and was divided into many towering pinnacles.

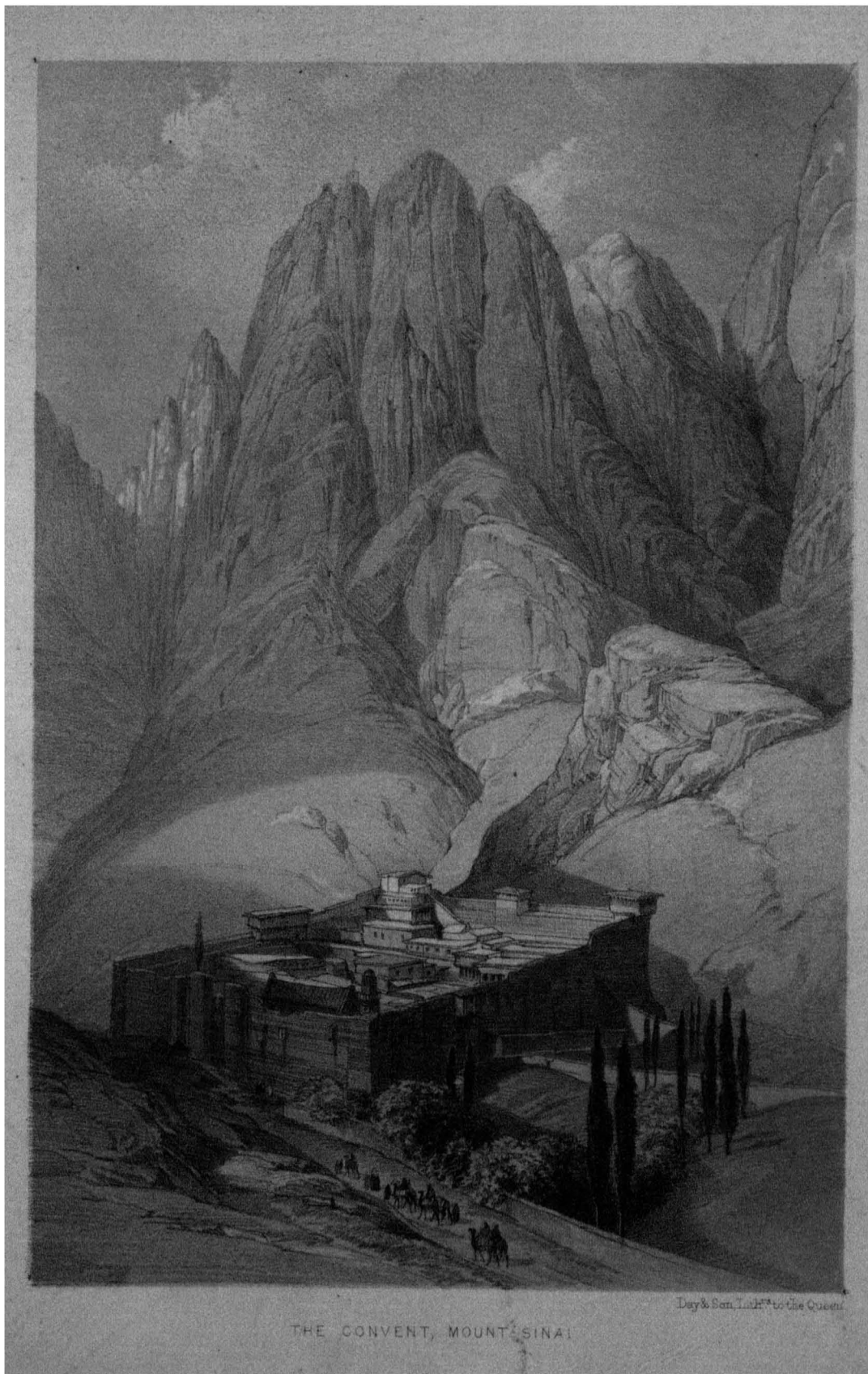
The next morning was bitterly cold, and we hastily swallowed our *open air* breakfast, with blue faces and shivering limbs. There was a marked and sudden change in the temperature, and the wind blew keenly from the north east. After luncheon we walked for an hour or two, to warm ourselves; and ere long reached a plantation of *sont* and tamarisk trees—whence two *very juvenile* camels would fain have followed us; but of course they were driven back. Great quantities of gold were observable in the sand and granite. Late in the afternoon we passed a range of castellated rocks, which extended a long way; and rode through a fine ravine, about

half a mile in length. The night was frosty, but we did not feel cold in our comfortable tents.

As we approached Mount Sinai, granite rocks of stupendous height seemed to close in upon us; although Gebel Moussa itself is not visible until one arrives within a short distance from its base. On our right we saw some Arab tents—the women, as usual, running away as we drew near; and not very far from thence we came to two wells of water; at one of which we were accosted by the *Basha*, as he is called—Turkish government agent—who with no small difficulty wrote down our names in a book.

A broad pathway—made by the monks of Mount Sinai—leads, by a gradual ascent, to the *fortress convent*; a gloomy looking building—with its massive turreted walls, loopholes, and bristling cannon. Voices were heard, and faces peered through a door—perhaps thirty feet from the ground—which is masked by a wooden projection. The letter we had brought from the Greek bishop at Cairo—for this convent belongs to the Greek Church—was forthwith produced, drawn up by a windlass, and carried to the Superior. Without this sort of introduction, a traveller cannot be received here on any pretence whatever. Only two nights previous to our arrival, a man with his dromedary, and a single attendant, joined our encampment for a few hours. He was returning from Mount Sinai to Cairo; having been refused admittance into the convent, because he had neglected to provide himself with the required document; and notwithstanding that one of the monks was his own brother!

Our claim to hospitality accepted, we were not raised aloft, as we rather *hoped*—according to the *every day* mode of ingress and egress—but were led round to the back of the building; and entered, by a very low postern, into the midst of a perfect *chaos* of uncouth erections! Walls, churches, and houses, stood huddled together in strange confusion! We were paraded through dark passages and badly paved courts; up and



Day & Son, Lith. to the Queen.

THE CONVENT, MOUNT SINAI

down awkward stone staircases and wooden ladders; until, at *long last*, we reached the "Strangers' Corridor;" where we found apartments much more spacious, clean, and comfortable, than we had anticipated. Each of them was furnished with a broad divan, covered with gaily printed calico, and well supplied with cushions; a few plain chairs; and a common deal table, with a brass lamp upon it—which had three burners, like those from Pompeii, and of which so many are used in Italy at the present day. To these our own mattresses, sheets, pillows, quilts, and carpets, were speedily added; so that we had no reason to feel otherwise than quite satisfied with our quarters. The walls of the rooms were whitewashed; and the floors, like that of the balcony upon which they opened, were paved with flag-stones. The monks immediately sent us coffee; a plate of sweetmeat made of dates and almonds, for which this convent is famous; a bottle of *araki*—palm brandy—likewise manufactured here, and habitually drunk in the refectory; and, what *we* had learnt to relish above all things—a decanter of delicious cold water. Our luncheon over, a priest conducted us into the church of the "Transfiguration," where service was going on—to celebrate the Greek Christmas, which agrees with our old style of reckoning. The monks were chaunting mass; while their venerable Superior was scattering incense from a silver censor, as he walked round the nave, attired in his robes of office. We remained but a short time, and were then shewn the "Chapel of the Burning Bush." Before entering, we were requested by our *cicerone*, who spoke Italian, to take off our boots.—"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."* Beneath the altar is a silver plate, covering the sacred spot, and where lamps of silver are always kept lighted. Other lamps, of most elegant design, are suspended from the ceiling: the floor is richly carpeted. Of the many well executed paintings that adorn the walls, one is said

* Exodus iii 5.

to be the work of the Emperor Constantine.* It is in compartments, and does the artist great credit.

The date usually assigned to the foundation of the convent of Mount Sinai is that of the sixth century after Christ; most writers agreeing in the belief that it was founded by the Emperor Justinian; and not by the Empress Helena, who merely built a *tower* there. Within the walls, which form an irregular quadrangle, are twenty-five small churches, besides that of the "Transfiguration;" and—marvellous to relate—a mosque and minaret! Policy seems to suggest this concession; and we were coolly told by a Greek priest, that, since the Muslim religion was so tolerant towards other creeds, it doubtless merited a like treatment at *their* hands! However, tradition asserts that this Mosque was erected by the Prophet himself; when he, on one occasion, visited Mount Sinai.

We had hardly finished dinner when an ecclesiastic paid us a visit, who introduced himself as "Professor of Theology." His black cloth cloak, lined with wolf's fur, was a handsome addition to the rest of his costume. His features were regular, and his bright dark eyes were piercing and animated. He spoke French fluently, and said he had lived in France for many years. Like *all* the monks of Mount Sinai, he is by birth a Greek. He told us he was educated for the medical profession, but had preferred that of the church; and from his conversation he seemed content with his mode of life, although the ideas of *a-ci-devant* man of the world were still sufficiently apparent. With all the eagerness of a schoolboy, he quickly devoured a plate of bonbons, drank two or three wineglasses of pure brandy, and finished with a cup of tea. There was a certain restlessness in his manner, which tended to confirm Vincenzo's belief that his family sent him here for *change of air*! There is some *talent* in his madness, at any rate.

* There are likewise a few painted shells in this chapel, which are exceedingly curious.

In the evening we attended vespers: the church was but dimly lighted. A silver salver and vase, containing the sacred elements, were placed in the centre of the nave; and while the Superior pronounced a benediction, the other officials walked round them in procession. At midnight we were awakened by a most discordant ringing of bells, summoning the brotherhood to prayers. This was *Christmas day*—the sixth of January—and the monks had a busy time of it! The six cannon were fired at sunrise; when, quite unable to go to sleep again, we opened the windows, and looked down upon our Arabs; who, not admitted into the convent, were sitting in a circle round a cheerful blaze outside; the camels lying near them.

As we left the breakfast table, a Russian pilgrim—of whom vast numbers visit Mount Sinai, on their way to and from Jerusalem—came singing towards us, and begged for a little sugar. We then sent for a guide; also for one of our own men, who was to carry the lunchcon; and hastily prepared to ascend Gebel Moussa; which I *hope*, and would fain *believe*, is the *true* Mount Sinai; whereon—"the Lord descended in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." *

Leaving the convent by the low postern I before mentioned, we at once began the ascent. On the opposite side of the ravine rose Gebel Harouf. The first individual whom we met was our Sheikh, who approached with smiling face, and shook hands with us. Our priestly conductor could, unfortunately, speak no language but Arabic; however, we had implicit faith in the guidance of *Messrs. Murray and Stephens*, whose books were our constant companions. At our heels pursued a whole army of followers, who *would* not be driven back. They pressed upon us—even more closely than the people who beset visitors to the field of Waterloo, with their bullets, buttons, and bits of iron. These Arabs had crystals to sell, which

* Exodus xix. 18.

they find among the rocks, and were willing to run the chance of being employed in some way or other during the day.

We felt the heat very much, for there was a fiercely burning sun over our heads; although the road lately made by Abbas Pacha, on the occasion of his visiting this locality, and which extends nearly two thirds of the whole distance, renders the task of climbing Gebel Moussa comparatively easy. We passed a group of women, whose faces were concealed by masks of coarse white linen; their glossy black hair was fastened in front by a small ornament of coral; and they wore necklaces, rings, and bracelets, in profusion. They remained seated on a heap of stones, and did not seem at all afraid of us. In about an hour we came to a place where a quantity of bricks had been deposited, by order of Abbas Pacha; for the purpose of erecting a station, or house of rest. Here we sat down for a few moments to enjoy a refreshing breeze; and to look below and around us over the deep gorge, with its craggy peaks, its gullies, and varied lights and shades. We hardly dared to glance *upwards*: the summit—ten thousand feet above the level of the sea—was still so far off. The scenery became wilder as we proceeded: huge projecting masses of rock threatened to overwhelm us! I walked on, in advance of the rest of my party; and when I paused to take breath, had ample leisure to gaze upon the awful grandeur which surrounded me. Apart from Scriptural association, the picture was in itself sublime! On the right was a fearful precipice, on the left towered perpendicular cliffs of tremendous height! At the end of Abbas Pacha's road is a gallery; pierced, for perhaps two hundred yards, through the solid rock. From thence we descended into a hollow, and turned abruptly to the left. A third hour—and half a one besides—from the time of our leaving the convent, was now to be occupied in difficult and most toilsome scrambling. Exhausted and breathless, we were thankful to reach the highest point; and have some rest and refreshment, under shadow of

the walls of what was formerly a chapel. The monks had sent—as a *supplement* to Vincenzo's luncheon—coffee, oranges, bread, and a bottle of *araki*: the three first were particularly welcome. A fire was soon prepared for making the coffee; and before the cups were filled, the guide stirred it several times with his walking stick! Close to our resting place the Arabs pointed out a cave, and said “Moussa.” There is another small chapel here, surmounted by a Greek cross, upon whose simple altar flickered a solitary candle. A little below the summit, from whence we had a last and distant view of the Red Sea, is shown the grotto into which Moses crept—says tradition—while the “*Glory of the Lord*” passed by.

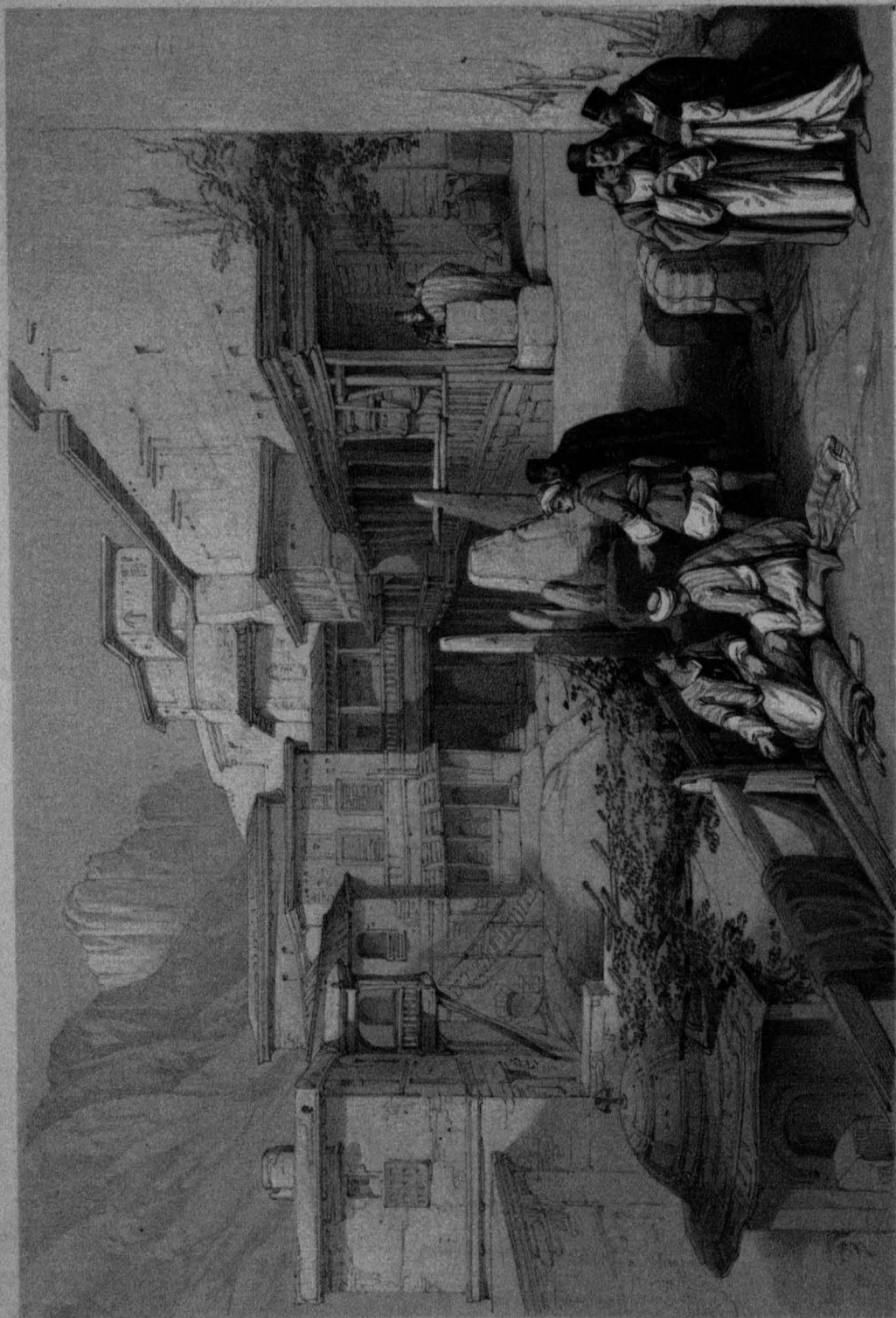
We did not return by Abbas Pacha's road, but continued our descent straight forward—not forgetting to look at the legendary footprint of Mohammed's camel—through the most magnificent mountain gorge ever beheld by mortal eyes; until we reached the little chapel of St. Elias, built over the cave where that prophet is said to have spent forty days and forty nights in commune with his God.* Facing the entrance is an inscription, traced upon the rock—in Sinaïtic characters, like those of the *most ancient* on Gebel Mohkatteb. Near a fountain of excellent water—dug, say the monks, by St. Elias' own hands—is an old cypress tree, of enormous girth; planted more than a century ago, by St. Damianos, a hermit. The Arabs sprang aloft like monkeys, to gather for us some branches with ripe cones attached to them. This open space is considered to be the summit of Mount Horeb. We soon arrived at another fountain; called the “Well of St. Simeon the Cobbler,” from the following legend:—A shoemaker, who was performing a pilgrimage to the top of the holy mountain, sat down to rest beneath the shadow of an overhanging rock. Meanwhile, he took out his cobbling materials; and turning his thoughts towards heavenly things, resolved to quit the temptations of the

* 1 Kings xix. 8, 9.

world for ever, and end his days on this very spot. There was no water here *then* ; but the instant the pious shoemaker had made this resolution, a spring gushed forth, and has continued to flow ever since !

Within half an hour from hence we came to a chapel, dedicated to the Virgin Mary ; and passed through two narrow archways, originally secured by gates of iron ; where, in former times, it was necessary for pilgrims to show a pass from the Superior of the convent, before they could proceed to their devotions in the once numerous and richly decorated chapels, erected on the upper part of Gebel Moussa. The ascent was by three thousand steps.

After our fatiguing walk we were glad to reach the convent, and re-enter the low portal, which was most cautiously and deliberately opened to admit us. A crowd of beggars, of both sexes and all ages, among whom was a very old man—a dwarf ; besieged our party with cries for *backsheesh*. The “Professor” paid us another visit in the evening, and took us out upon a terrace, overlooking the entire of this extraordinary maze of buildings. He was anxious to persuade us to ascend Mount St. Catharine the next day ; but when at last he frankly acknowledged that to reach the summit, go over the Latin convent there, and return before dark, would require a start at sunrise ; we gave up the idea—although we thereby missed seeing the place where Moses broke the Tables of the Law (?)—and arranged with our *friend* that he should accompany us to the “Convent of the Forty Martyrs.” He readily obtained permission from the Superior to act as our *cicerone* ; and delighted as a child “*to have a walk*,” he set off at such a quick pace, in the broiling sun, that we could scarcely keep up with him. In vain we pleaded the fatigues of yesterday ; he only laughed at us, and *tore away* faster than ever ! We passed a huge pile of bricks ; ready for the intended erection of a palace, by Abbas Pacha. He was charmed—and no wonder—with the pure air of these mountains ; and having a family of delicate children,



Engraving by J. G. Smith, 1840, for the Queen's

INTERIOR OF THE CONVENT — MOUNT SINAI.

he determined to fix their abode here during the summer months. Whether this scheme will yet be accomplished, or has been laid aside since Abbas Pacha's sudden death, remains uncertain. The "Professor"—in reply to some question of mine—said, rather sharply, "How can the Pacha be a man of much information, when he is married? What leisure can any man have for duty, who takes upon himself the *cares of a family*?"

Continuing along the base of Mount Horeb, we came to a large stone—the mould of Aaron's golden calf!—and were requested to look into a hole, or vault, wherein the gold was melted! We stood in the midst of a vast plain, where—tradition informs us, and we may credit her statement—seventy thousand Israelites were assembled. On our right was the "Mountain of Aaron," with the black line of an Arab encampment at its foot. I need scarcely say we had quite as many clamorous followers in our train as before. Further on—also on our right—is the burial ground of those Israelites who died in the Wilderness! and on the opposite side of the plain are some high rocks, from whence fountains gush out most abundantly. Here our enthusiastic conductor pointed to the *identical spot*—beneath a tremendous cliff—where the earth opened, and swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram!—giving at the same time a version of his own, a little at variance with the Scriptural story. "They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation."*

We now turned to the left, into an opening between the mountains; and pursuing our rocky way, we seated ourselves from time to time—gazing with wonder and delight upon the huge boulders, scattered in chaos on every side; the broken crags; and the wild *vistas* between them. Nor did our Arab *escort*, the "Professor," and the *priest*

* Numbers xvi. 33.

guide, at all mar the general effect of such a picture. No writer has altogether done justice to the terrific grandeur of Mount Sinai. It is in truth a scene of *awful desolation*, such as no pen can fully describe; and yet, in strange contrast, here are *fruit gardens* belonging to the monks; the soil of which is washed from the heights above. Near these gardens—in the valley of Rephidim—is shown *the rock*, whereof the Lord commanded Moses, saying, “Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.” *

This rock is more than twelve feet high, and there are several deep marks from whence the water flowed. Close by is shown the place where the golden calf was set up—on a column! Belfagor—*signifying calf*—is the name applied equally to this spot, and to the place where the golden calf was made. After a little more scrambling over sharp and slippery stones, which cut the soles of our boots almost to pieces, we arrived at what are called the “Gardens of the Forty Martyrs;” and sat down to rest upon a low wall, at the edge of a large pool of stagnant water, backed by a plantation of poplars. Here was a fine grove of Olives protected by stone fences; and in various directions were dug channels for irrigation. Between this grove and the garden in which the ruined convent stands, is an enclosure, surrounded by rudely constructed walls of stone; where, during the month of October, people take up their quarters for days together, to enjoy the pleasures of the chase; and find abundance of gazelles, hares, quails, partridges, and storks. Some beautiful specimens of gazelle’s horns had been already offered to us for sale, by the monks and Arabs of Mount Sinai. In the garden of the Forty Martyrs—the particulars of whose martyrdom is by no means clearly explained—we saw, besides olive trees, several

† Exodus xvii. 6.

cypresses of considerable growth, although they are all exceeded in dimensions by that of St. Elias. The convent is still kept in a *slight* degree of repair; and a man, in charge of the place, resides in part of the dilapidated building. Service is occasionally performed in the chapel—whose interior walls were once adorned with painting, now nearly obliterated. The olive wood bell was made to toll its feeble sound for our edification. Over the door is a curious old window of coloured glass, in circular compartments; and light is also admitted through an aperture from above. Leaving the chapel, we mounted up two flights of stone stairs, to a terrace; on one side of which are a few small apartments, wherein adventurous travellers sometimes spend one night, in hopes of being rewarded by a view of sunrise over the highest peak of Mount St. Catharine. Between that peak and the terrace rose Gebel Moussa, upon whose barren top we had so lately stood.

We returned to the garden, and found luncheon ready, and our cloaks spread beneath the shade of one of the largest cypress trees. Again had the fraternity contributed towards our repast, by sending excellent bread, coffee, oranges, and *araki*; also some very unpalatable cheese made of camel's milk, and which comes from Cairo. The "Professor" seemed, however, to think it very good, for he ate an *immense* quantity of it before he smoked his pipe! As we retraced our steps along the valley of Rephidim, we had leisure to notice the variety of valuable wild plants springing up between the rocks; such as the vanilla, *bella donna*, and many others most useful to the monks. High up in an opposite cliff is a cavern, which was once the dwelling of an anchorite, but how human feet could ever reach such a spot, it was impossible to imagine!

This day's excursion was an exceedingly pleasant one. The "Professor" dined with us; but refused to eat meat, as being contrary to his *vows*: he had however, a childish love for sweet things, and—*sotto voce*—a still greater fondness for the brandy bottle! He gave us a good deal of information

respecting the convent and vicinity of Mount Sinai ; which called forth our patient endurance of his long *sittings* in an evening—when his conversational powers generally became somewhat *obscure* ! He was, on one occasion, boasting of the wealth of the great church here ; when, with the artful cunning of a Greek, he suddenly recollected himself ; and, abruptly changing the subject, groaned over the *extreme poverty* of this particular brotherhood !

The apartments occupied by travellers were built about nine years ago, at the joint expense of a rich Cairene cousin of the “Professor,” and the present Superior of the convent. The original “Strangers’ Corridor” was on a lower story, and is now allotted to the use of Russian pilgrims only. Our little *ménage* at Mount Sinai was most snugly compact and comfortable.

We were taken into a room where the monks keep for sale—sweetmeat of dates and almonds ; crystals found in these mountains ; gazelle’s horns ; shells and coral from the Gulf of Akaba ; rosaries made of black worsted ; and silver rings of rude workmanship, stamped with the insignia of St. Catharine—with which every visitor takes care to provide himself, as a token of pilgrimage. There are also small round tin boxes of what is called “*the true Manna of the Israelites*,” sold here. This manna is of a gummy substance, and as sweet as honey : it exudes at certain seasons of the year from the lesser branches of the tamarisk tree, and is produced by the bite of an insect. Vincenzo told us that he had seen it in great quantities near Baghdád, and that it dropped upon his coat as he rode along.

The “Professor’s” next act of kindness was to show us all that was to be seen within the convent walls. We entered the church of the “Transfiguration” by the elaborately carved wooden gates, of the time of the emperor Justinian ; and were once more conducted into the chapel of the “Burning Bush.” Here an amusing dispute occurred, between

our *friend* and the priest who spoke Italian, upon the probability, or otherwise, of Constantine's having executed the painting ascribed to him; the former being decidedly against the imperial legend, while the latter firmly believed in it. The "Professor" settled the matter to his *own* satisfaction, at least, by adding, "As for me, I occupy myself with *great* things, while you have merely to attend to *trifling* matters!"

Our attention was now turned towards the interior of the church itself; and first of all, to the tomb of St. Catharine, the patron saint of Mount Sinai; who was—we were told—broken on the wheel at Alexandria, during the reign of the emperor Maxentius, in order to be put to death; but the wheel snapping in pieces, she was afterwards beheaded, and her body carried by angels to the top of the mountain, which bears her name! It was subsequently discovered there by the monks of Mount Sinai, and they laid it in its present sepulchre. Some doubt is expressed as to whether the whole body is deposited here, or only the head and one hand. This tomb is of carved white marble—with a canopy of the same material, from whence are suspended three gold and four silver lamps, beautifully wrought and designed; to some of which pieces of red coral are attached—valued at two thousand piastres each—and also pearls of extraordinary size and value. The *gold* lamps are Venetian. Several pear-shaped crystals are likewise hung from the canopy.

This edifice—considered by Pococke to be a perfect model of an ancient Greek church—consists of a nave, two side aisles, and three chapels. The nave is built higher than the aisles, and the aisles are higher than the chapels. The walls are covered with Greek paintings of all sizes; many of which are very valuable. The Madonna and Child appear in every direction; and in some instances, their aureoles are of embossed silver. One picture—of the Virgin and infant Jesus—is said to be by the hand of St. Luke! Near this, is a well executed portrait of St. Michael, and another of the Angel Gabriel. St. George and the Dragon is a favourite

subject here; the Last Judgment is represented over and over again; so are the Forty Martyrs; and of course St. Catharine and her Wheel are not omitted. The ceiling of the nave is divided into compartments of blue and gold. The marbles used for the pavement, &c., were, according to the monks, found near Mount Sinai; but Pococke says they were brought from Damascus.* The dome above the altar contains a curious mosaic picture of the Transfiguration—the gift of the emperor Justinian†—and in front of this dome is an immense gilt cross, whereon is painted the figure of our Saviour. Sculptured images are not allowed in Greek churches. The altar, confessionals, reading desks, and many of the picture frames, are inlaid with tortoiseshell, ivory, mother of pearl, and silver—the work of artists within the convent. Elegant silver lamps, like those in the chapel of the “Burning Bush,” and over the tomb of St. Catharine, hang from the roof: to one of them is suspended, by silver chains, a boat with oars—also of silver—symbolic of the “Word.” The golden crown of St. Catharine, set with precious stones, is kept near her tomb; and we likewise saw her ivory crozier, which is fastened upon a small column—or shaft—of inlaid mother of pearl, silver, and tortoiseshell. Some very ancient but well preserved priestly vestments—one of which was French—were displayed to us: they were magnificently embroidered in gold and colours. In addition to all these curiosities is a large piece of Indian tapestry, that must have been handsome in its day, although sadly faded now. Upon the altar—which is one hundred and sixty-two years old—are placed the magnificent silver gilt vessels, required for the church service: also a copy of the Gospels, bound in silver gilt, and adorned with fine enamels. On each side of the altar are two bronze candlesticks, one very much larger than the other. The fonts for Holy Water are extremely pretty: they are formed of three white marble basins, of different sizes—

* See Pococke's *Travels in the East*, vol. 1, p. 150.

† Stephens made a strange mistake in calling this beautiful mosaic a *coarse painting*.

the smallest at the top—and the water flows from the upper and middle receptacle into the lowest, like a miniature fountain. Our guides next led us up a staircase, to a chapel; through which was an inner apartment, containing several portraits. The most conspicuous was that of the present Greek Patriarch, who resides at Constantinople; and who was once Superior of the convent of Mount Sinai. Below the portraits were some quaint old maps; but the *grand* treasure was a manuscript copy of the Evangelists—beautifully written on vellum, in letters of gold, by the emperor Theodosius. This highly prized volume is of the ordinary dimensions of a “Family Bible,” and abounds in exquisite paintings. The binding is of silver gilt. No less curious, is a small Psalter—written eight hundred years ago, by some *young virgin* who died in the Desert. Within a recess stood a large water jar of white marble, carved and painted: close to it was a carved ivory reading desk. We were then shown a cross of embossed silver gilt, about a foot in length, and divided into compartments, in each of which was an admirable piece of carving in *gopher wood*—“the same,” said the “Professor,” as was that of Moses’ staff, when he struck the rock for water!” In the Library of the convent we found the Superior, who received us very kindly; but as he speaks no language except Greek and Turkish, we could merely exchange a few commonplace civilities, through the medium of an interpreter. There was a curious print against the wall, intended to represent the scenery of Mount Sinai—Moses—St. Catharine—and I know not what besides—all jumbled together like figures at a masquerade! The books were divided into two parts—the manuscript, and the printed ones. We had no desire whatever to visit *all* the chapels here—which are poorly furnished, and not worth seeing; but went into that of St. Demetrius, for the sake of its extraordinary echo.

Opposite the apartments occupied by the Superior, are those of the monks. We were invited to enter the Vicar’s cell, as well as that of the

"Professor;" but their state of almost *incredible* dirt and discomfort was so excessively disgusting, that we made as speedy an exit as possible. These cells are supplied with shelves, a chair or two, and a table: mattresses are laid upon a stone bench. Outside are stone divans, with one end raised to support the head. The "Professor" showed us his case of books—some of which have been given to him by travellers—his surgical instruments; and his medicine chest; for he was, as I before mentioned, educated to be a doctor. Mr. T. has made him quite happy by promising a contribution to his stock of drugs.

The Belfry contains three bells, and when they are all ringing together, the noise they make is anything but harmonious: one is of olive wood, another of bronze, and a third of iron.

In honour of certain days, flags are hoisted on the outer walls: there are two of St. Catharine, with white grounds and green borders; one of the Forty Martyrs; and a fourth of St. George and the Dragon.

Two wells of good water are within the convent: one goes by the name of "St. Stephen"—a St. Stephen who was stoned to death here—while the other is declared to be *the* well at which Jethro's daughters found Moses!

Besides the "Professor" and our *paid* guide, we had with us a goodly escort of monks and priests, who led us along dark and winding passages innumerable. The clumsy old locks and hinges were generally very obstinate, although force compelled them to yield eventually. We walked through the gardens, which are carefully cultivated: the monks, being forbidden to eat animal food, depend chiefly upon herbs, fruit, and vegetables, for their subsistence. Their corn, and much of the soil for their gardens, is brought from Cairo. Olives, peaches, vines, date palms, pomegranates, and almond trees—the latter in full blossom—flourish among lofty cypresses. There are only two orange trees; but they are remarkably fine ones, and extremely productive. Near these

gardens is an old tower—inhabited by Arabs, who are employed in various ways by the monks—called the “Observatory of St. Helena.”

I must now endeavour to describe the *Charnel House*. The inmates of this convent—thanks to the salubrity of the air they breathe—frequently live to a great age; but when Death does at last seize upon any member of the brotherhood, his body is buried in the ground, in the usual manner, and left undisturbed for the space of three years. By that time—all putrefaction being at an end—the bones are put into an open basket, which is ticketed with the name of the deceased, and deposited in the charnel house. As we entered within this dreary abode of *departed monkhood*, a lighted taper—thin and spare in dimensions—was given to each individual. A scene—strange indeed, and how contrary to *our* cherished notions of *respect for the dead*!—then ensued. The baskets were freely rummaged, and their contents even jokingly criticised by our companions, in their search for some former acquaintance! Skulls were heaped on the ground, one upon another, like cannon balls; shelf upon shelf was piled with human bones! The St. Stephen—whose well we had just seen—is here, decked out in his robes of office. One large chest is set apart for the remains of the Archbishops of Mount Sinai!—and a *boxful of archbishops* is by no means a sight of every day occurrence! Another chest contains the bones and iron shirts of two young Persian princes, who died here. The skeleton of an anchorite hangs from the roof, arrayed in tatters; and there is a curious old iron cross and girdle, that belonged to some saintly devotee. But we had no desire to linger among this ghastly assemblage; and returning to the convent, we were taken into the *refectory*; an apartment perhaps sixty feet long, with a vaulted roof. The table, in the centre of which was a bronze hand-bell, is placed across the further end; and on one side is a pulpit of painted wood; whence, during the single daily meal, one of the holy brotherhood—of whom there are twenty—reads aloud. Whenever

the monks want to eat between one day's meal and the next, they are allowed a certain quantity of bread, and common *horse beans* soaked in water! The "Professor" walked towards the door of entrance, and taking down a rosary that was hanging there, commenced chaunting from a book, in most discordantly nasal tones, the form of words always pronounced at the ceremony of washing the feet of Russian pilgrims.

Different trades are practised within the convent. We passed a blacksmith's forge as we were leaving the refectory; and I had a pair of boots very well repaired by a *monk cobbler*.

That evening we received a visit from the Superior, who was attended by a priest. He evidently wished to be exceedingly civil to us; and *we* desired to leave nothing undone on our own part. However—with all our attempts at conversation, and many polite speeches on both sides—it was, I am sure, a considerable relief to *everybody* when he rose to depart. He presented each of us with a print, relating to Mount Sinai and signed with his name. He is a fine but stern looking man, about sixty years of age, and has a long white beard. The "Professor" did not, of course, forget us on this our *last evening*; and we once more gazed from the terrace upon the *quaint little city* enclosed within the convent walls. We prepared to leave Mount Sinai with feelings of regret; and I would gladly have carried away *agreeable* impressions alone from that sacred spot; but the greedy forwardness of the monks, in trying what they could extort from us, was too provoking to be patiently endured. Vincenzo angrily exclaimed—"They think ourself *bazaar!*"—when the *holy brotherhood* crowded round him; begging for tea, sugar, coffee, candles, brandy, and whatever they imagined his canteens contained.

Monday, January 9th. The weather was clear and frosty—perhaps rather too cold. We hurried over our breakfast, and were conducted by our *indefatigable friend* to the apartments of the Superior—previous

to the commencement of church service at seven o'clock—in order, according to custom, to bid him farewell before our departure. The “Professor” had caught a heavy cold, and wrapped his warm cloak tightly round his thin figure as he approached the low portal; close to which he pointed out to us a hole in the wall, that we had not observed before, through which bread is passed every morning to the Arabs. He then led us along a subterraneous passage, and across part of the nearest garden, to the front of the convent—where the camels were loading. Shivering from head to foot, we seated ourselves on the edge of a large stone reservoir of water; into which, at one corner, is a descent of stone steps. Fortunately, we had amusement enough in watching our *belongings*, animate and inanimate, as they were—one by one, by means of a thick rope—let down from the high door. It was, as may easily be supposed, a tedious business so far as *time* went. When the crate of fowls descended with *cackling sounds*, the anxious face of the cook was seen watching over its safety.

Our Arabs made noise sufficient for a whole legion of brigands. Two of them fought desperately, in a dispute as to which of their camels was to have the additional weight of a carpet bag; but Vincenzo's strong arm speedily settled the quarrel, by throwing the *bag* of contention in the face of each combatant; giving them, at the same time, a few blows with his *coorbash*. He then turned towards the Sheikh—who behaved disgracefully in not preserving better order—and gave *him also* a good beating! By degrees a crowd of mendicants gathered round us, urging all sorts of unreasonable claims for *backsheesh*—every one having been already paid to his utmost desert.

Vincenzo procured an ample supply of the excellent bread made in the convent, which kept quite sweet and good for a fortnight. Bread was likewise given by the monks to our Arabs through the hole near the postern; and some more was thrown from the high door, to “cheer us on

our way." At the moment of starting, the Sheikh ran up to Vincenzo, threw his arms round his neck, and kissed him!—So ended their quarrel. We bade adieu to the "Professor" with mutual expressions of good will; and exchanged greetings *en passant* with the Turkish Basha, who had met us on the day of our arrival at Mount Sinai, and was again smoking his pipe at the well. A fine perspective of the distant mountains opened out before us: their varied tints were truly beautiful; and we passed a Sheikh's tomb, which at the first glance we mistook for a tent. The air was delightfully fresh and bracing. Our halting place was in a sheltered nook, protected by high rocks. The tents of our Sheikh's father were pitched at about three hours' distance; and the former, pushing on alone, to give tidings of our approach, remained all night with his tribe: while the old Sheikh himself joined our camp at midnight, and escorted us early the following morning to his *Desert home—the dwelling of his ancestors!*

This encampment of the Bedouin tribe of Lassayd, whose chief has authority over two others—those of Howára and Legghát—consisted of a line of seven or eight black tents, made of woven goat's hair; which, being raised upon poles, lower at the sides than in the centre, possessed the advantages and appearance of a sloping roof. The two Sheikhs assisted us to dismount; and leading us into one of their tents, made signs that we should sit down upon a carpet. The old Sheikh had a dignified and courteous manner, with a countenance of stern resolve. He *looked* what in fact he *was*—a Bedouin chief!—whose "hand" *could* "be against every man." * His beard was grey, and not very long. His dress was of no more costly material than that of his inferiors; but the handles of his dagger, sword, and pistols, were of richly chased silver. Some stranger Sheikh was also here, equally distinguished by the handsome weapons which he carried in his girdle. A fire was instantly lighted for preparing coffee; and at the same time we heard the process of grinding corn

* Genesis xvi. 12.



Day & Son Lith^{rs} to the Queen.

SHEIKH OF THE DESERT.

to make bread. Our young Sheikh now requested that Miss —— and myself would pay a visit to the *ladies*; and we accompanied him first to the tent of his father's two wives. The principal lady—who had just completed her hospitable task of baking a loaf—advanced towards the entrance; took each of us by the hand; kissed our cheeks (without removing the white gauze mask, adorned with coins and gold embroidery, that covered her face); and made signs that we should seat ourselves upon a cloak of snowy white cashmere, spread upon a carpet in one corner of her simple dwelling. Her movements were extremely graceful; her limbs beautifully formed; and although her features—with the exception of a pair of fine dark eyes—were entirely concealed, we fancied she must be very young. Two thick plaits of glossy black hair hung down behind, nearly to her feet; and she wore a great variety of ornaments, among which were bracelets composed of silver and leather. Her companion was neither so finely attired, nor so closely veiled as herself; and there was nothing remarkable in her general appearance, save that she too had dark and expressive eyes. With a trifling gift to the first lady, we took our leave; having terrified nearly out of her senses a little girl of five years old, who ran screaming away to a distance. This child's hair was fastened over her brow with a mother of pearl medallion.

The young Sheikh had also two wives; and in duty bound, we paid our respects to them likewise. His first wife was stone blind; and her head and face were closely enveloped in a black cloth *habarah*: taking our right hands in her's, she raised them to her lips. The other female stood by her side, and removed her veil for a moment: she was quite a girl, but not at all pretty. Both these ladies wore strings of beads, and silver ornaments; which were neither so costly nor in such profusion as those of the old Sheikh's wives.

Once more seated within the *great man's* tent—the flat newly baked loaf was placed before us, raised from the ground upon an earthen jar; and

coffee was served in little china cups. We then broke off with our fingers pieces of bread from the loaf, and dipped them into a deep pewter plate of *diib*s (dark coloured honey) which stood near us. Our wild entertainers sat before us—outside—in a semi-circle round the fire, smoking their pipes. Born to deeds of desperate daring, and governed by laws of their own, they are not without their *savage virtues*.

Before we went away, Mr. T. bought one of the largest sheep I ever saw, with a noble fleece of wool, as a gift to our Arabs in honour of the day; and presented *our host* with some scarfs and handkerchiefs. When these important matters were satisfactorily arranged, we shook hands with the old Sheikh—thanking him for his hospitality in the very few words of Arabic our party could muster—and resumed our journey. The young Sheikh had not the least idea how old were either his father or himself!—for the Bedouins keep no account of ages.

In an hour afterwards we came to a winding, steep, and rugged mountain track—called by the Arabs Gebel Lusía—some parts of which were very slippery and dangerous, being mere ledges of rock. However, the gorge through this pass is exceedingly fine; and is quickly succeeded by sandy plains, abundantly strewed with the lovely white broom, and many shrubs and flowers besides—particularly the delicate white crocus. Wild sorrel too, was springing up here and there.

During the afternoon we unexpectedly saw again the old Sheikh of the Lassayd. He had taken a *short cut*; with only three of his tents—which were already pitched—and came forward to greet us. We repeatedly crossed the now dry beds of what must, after heavy rains, be furious torrents; and I need not say how *more than fortunate* we considered ourselves in escaping them!—notwithstanding their grand and terrible effect amid the wild scenery of the Wilderness. Our encampment was on a broad and level expanse of sand, with Mount Sinai still in view. The Arabs had a famous *feast*; and Vincenzo could scarcely rouse

them the next morning from their *apoplectic slumbers*! They devoured the whole sheep—inside and all!—cutting it up into small pieces, which they threw upon their fire; and snatching them—when done enough—from the burning embers with their fingers!

Wednesday, January 11th. We started a little later than usual—for the reason I have named—and riding close to the foot of Gebel Tyh, soon entered upon a beautiful mountain pass. It was steep and sadly toilsome for the poor camels; who seemed as though they had eaten nothing for days past, so greedily did they crop a certain shrub (*Gatta*) that grew plentifully in our track. The Sheikh, who is of course our *guide*, loitered—contrary to custom—in the rear with the baggage camels; and when, at last, we reached a spot where it appeared uncertain whether our proper course lay to the right hand or the left, an argument necessarily ensued between our dragoman and the camel drivers. Three or four times did we “advance and retire.” We even began to speculate on the chances that—like the Israelites of old—*we also* were perhaps doomed to wander out our remaining days in this barren and thirsty land; when, to our great relief, we were joined by the rest of the caravan. Vincenzo was in no mood to be *humbugged* with idle excuses about *protecting the luggage*: he scolded *furiously*; and again did not scruple to make free use of his *coorbash* upon the delinquent’s shoulders! The almost instantaneous result of his words and treatment were quite *marvellous*! Thoroughly humbled, the Sheikh continued ever afterwards in close attendance!

Peace restored, we progressed slowly but steadily. The rocks were high, and worn into an endless variety of architectural forms. We ascended and descended, and then advanced with caution up a frightfully precipitous path. Often did we pause upon that steep ascent, and glance with awe and wonder on the towering crags and dark ravine below; while in the distance we beheld plain after plain of yellow sand, divided from each other by rocky mountain ranges; and further still—far as

the eye could reach—rose the hallowed peaks of Mount Sinai! How inconceivably magnificent must that noble prospect appear, when rapid torrents roar and foam down those deep gullies; bearing along, in their mad career, immense masses of stone! Through one lofty rock, Nature has made a rounded arch of enormous, and nearly perfect, proportions! The camels were led with extreme difficulty; and, to the imminent risk of losses and breakages, frequently relieved themselves of their loads. Both they and their owners were a charming addition to such a scene; as—winding up the pass—they were occasionally lost to sight for a brief space, and then suddenly came in view once more. The weather was delightful; and doubly agreeable to our feelings, because we had so lately anticipated the reverse. The wind was so high during the previous night, that we trembled for the *stability of our tents*: in the early morning the sky was very cloudy, and we had every probability of rain, instead of that bright and lovely day! We observed many varieties of flints lying on the ground; some of them would bear a high polish. After a gradual ascent of more than two hours, we found ourselves upon a vast *plateau* of barren table land. The tents were pitched in a hollow, strewn with infinitely diversified specimens of flint and limestone formation.

Our breakfast the next morning, before day had fully dawned, was in truth *al fresco*. The sky was grey and lowering; but, with a little discomfort, we gained at least *one* advantage; for we beheld the *moving panorama* of our Desert life, tinted with shades of colouring altogether new. On one side was a chain of mountains, on the other the interminable Wilderness: while, to complete this Eastern picture, were thrown out in clear relief—the dark faces of our Arabs, the camels loading, our servants, and the entire paraphernalia of our encampment. As usual, the Arabs were lazy; and Vincenzo was urging them to greater exertion in loud and angry tones.

That day we passed some very curiously stratified limestone rocks ; and ate our luncheon in most romantic style, within a shady bower of Tamarisks ! We had hardly started again, when we met three Arab women, seated on camels ; and soon came to a well of good water, at which a herd of about thirty camels were drinking. They belonged to one of the proudest and most independent of the Bedouin tribes—the Towári. The water was raised in a skin bucket ; by a boy, whose hair was arranged in four short plaits, hanging straight from his head. The camels drank from a bowl scooped out of a block of limestone. There was famous pushing and gesticulating, chattering and wrangling, between the two tribes ; for, of course, we and our animals must be satisfied, as well as the Towáris. The camels were nothing loth to join in the affray. Those of Towári were remarkably fine creatures : one of them fell flat on its side in the general *mélée*, and was with difficulty raised again. So great were the noise and confusion, that we felt quite bewildered ; and even rather alarmed for the consequences. I was, for some minutes, held fast between a couple of our loaded camels. Two pretty little donkeys stood quietly by, the very personification of patience ! I hope their virtue was ultimately rewarded ; but I fear they must have waited a long time, poor things !—for their unwieldy rivals appeared as if they never could imbibe a sufficient quantity of water ; they were evidently taking in a supply that was to last for several days. Rajéeb is the name of this well. We encamped in the Wadee El Arish, which is surrounded by low chalky hills, full of fossils. Tufts of parched herbage were scattered here and there in the sand.

A fine sunrise cheered the early part of our next day's journey, which was otherwise unusually dreary. Far distant, in our front, were chalky cliffs, as white as those of Dover. It was quite a subject of rejoicing, when—after several hours—we passed a few isolated masses of sandstone, that looked like ruins until we rode up to them : some of these rocks