



TRAVELS
AMONG
THE ARAB TRIBES

INHABITING THE COUNTRIES
EAST OF SYRIA AND PALESTINE,
INCLUDING A JOURNEY
FROM NAZARETH TO THE MOUNTAINS BEYOND THE DEAD SEA,
AND FROM THENCE THROUGH THE
PLAINS OF THE HAURAN
TO
BOZRA, DAMASCUS, TRIPOLY, LEBANON, BAALBECK,
AND BY THE VALLEY OF THE ORONTES
TO SELEUCIA, ANTIOCH, AND ALEPPO.

WITH AN APPENDIX,
CONTAINING A REFUTATION OF CERTAIN UNFOUNDED CALUMNIES
INDUSTRIOUSLY CIRCULATED AGAINST THE AUTHOR OF THIS WORK, BY MR. LEWIS BURKHARDT,
MR. WILLIAM JOHN BANKES, AND THE QUARTERLY REVIEW.

By J. S. BUCKINGHAM,
AUTHOR OF TRAVELS IN PALESTINE AND THE COUNTRIES EAST OF THE JORDAN
MEMBER OF THE LITERARY SOCIETIES OF BOMBAY AND MADRAS,
AND OF THE ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BENGAL.

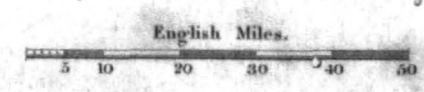
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1825.



Map of Syria
with the Route pursued by
MR. BUCKINGHAM,
in his Travels among the
ARAB TRIBES on the EAST of the JORDAN,
including a great portion of the
ANCIENT AURANTES or MODERN HAURAN,
with the newly ascertained positions in the intermediate districts of
Palestine & Syria
from the
DEAD SEA TO ALEPPI

Drawn & Engraved by Wm. Hall





LONDON.
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New-Street-Square.

TO
BENJAMIN BABINGTON, Esq.

THIS
VOLUME OF TRAVELS

IS
GRATEFULLY DEDICATED,

AS
A TOKEN OF THE SINCERE ESTEEM AND REGARD

OF
HIS AFFECTIONATE AND FAITHFUL FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E

It is now three years since I had the pleasure of laying before the public a volume of *Travels in Palestine*, through the countries of Bashan and Gilead, and the region of the Decapolis, East of the River Jordan. The flattering reception given to that work by the literary world in general, and the uniform testimony of the principal critics of the day to its merits, occasioned it to pass rapidly into a second edition; when the *Quarterly Review*, which had been convicted, by certain passages in these *Travels*, of glaring errors in its criticisms on the works of others, put forth one of the most slanderous articles that ever appeared even in its pre-eminently slanderous pages, with a view to condemn and destroy (as far as its malignant influence could effect such destruction,) what almost every periodical publication in England had before commended, with the most unequivocal appearance of sincerity and good faith.

Being then in India, I was unable to do more than publish a *Reply* there to the aspersions of this *Review*, for criticisms they

could not be called ; and this was done without a moment's delay. Circumstances, over which I had no control, prevented the republication of this Reply in England, from which, no doubt, many must have inferred that nothing had appeared elsewhere. Having myself, however, been compelled to leave India, and return to this country, from causes sufficiently well known to the public to render any detail of them in this place quite unnecessary, I have embraced the earliest opportunity, which a suspension of my struggles to obtain redress for the injuries I have received from the East India government, now fortunately admits, to bring before the public, the present volume of Travels among the Arab Tribes inhabiting the countries East of Syria and Palestine, in the hope of its being found still more worthy their approbation than the former one, already named.

The calumnies of the Quarterly Review, with the complete refutation by which I was enabled to repel them as soon as they appeared in India ; the unfounded aspersions of the late Mr. Burckhardt, with an exposition of their falsehood by the very individual cited by him as an authority for his facts ; and the unparalleled conduct of Mr. William John Bankes, Member of Parliament for the University of Cambridge, and son of Mr. Henry Bankes, the Member for Corfe Castle ; with a complete exposure of the unwarrantable proceedings of the father and son, in an attempt to suppress my work, in which they succeeded for nearly two years, by deterring Mr. Murray, the bookseller, from fulfilling his engagement, after it had been finally made binding on his part ; are all included in an Appendix at the end of the present volume.

The reader is, therefore, earnestly requested not to close the book without glancing through the Appendix in question, where he will find, among other attractive pieces, the following choice *morceaux* to repay his attention:—Some fragments of letters from the late Mr. Burckhardt to myself, sent to me from Egypt and Arabia, full of the most friendly professions and assurances.—Portions of a paper shortly afterwards circulated among others, and without my knowledge, by the same Mr. Burckhardt, full of the most infamous aspersions on my character; citing as his authority for many of the facts, a gentleman who positively denies, in writing, having ever made many of the assertions imputed to him!—Letters of Mr. William John Bankes, addressed to me in Syria, after we had travelled together for a considerable time, acknowledging the superiority of my activity in writing, and the greater accuracy of my judgment in observing, as compared with his own; admitting his having read my notes, and expressing a hope that I should not be ashamed to see my name associated with his in any joint literary undertaking.—A Letter from the same individual, sent from Thebes at a subsequent period, insinuating that I had never written any notes of my own, at all; and stating my ignorance to be such that I could not even copy a Greek inscription, and did not know a Turkish building from a Roman one!—A Letter from Mr. Henry Bankes, senior, to Mr. Murray the bookseller, cautioning him against publishing any thing of mine on Syria, as his son was soon expected in England; and desiring that my work should be suppressed, until his son could get his materials on the same country published before me!—A Letter from Mr. William Gifford, the editor of the Quarterly Review, to Mr. Murray, acknowledging that my manuscript was interesting and

important in some degree, but recommending him to retrench forty or fifty pages of my volume, under the pretence of its containing blasphemy of so powerful and influential a nature, that it would not be safe to put it even into the hands of the printers, as they, he supposed, had souls to be saved as well as other men, and could not read it without being inevitably corrupted, and thus becoming subject to everlasting damnation! adding, however, that with all this, he rather wished the work to be published.—A Letter from the Lord Bishop of Calcutta, acknowledging the perusal of several portions of the work, (the whole of the manuscript being placed in his hands for revision,) without objecting to the use of any expressions, except that of the word “supernatural,” instead of “miraculous,” in alluding to some scriptural event.—A Letter from the Rev. Dr. Burder, a celebrated author and Christian Divine, characterising the very same volume, which Mr. William Gifford declared to be too full of blasphemy to be trusted even in the hands of the printers, as the very best book of Travels he had ever met with on the country of which it treated, and one that could not fail to stand high in that class of literature to which it belonged. — The article from the Quarterly Review itself, in which not a single proof of blasphemy is fairly established against this alleged magazine of “infidelity and obscenity,” though the forty or fifty pages that Mr. Gifford had advised to be blotted out, to prevent the eternal perdition of the printers, had neither been obliterated nor retrenched. — And lastly, a Reply to the calumnies of Mr. Burckhardt, Mr. Bankes, and the Quarterly Review, as well as to various writers in India who followed in their steps, and whose continued aspersions were no doubt greatly instrumental in provoking that hostile feeling on the part of the

government of India, by which I was so unjustly, without a trial or a hearing, banished from that country, while I was proceeding in an action for damages against those slanderers, in the Supreme Court of Justice at Calcutta; when, no justification being in the slightest degree proved, damages were awarded against them accordingly.

These remarkable documents, placed as they are in illustrative juxtaposition, will, it is hoped, reward the attention of even the most indolent and indifferent; and it is, therefore, with a view to lessen the chances of their escaping the reader's attention, that I advert to them so pointedly in the Preface; again repeating my urgent request, that he will examine the evidence therein developed, for himself, and let it have its due weight on his mind, in estimating the real merits of the question.

I pass from this subject, to advert to a few of the more prominent circumstances connected with the preparation of the present volume, and on which I desire to found my claim to some degree of indulgence for any imperfections which it may be supposed to display.

The notes of the journey, copious as they were in their original form, were taken under all the disadvantages of Asiatic travelling, which are now so well known as to require little more than a bare mention, to be immediately understood. They continued in this state, from the period of their being first made in 1816, up to the moment of my quitting India in 1823. The same may be said of the sketches, which were rude and

imperfect even at first, as I never pretended to greater skill in this, than the capacity to preserve a general idea, in outline, of remarkable buildings and striking views, and never intended these for any thing more than to assist my memory in preserving more accurate recollections of the scenes to which they related. It must be evident, however, that after a lapse of seven years, (my mind, during that period, being wholly engrossed with pursuits of so different a nature, that these had never any share whatever in my thoughts,) the difficulty of retouching, enlarging, and filling up, either the one or the other class of such materials, must be extremely great. With this conviction, I preferred not attempting it to any extensive degree; and though I feel that this will be considered a defect in the estimation of those who desire to see all works sent from the hands of their authors in the most polished state; yet, to those who value Books of Travels chiefly for the vivid freshness and reality of the descriptions, and the rigorous fidelity with which impressions received on the spot are preserved, I am also persuaded that this roughness and boldness of the original picture will be far more acceptable than a more highly polished tablet, in which the spirit might have been refined away by too much care in the subsequent retouching.

The original notes were put into form for publication, with such slight emendations only as the connection of the narrative required, on my late voyage from India to England; and, as I was then altogether without books of reference connected with the countries to which these notes relate, there are much fewer illustrations and quotations from older writers in the present volume than in the former one. The abundance of these was urged by

some, indeed, as giving the *Travels in Palestine* too learned and heavy a character for a volume aiming at popularity. • Such a defect (if indeed it be one), will not at least be observable in the present; though I have not wholly overlooked the interest which such illustrations, when sparingly and appropriately given, possess even for the general reader, and have accordingly introduced them where they appeared to me most required.

The map of Syria, with the route pursued by me through it, has been constructed by Mr. Sydney Hall, from the manuscript journals of my track, and from the numerous sets of bearings and distances taken by me at almost every station of note on the way. It will be found to include a considerable number of places, the names of which are entirely new, and the positions of which occupy points that were hitherto blank in our best maps of the country in which they are situated.

The Vignettes at the head of the Chapters were drawn partly from rude sketches made on the spot by myself; partly from written descriptions of particular scenes, carefully noted in sight of them, and afterwards embodied into form; and in a very few instances from portions only of the beautiful views of Casas, in the western parts of Syria; which will still be new to the greatest number of English readers. These last, however, do not amount to more than six out of the twenty-eight which the present volume contains.* They are all appropriately illustrative of the

* They are those at Chapters 1. 20. 21. 23. 26. 27.;—and are thus purposely indicated to prevent misrepresentation.

costume, architecture, manners, and natural scenery of the several portions of country described in the chapters to which they are prefixed, and as such it is hoped that they will be approved.

The whole of these have been drawn on the wood, by W. H. Brooke, Esq., of Percy Street, an artist of the most distinguished and justly deserved celebrity in this particular branch of his profession, and of exquisite taste and great power in every other department of the labours of the pencil. They have been engraved by different hands, and vary, therefore, in the merit of their execution; but even in this respect they are generally so well executed that they cannot fail to be acceptable.

The greatest attraction of the present volume, will, however, undoubtedly be its containing the fullest and most accurate descriptions of numerous ruined towns and cities in the Great Plain of the Haurān, the ancient Auranites, the very names of many of which have not before been made public; as well as faithful pictures of the state of manners in these highly interesting and almost untródden regions, which are likely to afford matter of agreeable consideration to readers of all classes.

In the hope that this portion of my labours will be found still more worthy than preceding ones of the approbation of the world, I consign it to the tribunal of public opinion, to receive its just sentence of neglect, of censure, or of praise.

J. S. BUCKINGHAM.

*Cornwall Terrace, Regent's Park,
London, December 1. 1824.*

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CHAPTER I.

FROM NAZARETH, THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE JORDAN, TO ASSALT.

NAZARETH, Tuesday, February 20. 1816.—My previous excursions in Syria had so impressed me with the difficulty of getting to Damascus or Aleppo from hence, in the present state of the country, and the consequent delay I should experience in the prosecution of my intended journey to India (by the route of the caravans from the latter city), that I thought it best to ascertain if there were any hopes of my being able to proceed from hence to Assalt, a town on the east of the Jordan; from thence to Karak, on the east of the Dead Sea; and so on through the Bedouin tribes that encamp on the Desert from the borders of Palestine to the banks of the Euphrates, and from that stream to the Tigris and the neighbourhood of Baghdad.

As the town of Nazareth is constantly frequented by persons from Assalt, who come here to purchase many of their supplies, there happened to be a party just now on the point of setting out on their return to that place; which furnished an excellent opportunity of journeying thus far in their company. To render myself as secure of accomplishing this as possible, I sought after a guide, and succeeded in procuring a Christian Arab of Nazareth, named Georgis, who had often been at Assalt, and knew most of the residents there, and who consented to accompany me on very easy conditions: I therefore closed with him, as my enquiries had been answered in a manner that strengthened my hopes of being able to accomplish the ultimate object of my wishes in getting to Bagdad by the route proposed. As, however, caution and secrecy are necessary to be observed by those who study their safety on journies in the East, I abstained from communicating to any one, in direct terms, the full extent of my intended progress in this direction, leaving this until I should be able to ascertain at Assalt or Karak how far it was certain of being successfully attained.

Mr. Bankes, my former companion in our journey from Jerusalem to Jerash, had a great desire to accompany me as far as Assalt; but an excursion to Nablous, for which he had made some engagements that could not well be put off, rendered this impracticable, without involving a further delay on my part, which my desire to get to my destination as speedily as possible would not permit. I accordingly began to prepare for this new and hazardous journey, among the people of a country hitherto untravelled by Europeans. My Turkish clothes were laid aside, and their place supplied by a Bedouin Arab dress of the meanest kind; as it was thought safest and best to assume the appearance of extreme poverty, in order to lessen, as much as possible, the temptation to robbery or molestation on the way. The few papers that I possessed were rolled up in a small and dirty sack, or purse, of coarse cloth, and the little money that I intended to take with me on my way was concealed in the *keffeah*, or Arab handkerchief, which covered my head. My

only arms were an old crooked *yembeah*, or dagger, and a common musket, with a few ball cartridges and a leathern bottle of priming powder. My letter of credit, being on Aleppo, had not yet been made use of for the defraying my expences; but as the wants of my intended route across the Desert were likely to be supplied without either frequent or large demands for money, I had still enough with me to meet all probable charges that might occur before I reached my journey's end. The horse on which I rode, with all its furniture, was my own; of clothes, I considered that I should require little or none; and a scanty supply of provisions was all that could be needed: so that, under all the circumstances of the case, I felt myself as well prepared for the journey as the occasion demanded, or as prudence would permit. It was right, however, in undertaking a route of such uncertainty and risk, that I should calculate on the possibility of a failure at least; and to provide against this, I entrusted all that I was obliged to leave behind me at Nazareth, in the form of baggage, to the care of Mr. Banks, who undertook to have it conveyed to Damascus; to which city, if I should be unable to penetrate across the desert beyond Karak, it was my intention to return by the shortest route, which would be through the Hauran, and from thence proceed as circumstances might direct: this, however, for the reason before mentioned, I refrained from communicating to others, as the knowledge of my intentions might impede their accomplishment, while it could answer no beneficial purpose, either to myself or others.

When I retired to repose, it was not without many reflections and apprehensions, suggested by the unknown state of the road on which I was about to enter, with a conjectural estimate of obstacles, which, as they could not be clearly foreseen, could not be fitly provided against. My determination, however, was fixed; and having already well weighed and considered the subject in all its bearings, it would have been weakness to suffer any considerations of apprehended danger to shake my resolution.

Wednesday, February 21.—My guide, Georgis, who was a petty trader in every description of goods, had determined to make this journey to Assalt a source of profit to himself, by taking a small supply of portable articles with him; and, with a view to buy them at a cheaper rate (as I afterwards learnt), had suffered the Assalt party of traders to set out without us, that he might remain behind to take advantage of the dull morning's market, and get his articles at a less price than could have been done while they were here; hoping, at the same time, by quickening his speed, to overtake them at their halting place for the night. The first intelligence that reached me in the morning was, that the party returning to Assalt had set out soon after sun-set on the preceding evening. I sent off immediately for my guide, who, keeping himself purposely out of the way till the end of his detention should be fully answered, was no where to be found. About ten o'clock, however, he made his appearance at the convent, out of breath from hurry, and hardly able to tell his excuses, so many were they, and so little breath had he to utter them. When he became more composed, he expressed his belief that we should not be able to overtake our intended companions, an apprehension that was but too well founded, as they had already gained upon us by a long night and the better part of a day. It was an ominous commencement of a journey, but there was no remedy. It only called for an exercise of greater patience, and created a necessity for greater perseverance, both virtues of which we stood eminently in need, and which it was doubly incumbent on me to exercise on this occasion.

It was a little after ten o'clock when we mounted our horses at the convent-gate, and receiving the benedictions of the friars, we quitted Nazareth and proceeded on our way.

Our course was directed to the south-east, over the hills which environ the valley of Nazareth, or the hollow of the mountain in which that town is seated; and descending over these hills on the

outer face, we came out at the foot of Mount Tabor, rising from the plain below.

At noon we passed over a portion of the great plain of Esdraelon, having Daborah on our left, and Nain and Endor on our right; the two last being seated on the slope of Hermon, at a distance of about three miles from our path. The plain was in a great measure waste, and the aspect of the scenery forbidding; but this was counterbalanced by the agreeable associations necessarily created by the sight of so many places celebrated in holy writ as could be seen from this spot.

At half-past one we passed a ruined building, of very rude construction, resembling an old fort. The name given to it by the people of the country is Dabboh, but I could learn no further particulars regarding its history or former condition.

At two o'clock we reached the village of Tayeby, consisting of twenty or thirty houses only, and inhabited wholly by peasants or cultivators. There were in this village the remains of a large edifice, apparently of Roman construction; the blocks of mouldings, cornices, and friezes, that lay scattered about, were of a large size, some smoothly hewn and others sculptured; but no tradition had been preserved respecting the building to which these belonged. We halted here at the house of the Sheikh, and were served with coffee by his youngest daughter. During our conversation, the Sheikh could not contain his surprise at finding we were going *alone* to Assalt through the dangerous valley of the Jordan, and among the thieves of Jericho. The heavy rain that fell detained us here for about half an hour, during which time the good old man said every thing he could think of to dissuade us from our purpose, and after exhausting all his arguments, appeared sorrowful, as well as disappointed, to find that all his friendly admonitions were in vain.

We quitted Tayeby at half-past two, and going still towards the south-east, passed, at about three o'clock, near to a ruined site of a

* See the Vignette at the head of this Chapter.

town called Yubba. In this place were vestiges of walls and buildings, apparently of an ancient date, but the peasants of the neighbourhood knew nothing of its history.

Soon after this we passed under a small village seated on the summit of a hill on the left of our road. It was called Oom-el-Russās, or "The Mother of Lead," but we could learn no assignable cause for this appellation. The village was full of inhabitants, and the rugged and stoney plain at the base of the hill on which it stood abounded with more cattle than there appeared pasture to feed on the spot. This place was under the government of the good and benevolent Hadjee Ahmet Jerar, of Sanhoor, of whom I had before occasion to speak*; and the blessing of whose paternal care seemed to extend over all the villages subject to his power.

We travelled on in a direction seldom varying from south-east, and going, on an average, about four miles an hour, when, at five o'clock, we came to a torrent called Waadi-el-Hhesh. On the left of this stream, at a short distance to the northward, stood Kafera and Jabool, two Mahommedan villages, which my guide assured me were once Christian towns of note, and were acknowledged by all to be very old. We saw, encamped on the banks of this torrent, several parties of Bedouin Arabs, who fed their flocks on the neighbouring hills, and brought them to water and to shelter near their tents at night. The source of the stream is at a short distance from hence, to the north-west, and it winds down in an easterly direction till it discharges itself into the Jordan.

At five o'clock we reached a narrow pass, between two approaching hills, and entered from thence into the valley of the Jordan. On the left of the pass were the ruins of a fortress which had once probably guarded the passage, and formed an important military post.

We continued our course about south-east across the plain, which was well cultivated on the west side of the Jordan, and looked beautifully verdant on the east; when, in about an hour after our first entering the valley, we came to the banks of the

* See Travels in Palestine, 4to edition, p. 498.

river. We found here a number of Arab tents scattered along its edge, and from the dwellers in them we received the accustomed salutation of peace as we passed through the encampment. We had some difficulty, indeed, in resisting their entreaties to halt at their tents for the night; but as we were informed that the Sheikh of this tribe was encamped with another portion of his people on the east bank of the river, and were equally sure of a welcome reception there, we passed on, returning thanks to those whose solicitations we found it so difficult to refuse.

In fording the Jordan at this spot, which was at a distance of two hours, or about four miles to the southward of its outlet from the lake of Tiberias, we found it so deep near the banks of the stream as to throw our horses off their legs for a few minutes, and oblige them to swim; but they soon regained their footing as they approached the middle of the stream, and in the very centre we found it quite shallow. It still appeared rather as a brook or torrent, than a river, being no where more than one hundred feet wide, as far as we could observe it from hence; and the water, which was clear and sweet, winding slowly over a sandy and pebbly bed at about the rate of a mile and a half per hour.

After going up on the eastern bank of the river, and proceeding for a league onward, we came to the principal encampment of the Arab tribe whom we had first met with on the opposite bank of the Jordan. The name of the tribe we learnt to be Beni-Ameer-el-Ghazowee, and that of the place of their encampment, Zubbah. Their tents were very numerous, and larger than usual; and there were an abundance of fine horses, camels, and flocks, betokening great wealth among them in property of this description.

We alighted at the tent of the Sheikh or Chief, by whom we were well received, and invited to take shelter with him for the night. Immediately after our halting a meal was prepared for us, the principal dish of which was a young kid seethed in milk. Many of the Arabs encamped around us came to pay their visits to the strangers, and some few ate with us as they came, and then retired; but the

greater number of the visitors made their suppers of bread and oil alone. I had already had occasion to perceive that my Nazarene guide, Georgis, was one of the most loquacious of his race that I had ever before met with ; and mingling, as he did, a large portion of good humour with his talkativeness, he was often highly entertaining. The present was an occasion well calculated to draw him out, and, accordingly, his long and well-told stories contributed greatly to the amusement of the chief, and all who came to share his hospitality with us.

Midnight approached before our visitors retired, and, as we proposed starting early in the morning, it was very desirable that we should enjoy some rest ; but this was a blessing not destined for us. The first and most powerful cause that prevented it, was a dreadful tempest, which gathered up in pitchy darkness, and descended in a torrent of thunder, lightning, and rain. The tents were thus beaten down, and the affrighted flocks and herds flying to them for shelter, increased the general confusion ; while, amid the awful darkness which succeeded to the lightning's glare, and the deluge of rain that swept every thing before it, the mingled cries of terror uttered by the women, the children, and the cattle, added only to the horror of the scene.

Thursday, February 22.—We continued in this situation until the day broke upon us, and displayed a perfect wreck, as not a tent throughout the whole encampment was left standing. And many of the young infants, as well as the tender kids and lambs which had been exposed to the storm without shelter, were dead and dying around us : in short, the devastation was more marked and more extensive than I should have thought it possible for such a storm to have occasioned on shore.

When the sun rose, the rain abated, and the sky cleared up ; but being unable to render any assistance to those with whom we had shared the common evils of the tempest, we mounted our horses without a dry thread in our garments, and entered on our journey

before we had broke our fast, so that we were wet, weary, and hungry, even at the beginning of the day.

We now directed our course nearly S. S. E., keeping along the foot of the hills that border the valley of Jordan on the east; and about seven o'clock, or within an hour after setting out, we passed under the village of Arbagheen or "Forty," but could learn no reason for its numerical name. On the opposite side of the river, in a direction of nearly west from this, we could perceive the town of Beisan, the ancient Scythopolis, where there is a large population, and a general mart for the supply of the Bedouin Arabs of these parts. There are several remains of antiquity at this place, particularly the vestiges of a theatre, and many marble columns erect and fallen; but as we did not visit the spot in our way, I had no opportunity of ascertaining minutely what else it might have contained.

Continuing our course about S. S. E. parallel to the stream of the Jordan, and near the foot of the hills on the east of it, we came at eight o'clock to a station called Maka, where we found an encampment of Arabs of the tribe of Beni Sheikh Hussein, who, though they had pitched their tents so near to those of Beni Ameer Ghazowee, were on terms of deadly hostility with them. We were called upon to pay a tribute to this chief as we passed; which, as it was a small sum, we did not dispute, though it is contrary to the Arab custom to demand money as tribute from single travellers, as they content themselves in general, when at peace, with exacting a fixed duty on goods carried as merchandize or traffic, and let the mere journeyer pass free. We found an extensive burying-ground at this place, the most conspicuous object of which was the tomb of Sheikh Hussein, from whom the tribe derived its name. There were a few palm trees near this, and pits in the earth for preserving corn; the Arabs of this tribe being partly cultivators and partly shepherds, and consequently of that mixed character which partook equally of the manners of the

Fellahs or agricultural peasantry, and the Bedouins or wanderers of the Desert.

We quitted Merkah soon after nine o'clock, and about ten, passed under a spot on the hills on our left, which by some was called Tabakat Fehhil, and by others Jerim Mooz. As it was on an eminence difficult of access, we did not go up to it; but my guide, who had been frequently there in his journeying through these mountains, described it as containing tombs with massy stone doors, like those at Oam Kais or Gamala, and other remains of ancient works, in columns and large blocks of hewn stone.

Soon after leaving this spot, we passed two ruined and deserted villages in the hills on our left, called Hejeja and Soolikhat, both of which, like the former, were thought to be ancient stations; and, indeed, from the number of old fortresses that were seated among the hills on each side of the Jordan, nothing is more probable than that each of these marked the position of some ancient place.

At noon we were opposite to Jebel Adjeloon, a lofty mountain on our left, covered with snow. At its base, on the western side, we saw a number of ruined buildings, with appearances of aqueducts leading along the uneven parts of the hill. This place was called Fakâris, and was thought to be the site of an ancient town. Its position is marked by a stream of water, descending from hence into the Jordan.

We had been anxiously on the look-out ever since our leaving the Arab camp, as this valley is so notoriously infested with robbers, that persons scarcely ever pass through it even in large parties without being attacked, and it was thought madness for single travellers like ourselves to attempt it. Our expectations were soon realised, as we met here a party of eight men, two of whom were on horseback and six on foot; the former armed with ances and sabres, the latter with large bludgeons; but not one among them having fire-arms.

As they approached toward us on the high road, we turned off from it a few yards on our left, in order to watch their motions; and, as they drew nearer, they turned off also to meet us. Knowing their intentions to be hostile, we called a halt; and having our muskets cocked, threatened with instant death whoever among them should advance a step farther. They assailed us with every species of abuse, demanded to know who we were, and asked what business we had to be journeying through territories which they called exclusively their own, without paying tribute to them as the lords and masters of it. We replied that when they wanted tribute, they should send larger parties to collect it; and we bade them defiance. They advanced in a sudden rush to surround us; I discharged my musket at random, and the sound was as that of a cannon, rolling and reverberating through the hollows of the hills near us, like the echoing of peals of thunder. The consternation which this occasioned was such, that the Arab horses started and reared, and the men on foot ran with precipitation in opposite directions. The scene was rather ludicrous than otherwise, and proved to us how contemptible were the enemies we had been taught to dread as irresistible, and how much their numbers should preponderate to make them at all formidable.

When we had dispersed these robbers by such a simple effort, we continued our way along the valley as before, having the Arabs to hang about our rear for half an hour, when they quitted us, probably in the hope of meeting with some more defenceless objects of plunder.

About one o'clock we came to the site of considerable ruins, where we saw foundations of buildings, outlines of streets, blocks of hewn stone, and other fragments, evidently marking the position of some considerable town. This place still bears the name of *Amatha*, and from its name, as well as situation near the banks of the Jordan, may with great reason be taken for the site of *Amathus*, to which in these particulars it so exactly corresponds. The extent of space covered by the ruins here, is much greater than

that which is seen of ancient Jericho; and on the hills above it, where another city of the name of Raajib is said to have stood, we could see from hence remains of aqueducts and other works of building; while my guide, who had himself been on the spot, described it as containing fallen columns and other marks of architectural grandeur, now in dilapidation and decay.

At this place we crossed a torrent of water descending from the hills, and running westward into the Jordan, under the name of Waadi Raajib, from its passing close by the ruins of that ancient town.

At two o'clock we reached a place called Abu-el-Beady, where we determined to turn in and enquire the news of the road, as well as to obtain shelter and repose for an hour, as the rain had scarcely ceased for a moment since our first setting out; and we were wet, weary, and half famished with hunger.

Abu-el-Beady is a name given to a small village of huts, collected round a mosque, built over the tomb of some distinguished personage, who had given his name to the place. This Abu-el-Beady was said, according to the traditions preserved of him here, to have been a powerful sultan of Yemen, who died on this spot on his way from Arabia Felix to Damascus; but of whom no other particulars are known. The tomb and mosque appeared to be very ancient, and both were ornamented with a number of Arabic inscriptions in a square formed character. A large piece of green glass, weighing probably from three to four pounds, was placed in the wall near the door of entrance; and as it passed for a real emerald, it was highly valued and even venerated by the people here. My guide, Georgis, who was a Greek Christian, preserved his decorum throughout, and was as unwilling to defile himself by entering a mosque as the keepers of it would be to suffer the mosque to be defiled by letting him enter it. As I had no such scruples, however, and was considered by the attendant to be a good Mussulman, I paid a small donation of forty paras to support the lamps kept constantly burning around the tomb;

when, throwing off my slippers at the threshold, and kissing the reputed emerald in the wall, I entered the mosque.

The interior of this building offered little to repay the curiosity of a visitor; its walls were plain, and from the ceiling hung numerous paltry lamps, ostrich eggs, shells, &c. The tomb of Abu-el-Beady is an elevated mass, rising from the floor, spread over with a covering of cloth; ornamented with Arabic inscriptions worked into it. The ceremony enjoined on the visitor is simply to circumambulate the tomb barefooted; to salute the ashes of the saint by kissing the cloth, and placing the forehead on the corners of it, exclaiming at each salutation—"Ya, Allah! Ya, Abu-el-Beady!" Though tradition calls this departed being a king of Yemen, and states that he died here on his way to Damascus, the present guardians of his remains were ignorant of any further details of his history. The tomb has the appearance of considerable antiquity; and the Arabic inscriptions seen around it, were too intricately written for me to make out any date, or decypher more than the name of God, and of the saint who lies interred there.

The family residing here in charge of this sanctuary, were remarkable for having (with the single exception of the father only) negro features, a deep black colour, and crisped hair. My own opinion was, that this must have been occasioned by their being born of a negress mother, as such persons are sometimes found among the Arabs, in the relation of wives and concubines; but, while I could entertain no doubt from my own observation, that the present head of the family was a pure Arab of unmixed blood, I was also assured that both the males and females of the present and former generations were all pure Arabs by descent and marriage, and that a negress had never been known, either as a wife or a slave, in the history of the family. It is certainly a very marked peculiarity of the Arabs that inhabit this valley of the Jordan, that they have flatter features, darker skin, and coarser hair than any other tribes; a peculiarity rather attributable, I con-

ceive, to the constant and intense heat of that deep region than to any other cause.

We remained here the whole of the day, and at night slept on the outside of the building, there being no accommodation within, from the females and cattle occupying every inch of the room. As our clothes were still wet, and we had no changes with us, we suffered much from exposure to the cold wind that blew, and passed altogether a most uncomfortable night.

Friday, Feb. 23.—We prepared to depart from Abu-el-Beady before day-light, without even the common enjoyment of a pipe and coffee, which few among the Arabs forego on such occasions. We started with the earliest dawn, and still pursued a course of S. S. E. along the foot of the eastern hills. We had not proceeded far before we met a party of robbers driving home the cattle and the camels that they had stolen during the night. There were others still further on, who called out to those to arrest us, so that we were once more obliged to assume an attitude of defence. As we were yet within reach of assistance, we returned to Abu-el-Beady to see if we could procure from the neighbourhood a horse-man or two to strengthen our party. Being under the walls of the venerated tomb, by the time the robbers passed it, they did not venture to molest us there, though they were loud and lavish in their abuse of us for daring to travel alone without seeking their protection and paying them for the same, consoling us with the assurance that unless we did so, we should be certain of being plundered before we reached Assalt.

We could procure no assistance or additional escort at Abu-el-Beady, and were consequently in great doubt as to what course we should pursue. As we sat smoking and conferring together under the walls, a third party of Arabs passed by on foot, and these sent two of their number to us to examine and report. From these we learnt that the two first parties which had gone by were outlaws or outcasts of the tribe of Beni-Szakker, who occupy the

Desert to the east of the Dead Sea; and that those who now addressed us were of the tribe of Beni Abad, who were on friendly terms with the people of Assalt, and derived their chief supplies from the market of that town. Even these, however, had been on a plundering excursion, and had carried off some goats and kids from the camps through which we had passed on the preceding day. We succeeded, after some negotiation, in obtaining two of these Arabs to accompany us as guides, and as a security also against our being molested by any of their own tribe in our way, while we counted on their forming some addition to our strength in the event of our meeting with any of the Beni Szakker, who were likely to plunder us if we crossed their way. The pledge of fidelity was mutually exchanged between us by our eating and drinking together; and the sum agreed to be paid to each of the men that accompanied us was three piastres only. Their companions continued their way in charge of their plunder of the night, and we set out from Abu-el-Beady a second time, about nine o'clock, with our new companions, going now about south-east inclining easterly.

In the course of our way we noticed several artificial mounds, which had the appearance of ancient tumuli, and many hewn grottos in the rocky cliffs on our left; these were originally perhaps excavated tombs, and may have been subsequently used as retreats for anchorites, of whom these solitudes are known to have been once the favourite region.

In about an hour after quitting Abu-el-Beady, we turned up to the eastward to ascend the hills, passing at the same time by the remains of a double aqueduct, with many vestiges of former buildings strewn around, and a small square chamber in the cliff above. There was also a singularly formed passage through a rock here, resembling a natural arch, under which we passed; the name given to this was Makhrook.

About a league further on, going now in an easterly direction, we came to the stream of the Zerkah, which I had crossed before,

much further to the eastward, on my journey from Jerusalem to Jerash ; from which I could discover that it discharged itself into the Jordan much farther to the southward than is represented in the maps. We observed at this place an artificial canal of nearly a mile in length, for carrying the waters of the Zerkah to the ruined aqueduct described. The main stream itself was narrower here than we had found it farther to the east ; but, on the other hand, it was deeper and more rapid in its course. At the spot where we forded it, there were appearances of walls and buildings on its banks, now half-hidden by tall reeds from twelve to fifteen feet in height, oleanders, and other trees and shrubs. On both sides of the stream were seen patches of partial cultivation ; the corn on its banks being now green.

From this ford of Zerkah we went up a steep ascent on the south, over a hill called Arkooob Massaloo-beah ; this hill forming the southern, and Jebel Adjeloon the northern boundary of the stream.

While we were ascending the hill, our new Arab guides discovered a fray in the plain, between their companions, whom they had left in charge of their spoils, and the owner, of the stolen cattle, who had pursued the robbers and overtaken them. Nothing could surpass the ardour and animation with which these men rushed instantly down to the assistance of their fellows. Both Georgis and myself were off our guard at this moment, so that the Arabs, taking advantage of this circumstance, rushed on us, seized our muskets, and ran violently down the hill. I alighted from my horse to pursue the man who had taken mine, and after a hard struggle recovered it, though Georgis, making no effort, suffered his to be carried off without resistance. The Arabs had thrown aside their upper garments to be light for the chase, and my companion taking possession of these as some compensation for the loss of his musket, we pursued our way, not even staying to see the result of the contest, as we were anxious to reach Assalt before the night closed in.

We were nearly two hours in getting up this steep hill, though it was of inconsiderable height. When we reached its summit, we could perceive from thence the mountains of Jerash to the N.N.E. of us, with two ruined villages to the eastward, called Hharatein; and a little further on were pointed out, to the northward of east, the positions of Sihhan and Ullan, two ruined buildings that I had before passed on my way from Jerusalem to Jerash.

On the summit of Jebel Arkooob Massalooabeeah, we found a level plain extending to the southward and eastward, having a fine light red soil, with turf and thistles, besides a number of oak trees scattered over its surface. The unexpected appearance of such a plain on this high level was an agreeable contrast to the low and barren ground that we had just left, particularly as this elevated tract bore every mark of having once enjoyed, and being still capable of maintaining, the highest degree of fertility.

We found on this fine plain the remains of some apparently very ancient place, the traces of which were but barely visible. They were unquestionably, however, the remains of a town of some consequence; for, besides the vestiges of walls, marks of foundations, and lines of enclosures in the land, there were several fragments of stone columns scattered around. The shafts of these were perfectly plain, and composed of circular pieces placed one above the other; the capitals were rude square masses, in some instances detached from, and in others formed out of, the same block as the upper part of the shaft; there were no traces of sculpture on any of the blocks, either as mouldings or flutings: all was plain and rude, and bore the marks of the highest antiquity.

The spot is called by the Arabs, Massaera, and Mashaera; and as its position corresponds with that assigned to the ancient city of Machaerus, there can be little doubt but that the remains are those of the city of that name.

After passing over this plain about a mile to the south-east, we began to ascend another range of hills, the base of which lay on this high level tract, and which was called Jebel Assalt. On the brow of

the ascent, we observed several small encampments of Bedouin Arabs, and in one of the hollow valleys which lay on the left of our road, were seen the tents of the Beni Abad, the tribe to which our robber-guides belonged. My companion, Georgis, who had lost his musket, was impatient to go down to them, and demand redress from the sheikh for the loss he had sustained at the hands of some of his people; but as the road was rocky and bad, the night drawing on, and we had but an hour of sunshine, of which we stood in need to keep us warm and dry, I was determined to push on rather than risk being obliged to pass another night without shelter.

In ascending Jebel Assalt we soon came to the snow, which lay thicker and deeper the higher we ascended. We had, indeed, almost despaired of getting over the summit of the hill before dark, which gave rise to a warm dispute; my companion wishing to go down to the Arab tents to pass the night, and I being determined to persevere. In the midst of this hot and angry debate, and just as we were turning the angle of a rocky pass, two men on foot, who must have lain concealed waiting for our approach, sprung upon us from behind an opening, and seized the bridles of our horses. They were armed with sabres only, which they idly flourished in the air; and had their faces covered with the keffeah, or kerchief, worn beneath the turban, after the manner of the Arabs when they attack, leaving nothing but the eyes to be seen, which renders it impossible to recognize a murderer if he escapes, or trace on whose head the blood of the victim lies. With these men, as it has already been with those who had interrupted us in the valley of the Jordan, the sight of a musket was sufficient; I presented my piece cocked, and ready to discharge, when they instantly abandoned their hold, and sued for mercy. Had they been determined, they might have cut us both down from our horses before we could have been prepared for our defence, so suddenly did they spring upon us from their hiding place; but their resolution failing, they were glad to sneak off in safety; and

when they had got at some distance from us they set up a shout of defiance and triumph at their escape.

We found the summit of Jebel Assalt to be like that of Arkoob Massaloobéah below it; a fine fertile plain, with undulations here and there, a rich green turf, abundance of wood, and pines nodding on the surrounding eminences. From hence we enjoyed a magnificent view, as beautiful in many of its features as it was grand in the whole; and extending in every direction almost as far as the range of vision.

Among other objects within sight from the summit of this mountain was a small portion of the Bahr-el-Loot, or the Sea of Loot, the name given by all the Arabs of these parts to the Dead Sea. The north-west extremity of this sea was the portion seen from hence; and the nearest part of it appeared to be distant from us about twelve or fifteen miles. The picture which the Valley of the Jordan presented to us from this spot was highly interesting. From the southern edge of the Lake of Tiberias to the mosque of Abu-el-Beady, the plain appeared to be partially cultivated on each side; and the clusters of black Arab tents seen scattered over the bare yellow patches of the uncultivated parts, formed a fine contrast to the rich green of the young corn growing all around them. To the southward of Abu-el-Beady the valley presented a white, parched, and barren aspect; while the sterility of the hills that bordered the Sea of Death, increased as the eye traced them in the distance.

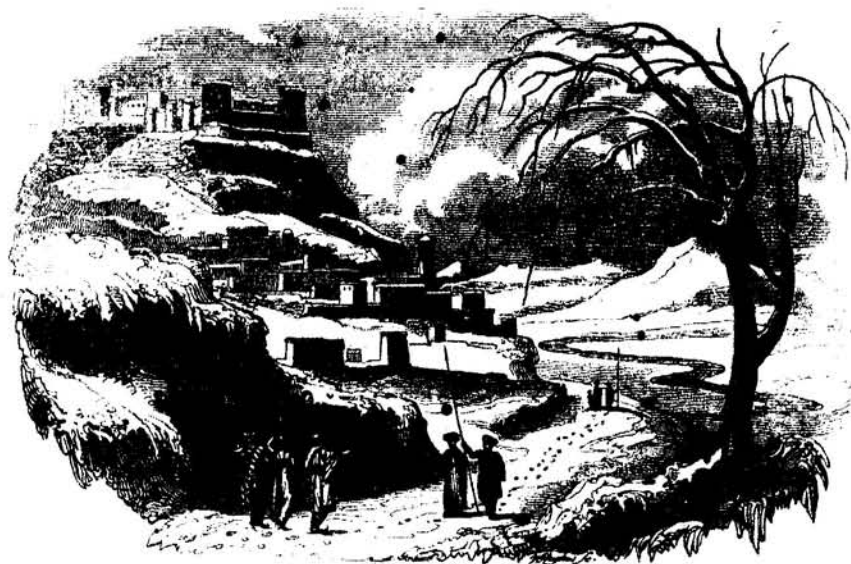
We had still a slight ascent to make, and reached the extreme summit of the mountain soon after four o'clock. The cold here was excessive; and the snow, presenting one unbroken mass, was hardened into solid frost. We had no means of determining accurately the height of the mountain on which we stood; but from a rough estimate of our progressive ascent, and the extreme depth of the Jordan and the Dead Sea at our feet, as contrasted with other mountain views of which I retained a perfect recollec-

tion, I should consider the height to be about 5,000 feet from the level of the ocean.

Tradition confirms the Arabs of the country in the belief, that this is the summit of Mount Nebo. On the very peak of the highest eminence stands a tomb, with other common graves around it. This is called the tomb of Nebbe Osha, or the prophet Joshua; and the belief is general, that the successor of Moses was buried here. The humbler graves around it are said to be those of Jews who had chosen this as the place of their sepulchre. The tomb appeared to me to be a Mohammedan structure, differing little in exterior appearance from the reputed tomb of Rachel, between Jerusalem and Bethlehem; but we did not go near enough to examine it closely.

Leaving these graves on our right, we began to descend to the eastward over a terraced slope, deeply covered with snow; but neither so hardly frozen, nor its mass so unbroken as we had found it on the other side of the mountain. At five o'clock, while descending the hill, we passed a small place called Cafr-el-Yahoodi, or the village of the Jews, probably an old settlement of that people residing near the reputed tomb of their prophet Joshua; and a few minutes after passing this we came in sight of Assalt.

Approaching this town from the west, we passed through a narrow valley, terraced all around with little corn plots, and beds of vines, though the soil was now covered with snow. The most prominent object of the view was a large castle standing on the edge of a rock, which, from its steep site and elevation, as seen through a long valley, had an imposing aspect.



CHAP. II.

STAY AT THE TOWN OF ASSALT.

It was sunset when we entered Assalt, which lies on the eastern brow of the hill whereon the castle stands, and which is therefore not seen when approaching from the west, until the traveller turns suddenly round to the right, and finds himself among the houses. The scene was new and interesting ; and the pleasure which I felt at having attained this first point in my journey, made me view every thing through the most favourable medium. The whole of the town was filled with snow, the streets being in some places almost impassable ; and the terraces of the houses, which, from the steepness of the hill, rose one above the other like steps, presented a number of square and snow-white masses, like sheets exposed on the ground to dry. The inhabitants, including men,

women, and children, were clothed in sheep-skin jackets, with the skin, looking like red leather, turned outside, and the wool within ; while the florid complexions and the light-brown hair of the people gave to the whole an appearance of a scene in the north of Europe, rather than one in the southern part of so hot a region as Syria, and bordering, too, upon the parched deserts of Arabia Petræa.

We were conducted to the house of one of the most wealthy inhabitants, a Christian, named Aioobe or Job, who was reputed to be one of the greatest traders in the country. Like Job of old, this man was rich in abundance of flocks and cattle, was blessed with sons and daughters, and was as renowned for his piety, as he was celebrated for his wealth.

Our reception at his house was warm and hospitable ; and we were offered every accommodation that it afforded. When supper was served up to us, almost all the heads of families in the town came to visit us, as strangers : the arrival of new persons among them exciting a sensation of curiosity which extended itself through all classes. There being no Mohammedans present, my guide and companion, Georgis, took care to inform the whole company that I was an Englishman. As to the fact of my being a Christian, he said it was difficult for him to decide, as some persons imagined the English to have no religion at all, and others contended, that though Christianity was nominally the prevailing faith of the country, it was altogether so remote from that of the Greek church, to which they belonged, that it did not deserve the name. This subject became one of lively interest to the party, and was discussed with great earnestness by most of those who were present ; but having at length come to the determination that the English were neither Moslems, Jews, nor Catholics, the three great sects which they consider inimical to their own, I was received by all as a friend, and welcomed accordingly.

In the course of the evening, the conversation turned on the visits of Dr. Seetzen and Mr. Burckhardt to this town. The former

was known by the name of Hakim Moosa, and the latter by the name of Sheikh Ibrahim. Both of these travellers were habited in the same manner as I had found it necessary to be, namely, in the dress of a Bedouin Arab; each of them wore a beard, and spoke the Arabic language; the former very imperfectly, the latter tolerably well. In the company of Mohammedans, these travellers preserved the appearance and profession of the Moslem faith; but with the Greek and Catholic Christians, who abound on the east of the Jordan, they passed invariably as Englishmen, and were well treated on that account; although Dr. Seetzen was a German, and Mr. Burckhardt a Swiss. The former of these travelled always on foot, accompanied by an Arab guide, to whom he gave a Spanish dollar per day, which was considered a munificent reward; and it is said, that the chief objects of his enquiry were the mineral and vegetable productions of the country, with such curiosities in natural history as fell in his way, to the collection and examination of which his mode of journeying was particularly favourable. Mr. Burckhardt usually rode, either on a camel, a mare, or an ass; and the chief objects of his pursuit were thought to be antiquities, geography, and the manners of the people. These were the impressions that I gathered from the conversation of the party regarding these distinguished travellers, who were well known to most of the persons present, as each of them had made a stay of many days at this place.

Our supper was followed by card-parties, which assembled in different quarters of the room, all sitting on the ground, and having stools of about a foot in height to serve for card-tables. The games played were various; one of them, however, resembled Quadrille, and another Loo. The cards were dealt and played backward, or from right to left, and the names of the suits were Italian, though not all correctly applied; spades being called *bastoni*: clubs, *spadi*; diamonds, *argenti*; and hearts, *cuori*. The parties played for money; but though the sums staked were

small, it was sufficient to agitate very warm disputes among the players.

We broke up early, dispersing before nine o'clock, when we were taken to another house to sleep. The mistress of it, who was a widow, and related to my guide, received us kindly, and insisted on going through the ceremony of washing my feet, observed, as I understood, among the Christians of Assalt to all strangers who come among them as guests or visitors. The house in which we were now lodged, consisting of ~~two~~ rooms only, one above the other, I naturally concluded that the widow and her children would have slept in one of these, and that Georgis and myself would have occupied the other. It was otherwise arranged, however; the lower room was used in the daytime for all the purposes of cooking, and other household labour, and at night was converted into a bedroom; while the upper story was made entirely a storehouse for the secure keeping of provisions, clothes, and other articles, put under lock and key. Mats were therefore spread for us all on the lower floor; and what struck me as a remarkable feature of the arrangement was this, that while the widow, who was not more than 30 years of age, lay in the middle of the room, Georgis and I were directed to lie on each side of her, and the young children were placed beyond us respectively; leaving scarcely two feet space between each person, as the room was not more than twelve or fifteen feet square. It did not appear to be the custom of the place to undress for sleep, as each lay down in the garments worn during the day. Our rest was, however, occasionally disturbed during the night; and as neither of the parties had any specific bounds assigned, I found the widow rolling alternately toward Georgis or myself, as she turned sides for relief; so that we often pressed closer on each other than was at first intended, and might be literally said to have slept all in one bed.

Assalt, Saturday, February 24. — The day broke in tempests, accompanied by thunder, lightning, and hail. The storm was

indeed awful, and the aspect of the weather throughout the day was such as to forbid all hope of our moving on our journey. The high wind was productive of terrible consequences to some of the inhabitants, as we witnessed, indeed, from the door of our dwelling. Before the gale commenced the ground was already covered with snow; and the thunder and hail of the morning being followed by violent gusts of whirlwind and torrents of rain, some of the cliffy parts of the mountain broke away, and the lower parts of the town which filled the valley beneath these cliffs became buried under the fallen masses of rock, earth, and snow, by which many of the inhabitants were severely hurt, and such of their cattle as were not crushed by the fall of these masses very narrowly escaped drowning in the accumulated floods and pools which filled the obstructed hollows of the vale throughout.

Notwithstanding the tempestuous weather, which continued with little intermission during the day, we had a number of curious visitors, who came to enquire of us the news of other parts, and from whom I was equally glad to gather some local information in return.

In the course of the day the two Arabs of the tribe of Beni Abad, who had been our guides from the mosque of Abu-el-Beady to the passage of the Zerkah, came all the way from thence to Assalt to demand the restitution of their garments, thrown off by them when they quitted us on the mountain to go to the assistance of their fellow-robbers in the plain below. My guide, Georgis, who had retained these garments as a security for their return of his musket, carried off by them at the same time, expressed his willingness to restore them the moment the musket was produced. They replied that this was impossible; as it had been taken from them by the owners of the stolen cattle, who had rescued their property, disarmed the robbers, and succeeded in bearing back the spoil in triumph to their own camp. They contended, therefore, that the musket was lost by the will of God; and that it was both irreligious and unjust to demand its restoration; a demand, indeed

impossible now to satisfy. "With regard to the garments," said they, "the case is quite different. It is evident, from their being safe in your keeping, that it was the will of God to have them restored to their proper owners: why, therefore, should you, by withholding them, oppose the destinies of heaven? Give us back our robes," said they, "and let us again break bread together in friendship." Absurd as this distinction may appear, there was an earnestness of natural eloquence in the pleadings of these Arabs which made them all-powerful; and though they were avowed robbers, as well as men of a different faith, the Greek Christians unanimously agreed, that though the musket could not be recovered, the garments should be restored, exclaiming, "*Allah kereem!*" or "God is bountiful!" and inferring from thence that his creatures should follow the dictates of liberality and benevolence, rather than those of retaliation and revenge.

Assalt, Sunday, February 25.—The weather had not yet become settled, though there were short intervals which admitted of our going out of doors, and this was of itself a great relief, as my confinement of the preceding day had been very irksome and painful to me. I had not suffered it to pass, however, more unprofitably than I could help; and as the observations which occurred to my notice or experience were committed to writing at broken periods, as I could find time between the almost incessant coming and going of visitors, I shall follow them in the order in which they were noted down, and if deficient in arrangement and connection, they may at least be relied on for their accuracy.

The town of Assalt * is seated on the slope of so steep a hill

* In writing this name I have followed the exact pronunciation of the present inhabitants, although if the word were written "*Salt*," they would pronounce it in exactly the same manner, from their almost constantly placing an aspirate before the *s* in words beginning with that letter. There is reason to believe that this is the city of "*Salt*" mentioned in the book of Joshua, chap. xv. ver. 60., and enumerated among the towns and villages which formed the portion of the tribe of Judah in the southernmost part of their possessions towards Edom, — Salt being classed with the cities in the mountains and the wilderness, or near the Desert, where it may be said to lie. It is men-

that the houses rise one above another like a succession of steps or terraces, the buildings themselves facing chiefly towards the east and the south. On the summit of the hill is a large castle, which looks down upon the houses, and completely commands the town. * At the foot of the hill is a narrow ravine, in which stands a small square tower, not unlike some of the country church steeples in England, and probably once belonging to a Christian place of worship, but no traditions of its history are preserved. There appeared to be on the whole about a hundred separate dwellings in this small town of Assalt; and the computation, by taking an average of twenty ordinary houses, made the population from five to six hundred souls only.

The Sheikh el Belled, or chief of the town, is a Mohammedan; but holds himself independent of all the Syrian pashas. He does not receive tax or tribute, however, from any of the inhabitants, either in money or in produce; and differs only from the rest of the community in the influence he possesses, from having more houses, lands, and property than any of his fellow-townsmen. He lives in the castle, of which he occupies the largest portion; but several other families reside in other apartments of this large building; and the only source of his power is his superior wealth, as he is not vested, either hereditarily or by election, with any

tioned as this city in Adrichomius, *Theatrum Sanctæ*, folio ed. p. 54., and was a place well known to the historians of the Crusades. In an article published in the "*Mines de l'Orient*, tom. v. p. 145., it is mentioned among the "*Extraits historiques relatifs au Temps des Croisades du Livre, Insol. djelil fit tarikhi Khods el Khaleel*," thus: "In 626 (A. H.) Jerusalem was delivered up to the Franks, in consequence, as the Mohammedan writers say, of the divisions among the reigning princes, who, though all of one family, made as many parties as they were brothers in number. Some of the conditions were, that the walls should not be repaired from their present ruined state: that the domes of the mosques of Sakhra and Aksa should not be touched, and these temples be equally open to Christians and Moslems, while those villages only which lay on the road between Acre and Jerusalem should belong to the Franks. Kamel having made these conditions, and having still his troops at his own disposition, pursued his original plan of marching against Damascus; when Nasir, the governor of that city, made it over to his brother, Eshrif Moise, and received in exchange for it the castles of Karak, Shaubeck, Belkah, and Salt."

* See the Vignette at the head of this chapter.

direct authority, either from the governments around him, or the people, over whom he nevertheless exercises an influence nearly equal to that of a regularly appointed governor, in any of the provincial towns of the Syrian territory.

There are conceived to be about a hundred male Christians in Assalt, most of whom came here to seek refuge from the persecutions of Jezzar, or the "Butcher," the late Pasha of Acre, during the expedition of the French against Egypt and Syria; and these refugees were chiefly Nazārenes: they continue to be related to or acquainted with the people of Nazareth, with whom they generally live on friendly terms.

On their first flight to this place for protection against the persecutions of Jezzar, they found only Mohammedan inhabitants; but these were independent of the Syrian pashas, and seldom visited the larger cities, while the Arabs of the Desert mixed with them on friendly terms, for the sake of securing their supplies. There was, therefore, little or no bigotry among these isolated Moslems, so that the Christians, who came to them for protection, were permitted freely to reside among them and enjoy all the privileges and immunities common to themselves, without an enforcement of those odious distinctions of dress, tribute, and name, observed in the more civilized parts of Syria, where the power of the pashas extends. From these circumstances, coupled with their greater activity in matters of trade, the Christians have gradually increased in numbers and in wealth; and they may be said at present to enjoy at least an equal degree of influence with the Mohammedans, though these are still superior to them in numbers.

Among other confined notions entertained here on geographical points, is the singular one of there being but four seas in the world, which they thus enumerate:—

Bahr-el-Tabareeah — The Sea of Tiberias.

Bahr-el-Loot — The Sea of Lot.

Bahr-el-Melhhé — The Salt Sea.

Bähr-el-Hheloo — The Fresh Sea.

They ask, too, if there are houses in Europe, like those of Assalt; and think there is no single building in the whole world so large as the castle that overlooks their town.

Karak, which is three days' journey in an E.N.E. direction from this, is said to be about as large as Assalt; and the Christians are reported to be more numerous there than the Mohammedans. The duties of the Greek church at Karak are performed by two Arab priests from Jerusalem. It is asserted, in the most positive manner, that between Karak and the convent of Santa Catharina on Mount Sinai there are Bedouin Arabs dwelling in tents, who are Greek Christians, and live in the regular exercise of their religion. This fact was attested by many persons in the party in which I first heard it mentioned; but no one could say any thing about their history, or tell whether they were originally Christians from a long Christian descent, or whether they had been converted from Mohammedanism to Christianity at any recent period.*

* In the article from the *Mines de l'Orient*, before mentioned, there are the following passages alluding to Karak, which may be worth inserting in a note here: "After the death of Salah-ed-din, his brother, Melek-el-Aadel, or the Just Prince, possessed Karak, Shaubeck, and the eastern countries beyond the Dead Sea. He posted himself at Tal-el-Adjoul, or the Hill of Adjoul, near to Gaza, and received succours from Egypt, under the protection of Sancor, governor of Jerusalem, and Main-oun-el-Kasri, governor of Balbeis. He afterwards took Yafa by the sword, this being the third conquest of that place. Aziz, one of the sons of Salah-ed-din, was his nephew, and reigned in Egypt at the same time, afterwards joining him in his Syrian war, which led him as far as Maredin on the north-east, and into Nubia, the country of the Blacks, on the south-west. He pillaged all the country between Beisan and Balbeis, and killed and made many prisoners. He first possessed the country of Karak, Shaubeck, &c. about the year of the Hejira, 590; and died at the village of Aalkain near Damascus in 615, aged 75 years. He is described as a prudent and circumspect prince; a man of extensive knowledge, sound judgment, mild temper, patient, and favoured by fortune. He was succeeded in his government of Egypt by his son Melck-el-Kamel Abou-el-Mali Mohammed; and in Syria by the brother of Kamel, Melek-el-Maazem Jesus, who possessed all the country from Homs to El-Arish, with the sea-coast, Cælo-Syria, Palestine, Jerusalem, Karak, Shaubeck, Sackhad or Salkhad, and the countries east of the Jordan and the Dead Sea. In 618 the Franks were in possession of Damietta, and contemplated the conquest of Egypt, which they began with the capture of Mansoura. Kamel engaged six princes of his family, who governed at Damascus, Aleppo, Hamah, Balbeck, Homs, &c., to join him in an expedition against these Christians, and

The church of Assalt being open to-day, as it was the Sabbath, I accompanied a party there at an early hour. We found it situated among the dwellings of the town, about half way between the foot and the summit of the hill. The entrance was through a small court, which led to a vaulted room about thirty feet by fifteen; and from twelve to fifteen feet high, resembling in form and size the "House of Peter," at Tiberias. It differed from it only in one particular, by having a part cut off from the body of the room for the altar. This stands at the east end of the building, and is separated by a screen with two arched doorways; from these are suspended two sliding curtains, which are drawn when the mysterious parts of the service are performing, and are again withdrawn when it is permitted to the congregation to behold what is passing. The only furniture of the church consisted in a large wooden cross, and two wooden birds carved in the act of flying: these were placed on the top of the screen that divided the altar from the body of the church. Empty ostrich eggs suspended from the roof by cords, and a few common glass tumblers hung as lamps, were also counted among the ornaments; while three small pictures, containing more gilding than painting, and presenting the most grotesque figures of certain Greek saints, were as much objects of devotion as of admiration.

At our first entrance, we found the room so crowded that it was difficult for us to make our way in. There were assembled at least a hundred persons, which was a large congregation for so small a church: the men were placed in front, with the women behind

marched to Mansoura, where they attacked them. At the same time they proposed to them to deliver up Jerusalem, Ascalon, Tiberias, Laodicea, Gebela, and all the conquests that Salah-ed-din had made upon the coasts of Syria, reserving to themselves only Karak and Shaubeck, which were fortresses of the interior, east of the Dead Sea, on condition only of the Franks evacuating Damiatta. These offers, the Christian warriors, however, refused, and demanded in their turn three hundred thousand ducats as an indemnity for the demolition of the walls of Jerusalem, and insisted upon the restitution of Karak and Shaubeck."—*Extraits Historiques, relatifs au Temps des Croisades du Livre Insol. djelil-fit-tarikhi Khods-el-Khaleel*.—*Mines de l'Orient*, tom. v. p. 145.

them; and every individual, whether old or young, was seen standing. When we got near the altar we were presented with crutches; and as the service is extremely long, and all are required to stand during its performance, we found them very acceptable. Being a stranger, and this being my first visit to the church, all eyes were directed towards me, to see how I crossed myself, so as to determine, by the mode of my making that sign, whether I was Greek, Catholic, or Infidel. The service appeared to me nearly the same as I had before witnessed in the Greek churches of Asia Minor; and differed only in being performed in the Arabic instead of the Greek language. The priest wore a coat of many colours, a garment apparently as much esteemed throughout these parts in the present day, as it was in the days of the patriarch Jacob, who had one made for his favourite son Joseph; or in the time of Sisera, when a coat of divers colours was enumerated among the rich trophies and spoils of the battle of Tabor or Kishon. In the exercise of his functions, the priest remained mostly at the altar, while young boys, bearing censors of incense, were constantly waving them around his sacred person.

On the outside of the screen were two side-altars, at each of which a person repeated certain passages of the Psalms to another near him, who sung them. The individuals of the congregation criticised the faults of these singers as they proceeded, without scruple or reserve, sufficiently loud to be heard by every one in the room; and the noise and confusion arising from this general conversation was such as to take away from the scene all appearance of an assembly met to worship. When the priest came to the door of the screen to read aloud some portion of the service, a number of men, who had bared their heads and shoulders, pressed around him, and bowed down their necks to make of them a resting place for the large book from which he read the service of the day. When this ceremony was ended, the priest walked through the body of the church with the sacramental cup elevated, and a silk covering on his head: those of the congregation who were nearest to him

falling on the earth, and kissing his feet and the hem of his garment; while those who were not near enough to pay him this mark of homage, stretched forth their hands to touch some part of his robes, kissing their own fingers afterwards with great reverence, and even communicating the benefit of this holy touch to those who were behind them, and could not come in direct contact with the priest's person.

On our quitting the church, all the men of the congregation saluted each other by kissing on the cheek and forehead; and I came in for a large share of this, being saluted by upwards of twenty of my guide's friends, some of whom were smooth-faced boys, and others bearded elders.

Though the snow was still so deep upon the earth, as to render many of the narrow streets of the town impassable, yet the two hours following the church service were given up to visiting, and going from house to house, often by the most circuitous routes, to get at some dwellings that were otherwise inaccessible. As we ate something at each, we may be said to have dined at several houses in succession: but the mode of feeding was so offensive to an European taste, and the nature of the messes prepared was so contrary to our notions, that it required a great effort to overcome the disgust excited even by their appearance, and to preserve a show of being satisfied. Among other novelties, I observed that large lumps of solid butter were eaten by the people of this place, without the addition of bread, vegetables, or flesh meat; and this is accounted so wholesome that it is frequently given to infants in arms, by ounces at a time, as nurses in England would give bread only. At all the dinners there was an abundance of boiled rice, and generally a goat or kid served up with it, though often so tough as to require to be literally torn in pieces before it could be eaten. Raisins and olive oil, both produced from the surrounding country, were also in abundance, with bowls of butter and sugar melted and mixed together, and a kind of pudding about the shape

and size of a large lemon, made of barley paste stuffed with onions and pepper.

In the course of the conversation that passed over our meals, I learnt that during the present year, all the necessaries of life had experienced an unusual advance in price. Corn, which during the last year had been sold at six gallons for a piastre, was now at a piastre and a half per gallon. Butter is first melted, and then sold while it is liquid, by a measure called a *mudd*. This article was now selling at twelve piastres, or about two Spanish dollars the gallon. The wages of a labourer, if hired for a day, would be now about two piastres: but wages are seldom paid in money, the people undertaking their labours jointly, and dividing the profits of it in shares. Rich individuals who have lands, maintain the husbandmen in their own houses on the farm, and in addition to their food, give them one-fourth of the produce of the soil to be divided equally among them, reserving the other three-fourths for the landlord or occupier. This ratio of division is always observed, whether the produce of the farm consist of corn, fruit, and oil, raised from the land, or cattle born on the soil since the commencement of the husbandmen's servitude. The same regulation prevails also between shopkeepers and mechanics and their servants, who are all fed by their respective masters, and in addition to this, receive from them one-fourth of the profits on all works produced by their labour, in lieu of fixed wages. By this arrangement, the servants and labourers become in a manner incorporated with the family, and seldom or never change their masters, both parties being interested in the long continuance of their servitude.

The houses of Assalt are very small; each dwelling, with few exceptions, consisting of only one floor, and this having only one room, subdivided into recesses, rather than separate apartments. They are mostly built of stone; and, where necessary, a few pointed arches are thrown up on the inside, to support a flat roof of branches of trees and reeds plastered over with clay. The interior

of the dwelling is generally divided into a lower portion for the cattle and poultry, and an upper part raised as a terrace, about two feet above the ground floor, for the use of the family. In this raised part the fire-place for cooking is generally placed, but in no instance that I observed was there a chimney for carrying off the smoke; and as wood and turf are the fuel generally used, it becomes painful to those not accustomed to it, to sit in any house for more than an hour, where a fire is burning. In the upper division are the beds, clothes-chests, and provisions; and for the better security of these, there are again other subdivisions made in the upper part of the house by walls, shelves, and recesses, all formed of dry mud or sun-baked clay, without being white-washed or ornamented in any manner. There is seldom any aperture for light, except the door, which must be shut when storms of rain or snow occur, and are always closed at night, so that those within are then enveloped in darkness and smoke. I remarked that all the modern wooden doors of these houses, were hung in the same manner as the ancient stone doors seen in the tombs of the kings at Jerusalem and in the sepulchres at Gamala, a wooden post forming the inner edge of the door itself, and terminating in a pivot at each end, the upper pivot traversing in a hole in the beam above, and the lower pivot traversing in the sill or threshold of the door below.

The house of the merchant Aioobe, which was the best and most comfortable dwelling in the town, consisted in this manner of one room only, about twenty feet square, divided into a lower portion for the cattle, and an upper part or terrace, about two feet above the former, for the family. In the first of these was contained also a large supply of fire-wood and provisions for the winter; and in the last his whole stock of merchandise, consisting of cotton cloths from Nablous, Bedouin garments, and various articles, chiefly for sale among the tribes of Arabs, that come to the market of Assalt from the surrounding country. This chief of the merchants of Assalt was estimated to be worth about 5000 piastres, or 250*l.* sterling; and by most of his fellow-townsmen he was considered to

be as rich as any merchant could hope or desire to be. In comparison with his neighbours he might be called wealthy indeed; for many of those who were considered traders, had never more than 10% sterling invested in stock, and the average of the town might be safely taken at 20%, as rather beyond than below the state of their trading property.

After a day passed in visits to all the principal Christian inhabitants of the place, and eating, contrary to my inclination, at almost every house, we assembled in a large evening party at the dwelling of the widow in which Georgis and myself had taken up our temporary abode. Though the dimensions of this building were very small, not exceeding fifteen feet by twelve, it had a chimney in the wall, and an apartment of the same size above, the ascent to which was by a flight of narrow steps made of dried clay, with a carved wooden balustrade; the only instance I had met with in all the town, of so much convenience and ornament.

Although this was the evening of Sunday, cards were introduced, and I was pressed to take a part in the game against my will. Fortune was adverse to me: and in playing for garments, I lost my booza, a sort of thick woollen cloak, which I had bought at Nazareth for four piastres. There was no remedy: and though all exclaimed *Allah kereem!* "God is bountiful!" yet I felt that this was neither the season nor the country in which to gamble away warm garments, particularly as it would have been imprudent, at the present moment, to show that my finances were so good as to admit of my purchasing it back again from the winner.

The conversation of the evening was such as I should gladly have retained, had it been practicable to have stored my memory with all the geographical and topographical facts mentioned respecting the positions of ancient and modern places in the neighbourhood, the very names of which are unknown in England, as the whole of this tract is little better than a blank in our best maps. But amidst so many loud and discordant voices, and the innumerable questions that were incessantly asked me on every

side, the names of places that I heard in one moment escaped me in the next.

Among the many ridiculous questions that were seriously proposed to me, when talking of the different countries that I had visited, I was asked, whether I had ever been to the Belled-el-Kelb, where the men had dogs' heads? and, whether I had seen the Geziret-el-Waak, or the island in which women grow on trees, budding at sunrise, and becoming mature at sunset, when they fall from the branches, and exclaim, in the language of the country, *Waak ! Waak !* "Come and embrace me !"

The opinions entertained by the people of Assalt on all matters beyond their own immediate sphere of observation, are like those which prevailed among the most ignorant of the ancients ; and there is no fable of antiquity, however preposterous, that would not find believers here. Even now, places not a league distant from the town a ϵ made the scene of miracle ; and the people seem not only to believe, but to delight in the marvellous. My guide, Mallim Georgis, who was a consequential old man, of diminutive stature, with a scanty beard confined to the extremity of his chin, small grey eyes, an aquiline nose, thin lips, high arched forehead, and a round back, might have passed for a true descendant of Æsop, for he talked incessantly, and almost constantly in fables and parables. I have no doubt, from the reputation he seemed to enjoy with every one, that he was a man of integrity, and, in matters of common intercourse in life, a person of general credit and good faith ; yet even *he* made no hesitation to swear by the few hairs of the scanty beard he possessed, that he had seen a Muggrebin at Oom Kais, by the art of magic, transport one of the columns of the ruins from that place to his own country ; that he had distinctly heard him order it to rise and begone ; and that he himself, with his own eyes, had seen it take its flight through the air ! Others said, that at a place called Oom-el-Russās, in the way to Karak, several Muggrebins had, by the aid of perfumes and

prayers, raised up out of the earth copper cases full of gold, and carried them off to their own countries !

Amidst these absurd stories, there were now and then mingled some useful facts that were more worthy of remembering. I learnt, for instance, from the conversation of the evening, that Mallim Moosa, or Doctor Seetzen, had gone round the Bahr-el-Loot, or Dead Sea, from the outlet of the Jordan to the same point on his return, passing round from east to west, and that he had found the remains of many Greek monasteries and churches among the barren rocks that border it. Sheikh Ibrahim, or Mr. Burckhardt, had gone from hence, it was said, to Karak, and from that town round the southern extremity of the Dead Sea, by the ancient Zoar, to Egypt, with a party of Bedouins, about three years since. When I mentioned to them that I had, at Mr. Burckhardt's request, made minute enquiries into the particulars of Dr. Seetzen's death at Mokha, in my way from Egypt to India through the Red Sea, it excited a deep interest, and apparently a sincere regret ; * both these enterprising individuals being well known to most of the persons present, and being, indeed, the only Europeans that had ever, till this period, penetrated much to the east of the Jordan, as far, at least, as was known to us by any trace of such a visit.

The general topics of conversation were, however, relating to the Muggrebins, and their exploits whenever they came into this part of the country. These Muggrebins — the name being common to all the Arabs that come from any part of Africa between the Nile and the Atlantic — have the character of being profound magicians ; and as the country east of the Jordan abounds with ruins, the people think that in all of them treasures are buried, and that the chief, if not the only object of all strangers coming among them, is to

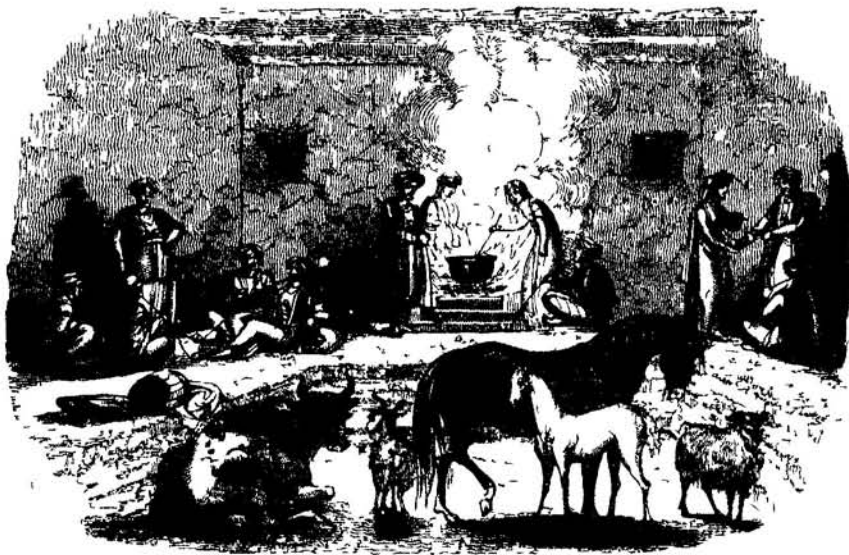
* The particulars here alluded to were sent by me to Mr. Burckhardt from Mokha, and by him transmitted to the Baron Von Hammer at Vienna : by whom they were published, in a letter bearing my name, in one of the numbers of a large work published at that capital under the title of "*Les Mines de l'Orient.*"

discover these hidden treasures, and carry them off for their own use. On the summit of Jebel-el-Belkah, or Bilgah, as it is equally often pronounced, the Pisgah of the Hebrews, from which Moses saw the promised land and died, and which is only three hours south of the reputed tomb of Joshua, on the mountain of Assalt, there grew, according to the testimony of all present, a species of grass, which changed the teeth of every animal that ate of it to silver! And in a party of twenty persons then assembled, there were not less than five witnesses who declared most solemnly that they had seen this transmutation take place with their own eyes!!

This conversation led to a debate on the history of Moses, his birth, and rescue by one of the daughters of Pharaoh, his wonderful works in Egypt, and his leading the Jews through the Desert to Canaan. Mallin Georgis, who shone in all matters of recitation and narrative, took so large a share in the debate, that he was unanimously requested to give it in detail, when he accordingly cleared his throat, and began with a loud voice, as if he were addressing a larger audience. To hear this history related in the Arabic language, and in a party of Arabs, so near as we were to the principal scenes described, was like the pleasure of hearing a tale from the Arabian Nights recited near one of the old Saracen buildings of Grand Cairo, the associations in each case making the hearer almost a spectator of the scene, and giving him a personal share in the events detailed. Every one present listened to the discourse of Georgis with evident pleasure; and during the pauses which were allowed for the guests to take coffee, and the narrator to take breath, various entertaining comments were made by the hearers on the several parts of the story that struck them most forcibly, or interested them particularly from the events or places to which they principally related.

In the course of the evening I observed, as peculiarities of conversation, that when one person wanted to arrest the attention of another, or to interrupt him in his discourse, he first called him by name, and then said, "A good evening to you, my friend;" to

which the other replied, " Good evening." This was considered as an assent to listen, when the orator proceeded with his discourse. Again, when the narrator of a story wished to obtain the particular attention of any individual in the company to what he was about to say, he first called that individual by name, and then bid him pray, as thus, " O Job! pray to the Prophet !" to which the person addressed replied, " I pray ;" and then the discourse proceeded as before. These interruptions were of very frequent occurrence, and were equally in use among the Mohammedan and Christian Arabs of these parts, to whom they appeared to me peculiar, as I had not observed them in any other society of Arabs before.



CHAP. III.

FURTHER DETENTION AT ASSALT.

ASSALT, Monday, February 26th. — The frost had been so severe during the night, that, in the room where we slept, the water in vessels for drinking was coated over in the morning, although all the external air had been excluded and the apartment had been heated throughout the night by the breath of eleven individuals; and the snow outside the door was hardened into a solid mass of ice. The morning was, however, clear and fine, the sun beaming out in full splendour without a cloud; but when I talked of proceeding on our journey, every one opposed it as precipitate and ill-judged. My guide, indeed, refused to stir until he saw how the weather would settle, which, he said, could not be ascertained till twenty-four hours of clear sky had passed over us; and this, he

contended, was the more necessary, as we should meet with no houses in our way, and, from the severity of the season, even the Bedouins might have removed their tents to the low countries and the plains. All my efforts to persuade him that by perseverance we might overcome every obstacle were useless, and as I could not prevail, there was nothing for me to do but to appear content.

After suffering a tedious morning of idle visits from men who had communicated all they knew before, I caught a spare hour to go up and see the castle of Assalt, the pride and wonder of all its inhabitants. This edifice is seated on the summit of a round-topped hill, composed of white lime-stone, out of which a deep and wide ditch has been excavated all around its base, so that it is literally founded on a rock. The building consists of an outer wall of enclosure, about one hundred yards square, with towers at each corner, and in the centre of each of its sides. Within this enclosure is a square citadel, and from twenty to thirty private dwellings, inhabited by Mohammedans connected directly or indirectly with the sheikh of the town. The general aspect of the castle is that of a work of considerable antiquity, but there were no particular features decisive of its age or date of original construction. The masonry is good, and the stones are large: many of them six feet by three; and these smoothly hewn and neatly joined at the edges, but rough in the centre of the outer front, or what is called the rustic masonry of the Romans, like the work in the lower part of the castle of the Pisans, or palace of David at Jerusalem, which, indeed, this citadel of Assalt very strongly resembles. Much of the original pile was in ruins, but a portion of one of the square towers remained: the eastern face of this was about fifty feet high from the bottom of the ditch, even in its present state. At the foot of this was a sloping mole, faced with smooth stones, forming a casing to the living rock on which the castle stood; and this casing of masonry presented appearances of the marks of water, with which the ditch had no doubt formerly been filled. Within the castle is a fine spring of water,

and from the well in which it is contained nearly the whole of the town is supplied. The original wall and tower have evidently been built upon by more modern hands, and of smaller and inferior materials; and the present gate of entrance into the castle has a pointed arch, well built, but doubtlessly constructed since the original erection of the edifice, being formed of smooth stones, unlike the rustic masonry of the castle generally, and of a smaller size as well as inferior workmanship. In different parts of this motley building, the Roman and the Saracen arch are seen together; but both of these appear to be modern additions, much posterior to the original building, the large rough stones, and the general aspect of which, give it the air of a place of higher antiquity than either Roman or Saracen times: the several portions are, however, now so confusedly mixed together that it would require great skill and patience to separate the one from the other.

At one corner of the citadel is a small mosque, frequented by the Mohammedan inhabitants of Assalt. Near this place we were shown two small European swivels, apparently two-pounders; they were each marked with a P., and the weights rudely cut on them were respectively 2cwt. 1qr. 18lbs., and 2cwt. 1qr. 16lbs. There was no device or emblem on them by which it could be determined from what nation they originally came: their appearance, however, was that of English ship-swivels, and the same circumstance induced me to think they could not be more than fifty years old. So rapidly, however, are things and events forgotten in countries where no written or printed records of them are kept, that no person at Assalt knew any thing of the history of these guns; although, from the difficulty of bringing such articles to an isolated spot like this, and from their being, probably, the only cannon that were ever known here, the circumstance of their first arrival at the town must have been an event of great importance at the time, and have been talked of for months and years afterwards. Here, too, within the castle, we saw the marble capital of a Corinthian column, small in size, and of inferior workmanship: but no one knew from

whence it came, or to what building it originally belonged, nor did I observe, throughout all the town of Assalt, any other vestige of Roman architecture, except this single capital.

At the bottom of the south-western valley, below and almost in the centre of the town,—for there are houses on both sides of the hill,—I observed a small square tower, which was said to have belonged to a mosque in that quarter long since destroyed, and the remaining portion of the work has nothing about it to lead to a contrary impression.

From the walls of the castle of Assalt the view of the surrounding objects is highly interesting. The north-western hills appeared covered with an unbroken sheet of snow, and the south-eastern hills had their hoary summits capped with the same wintry emblem: while the cultivated valley, that half environed the hill on which the castle stood, presented a surface broken by green patches of garden land, terraced vine beds, corn fields, and olive grounds; and the town below rose like a series of steps or stages, the roof of one house serving as a platform on a level with the door of the one immediately above it.

On returning from my visit to the castle, I found, as usual, a number of visitors and enquirers assembled, both within the house and around the door. In the course of my conversation with them, I was glad to find one who had been a great traveller in the country round about these parts; and having drawn him into a communicative humour, and filled his pipe from my own tobacco-bag, he readily furnished me with the following information as to the bearings and distances of several of the principal places in the neighbourhood, computed from this town of Assalt. I had a small pocket compass with me, brought from Bombay, about the size of a watch, which had a traversing card, and was contained in a morocco case. In order to obtain the bearings, I placed this on the ground before the door, and bade my informant point with his hand, as nearly as he could, to the quarter in which particular places lay. The distance was computed by the only method known here,

namely, by days and hours, at a quick walking pace on horseback. Both the bearings and distances are thus, no doubt, imperfect, the former particularly; but, in a country so entirely unknown, and the whole of which is a blank in our best maps, even an *approximation* to the truth is valuable, and as such I readily availed myself of the opportunity to set down the names and relative positions of the several places named, as follows:—

Bearings and Distances of Towns from Assalt.

Jerusalem	W. S. W.	2 days.
Nablous	W.	2 days.
Nazareth	N. W.	3 days.
Ammān or Ammon	S. E.	6 hours.
Gerash or Geraza	N. E.	1 day.
Fahaez	E. S. E.	2 hours.
Huzbahān or Heshbon	S. S. E.	9 hours.
Chahāf	S. E.	8 hours.
Karak	S. S. E.	3 days.
Oom-el-Russūs	S. E.	2 days.

Bearings and Distances of several Places lying in the Road to Oom-el-Russūs from Assalt.

Fahaez and Mahus	E. S. E.	2 hours.
Arrack-el-Ameer	S. E.	6 hours.
Huzbhan	S. S. E.	9 hours.
El-Hhaal	S. E.	12 hours.
Emsucker	S. S. E.	14 hours.
El-Ekferaat	S. S. E.	16 hours.
Massooeh	S. E. by S.	18 hours.
El-Burrazene	S. E. by E.	19 hours.
Mahhine or Yussera	E. S. E.	21 hours.
Gerrayne	E. S. E.	23 hours.
Madaba	E. S. E.	25 hours.
Etuheame	E. S. E.	26 hours.
Suthehah	E. S. E.	28 hours.
Lib	E. S. E.	32 hours.
Dellilāt	E. S. E.	35 hours.
Jelool	E. S. E.	36 hours.
Oom-el-Russūs	S. E.	40 hours.

There are many places of inferior note, which my informant thought too inconsiderable to name. For greater accuracy, the list was read over to him a second time after being written, and confirmed by his assent to the positions assigned.

Road back from Oom-el-Russās by another Route, through Ammān to Assalt.

1 Oom-el-Russās (1)	33 Deir-el-Nussāra	65 Surroot
2 Oom-el-Hamed	34 Deir-el-Seir	66 Beerein
3 Ghobeyah	35 El-Jehannah	67 Reijemeshook
4 Oom-el-Burrah	36 Tehhein	68 Malēgha
5 Beit Zeirahh	37 Abdoon	69 Safoot
6 Oom-el-Kundool	38 Ammān	70 Ezzhah
7 Oom-el-Anafish	39 El-Gherrenein	71 El-Bekkah
8 Jowah	40 El-Hhurjaan	72 Oom-el-Dennaneer
9 Yadoodi	41 El-Newekees	73 Jellait (Elia Ghioor)
10 El-Kissaire	42 Oom-el-Thebāh	74 Jelhood
11 Korbtho-el-Homeiry	43 Gherra Nurrhish	75 El-Musheijee
12 Mussulmaak	44 Oom Mahaleleefy	76 Oom-el-Hamed
13 Griet-es-Sookh	45 Gholdnak	77 Sehhoof
14 Oom Ghaezathy	46 Oom-el-Theimy	78 Zey
15 El-Theaebey	47 Oom Jozy	79 Sumia
16 El-Hummān	48 El-Jebeiah	80 El-Elaghoone
17 Oom-el-Hhairān	49 Gherbt-el-Beitha (1)	81 Seehaal
18 El-Chahāf	50 Yajoos	82 Allaan
19 Oom-el-Soweweny	51 Tabikirah	83 Gherbt-el-Beitha (2)
20 El-Ghoesemy	52 Merhel	84 Cufr Elma
21 Oom-el-Russās (2)	53 Beddnān	85 Cufr Oada
22 Fokharah	54 Abu Nesseer	86 Aira
23 Nahhoor	55 Moobus	87 Yergah
24 Oom-el-Kenāfit	56 El-Khermshay	88 Gherbt Aioobe-el-Nebbé
25 Beddeagh	57 Merah	89 Haramulla
26 Gherbt-el-Saadi	58 Ethelehhey	90 El-Beggbeah
27 Gherbit Saa (1)	59 Erramān	91 El-Bugghān
28 Gherbt-el-Seiry	60 El-Mustabah	92 Lezzedeeah
29 El-Koursee	61 Joobba	93 Gherbit Tobbalah
30 Gherbit Saa (2)	62 Aith	94 Shoogahor
31 Oom-el-Summaah	63 El-Alook	95 El-Megibbely
32 Dabook	64 El-Owalaké	96 Mēllikaruk

97 Er'Rohawah	100 Gherbit Sencit	103 Gherbt-el-Şookh
98 Gherbt-el-Allāly	101 El-Annab	104 El-Robbaheehāt.
99 Gherbt-Aboyey	102 El-Maez	

Here my informant grew tired of his task, and exclaimed, "By the beard of the Prophet! there are three hundred and sixty-six ruined towns and villages about Assalt, and I know the names of all; but who could have patience to sit down and recite them to another, while he writes them in a book?" I said all I could to explain the utility of this; and added, that my chief object in taking this trouble was for the purpose of ascertaining what scriptural names were still retained and extant among the ruined cities here: but all my efforts were of no avail; the patience of my companion was exhausted, and there was no prevailing on him to resume his task. I had ascertained, however, by this means, at least one highly interesting fact, namely, that the whole of this region was, in a manner, studded with the ruins of ancient towns, and must have been once highly fertile and thickly peopled. On a reference to the division of the places given to the tribe of Judah, there appear only three names of places in this modern list corresponding with those of the cities mentioned there: — Assalt, for the city of Salt (Joshua, xv. 62.); El-Anab, for Anab (verse 50.); and El-Jehennah, probably for Janum (verse 53.). I have no doubt, however, but a visit to the places themselves, and the comparison of names on the spot, might lead to the most interesting discoveries towards the elucidation of scriptural topography, and restore the lost knowledge of this interesting region, which appears, both from ancient testimony, and the existence of innumerable ruins up to the present time, to have been one of the most fertile and thickly peopled countries on the face of the earth, though it still remains a blank in our maps, and is considered by all who treat of these countries as a desert or a wilderness.

In the evening we were visited by one of the Arab priests of Assalt; a fat, coarse, ignorant, vulgar, and haughty man, who made

himself a sort of temporary deity among the party by which he was surrounded. In his endeavour to flatter me, by paying a compliment to the English nation generally, he said that the Christians of the East must be as glad to see any one from England as if the Madonna herself (the Virgin Mary) were to appear among them ! Theological distinctions, and reprobation of heretical sects, formed the chief topics of conversation ; and in the course of this it was admitted, that the Russians were the only truly orthodox people in matters of faith among the whole of the nations of Europe : although the English, it was allowed, were a much superior race, notwithstanding the general conviction that they had no religion whatever, and, consequently, none of its appendages — neither churches nor priests ; — a belief, in which they were so firmly rooted, that my most solemn asseverations to the contrary, accompanied by a long detail of our form of church government and worship, had no effect whatever in changing their preconceived notions.

This Greek divine officiated, by leading the prayer of the evening, as the party was about to break up. In doing this he stood before the rest, who followed his motions, after the same manner as the Mohammedans follow those of the Imams ; and, indeed, the ceremony itself very nearly resembled the Mussulman manner of prayer, except that there were not so many prostrations to the earth, and that the hands, instead of being elevated towards heaven, were almost constantly employed in marking the form of the cross on the head and breast. There was the same indecorous hurrying through the prayer, as among the Mohammedans ; and, as with them also, the chief aim of the Greek priest seemed to be to say as many words as possible, by the most rapid utterance, without taking breath, making the last word louder than all the preceding ones, and hurrying forward again with all speed after drawing breath, without any regard to pause or emphasis, so that the whole resembled a barbarous mode of singing, rather than solemn breathings of the soul poured forth before the throne of the Supreme Being. To add to this revolting picture, there was neither solem-

nity in the manner of the speaker, nor respect in that of the audience; for some talked, others laughed, and the mistress of the house, to save time, took this occasion to spread out the mats for our beds, at the same time muttering her prayers in an under tone with the rest. The priest, when his hurried service was at an end, determined to sleep at the house, instead of going to his home in another part of the town as he had intended, and by this step most disagreeably added to the number of our already crowded party.

Assalt, Tuesday, Feb. 27.—The heavy snow and intense frost which commenced soon after sunset on the preceding night, had continued until sunrise, and in the course of the forenoon we learnt that great destruction had been committed among the flocks and herds of the surrounding country; two persons indeed were said to have died from exposure to the cold, at a short distance from the town. This return of tempestuous and snowy weather created a new obstacle, or rather revived and strengthened the original hindrance to my prosecuting my intended journey from hence. I felt my stay here indescribably tedious, and would willingly have shortened it, had it depended on any exertions of my own: but we could not command the elements. It is true that there was no want of good and wholesome food, nor of shelter from the inclemency of the weather; but the first was disgusting, from the mode in which it was prepared, and the last was little better than the open air, from the myriads of vermin of every description which tormented me during the night. Had I been granted the enjoyment of a single day *alone*, I should not have regretted my detention so much; but during the daytime the house was filled with visitors and enquirers; and in the night, the crowded state of the room, in which we were all shut up together, rendered it difficult to enjoy even one hour's quiet and unbroken repose. It was only in the intervals between sleep that I could find time at night to commit any facts, or remarks on them, to paper, by the light of a dull lamp,

which burnt while all but myself lay asleep on the ground. This, of itself, will sufficiently account for the unconnected and imperfect nature of many of the observations that appear; some in mere outline, others only half expressed; and others again, probably, unimportant and uninteresting, but still thought worthy of preserving, at the time they were first made.

In the course of the conversation that passed among our visitors to-day, I learnt that the young men of Assalt invariably marry soon after their arriving at the age of puberty; and early marriages and a numerous offspring are accounted blessings to both sexes. Children, indeed, are sources of wealth in such a country; for the young sons are sent out to labour at an early age, and soon become capable of maintaining themselves, and even of bringing home a portion of their wages to the father, until they are twenty, when they are considered independent, and receive the whole. Young girls are also given in marriage for certain sums of money, varying from 500 to 1000 piastres, according to their connections or beauty; which sum being paid by the bridegroom to the bride's father, adds to his wealth, and makes girls as profitable as boys to their parents, particularly when they are handsome.

Many of the inhabitants of Assalt have light-coloured eyes, and fine soft auburn hair, with fair complexions, like the inhabitants of northern climates. The women would be agreeable in their persons, if they did not so strangely disfigure themselves, after the manner of the Arabs, by staining their lips with the most repulsive of all colours for the flesh, a deep indigo blue, as well as marking spots and lines of the same colour on the chin, forehead, and cheeks. The dress of the men resembles that of Syrian Arabs on the coast, with the exception only of their wearing over their ordinary dress a short sheep-skin jacket, the woolly part on the inside, and the skin, of a reddish colour, and tanned, as well as it can be while the wool is on, outside. The women dress also like the Syrians, but are rather more profuse in their display of strings

of gold and silver coin, with which they decorate their heads, arms, and necks.* 'The manners of both sexes resemble those of the Bedouins more than of the citizens of Syria, although they are originally descended from the latter, and mix more frequently with them than with the people of the Desert. The language, though Arabic, differs in many respects so widely from the language of Egypt and the Yemen, that I had often much difficulty in following a person whose utterance was more thick or more rapid than usual; and I felt this inconvenience the more, as I was without an interpreter; for my guide Georgis spoke more after the manner of the people of Assalt than of Nazareth,—and there is a striking difference even in places so near to each other.

The Bedouins of the neighbouring country are tall, well-made men, and have a prepossessing aspect and commanding exterior. They live on good terms with the inhabitants of Assalt, although their credit is so bad, that no trader of the town will trust them with any supplies, without having the purchase-money paid at the time. Assalt is the bazar or market for the supply of all the country as far as Karak, and this last place for the country east of it, which is said to extend a long way in that direction, before the sands of the Desert are met with. The Bedouins of these parts, however, though living in peace with the people of the town, on whom they chiefly depend for all supplies not raised within their own camps, are not in general esteemed by them; the common impression being that they are a barbarous and unjust race, and that no one, unless accompanied by an armed escort, or furnished with security, as well as pledges, from the sheikhs of the tribes, could with safety trust himself among them. From their character at present, as compared with the earliest accounts of them, it

* Rows of these coins, sometimes mixed with precious stones, bound round the temples and hanging over the cheeks, remind the scriptural reader of the verse, "Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold." — *Song of Solomon*, i. 10.

appears indeed that they have undergone little alteration for many centuries past. *

One of the consequences of the nearly equal mixture of Christians and Mohammedans in this community is a proportionate diminution of the force of bigotry and religious intolerance. It is well known that throughout the whole of the Turkish empire, and wherever the authority of Arab or Turkish governors extends, the Jews and Christians are not permitted to wear the gay colours worn by the Mohammedans; neither are they permitted to use the salutation of peace, or to swear by the oaths or ejaculations peculiar to the faith of Islam. At Assalt, however, no such distinctions exist. The Christians wear freely, and without molestation, the same garments and the same gay colours that are worn by their Mohammedan townsmen: they use the same mode of salutation; and there is no difference of exterior appearance, or even of manners, between the one and the other: so perfectly are they on a footing of equality. In return for this absence of intolerance on the part of the Mohammedans, there is a corresponding abstinence from what so particularly offends them in the Syrian towns among the Christians, namely, pork and spirituous liquors. In all the sea-ports particularly, there are pigs, spirit-shops, and wine-cellars

* The Arabians, called the Nabateans, inhabit a tract partly desert, and in other parts without water; and very little of this tract bears any fruit; therefore the inhabitants live by robbing and stealing, and for that end roving up and down the countries far and near, they vex the inhabitants with their continual incursions and robberies, it being a very difficult matter to subdue them. For in the dry country, they have wells digged in convenient places, unknown to strangers, whither they fly for refuge and are safe. For knowing where the waters lie hid and private, upon opening of the wells they are largely supplied: but strangers who pursue them, (unacquainted with those fountains,) either perish for thirst, or falling into many other disasters, and quite tired out, scarcely ever return home. And therefore these Arabians (being that they are not to be conquered) are never enslaved, nor ever admit any foreign prince over them, but preserve themselves continually in perfect liberty; and therefore neither the Assyrians anciently, nor the Medes and Persians, nor the very Macedonians themselves, were ever able to conquer them; who, though they often marched with great forces against them, yet they ever failed in their designs. — *Diodorus Siculus, Booth's Translation.* fol. 1700. Book ii. c. 4. p. 78.

in abundance, all of which are used and frequented solely by the Christians. * At Assalt none of these are to be seen ; and although the country about the immediate precincts of the town produces an abundance of grapes, no wine is made from them ; but such as are not eaten in their fresh state are dried as raisins, and stored up for winter use. They make also of these raisins a sweet, thick syrup, which is eaten by dipping bread in it, and is in great esteem among all classes, old and young. It is called *Dipse*, and is in general use in all parts of Syria where grapes are produced. *

The Bedouins take a quantity of this last article away with them into the Desert for their women and children, and to present it to guests to whom they may extend their hospitality. They also take from Assalt the manufactures of Egypt and Syria, including Sechem and Tyre, in return for which they bring camels, horses, and goats, as they did in the earliest times. † Indeed, in all respects they appear to have stood still, while every other part of the world has been either receding or advancing, and they are probably the only people now on the globe, to whom the most ancient description would apply with equal fidelity in the present day. ‡

* The learned Dr. Vincent, in his *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, says, that this article, under the same name, *Dipse*, formed one of the exports of the ancients, from Diospolis in Egypt to Arabia and India. It is mentioned as frequently by early writers as by modern travellers. Ebn Haukal calls it Doushab, and says that it was made also at Argham in Susiana. — *Vincent, Appendix*, vol. ii. page 68.

† Arabia and the princes of Kedar purchased the fabrics of Tyre, and brought in return lambs, rams, and goats. By the princes of Kedar may be understood the sheikhs of the tribes of the Desert, who lived in tents which were black. * *Kedar* signifies black; and Bochart concludes from this, that they were Arabs burnt by the sun; but that it refers to the tents is evident from Canticles, i. 5., "I am black but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem: as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon." See the Song of Maisuna, wife of Moawiah, in Abulfeda, *Reiska*, p. 116., which presents a true picture of the Arabs of the Desert. — *Vincent's Periplus*, vol. ii. page 548.

‡ "It is worth our pains here," says Diodorus Siculus, "to relate the manners and customs of these Arabians, for the information of them that are ignorant; by the use

* All the tents of Bedouins, that I have ever seen, are made of sheep's wool and goat's and camel's hair, and are mostly black, with sometimes, but rarely, stripes of white, grey, or brown; but this is so small a proportion, that even these striped tents all look black at a distance.

At the return of evening, we all met together as before, at the house of Aioobe the merchant, where a large party was collected before our arrival. We had not been seated long, however, before my companion, Mallim Georgis, gave the company a specimen of his powers as an Improvisatore, in Arabic, reciting, as he told me, extempore verses in that language, which, as far as I could discover, were generally thought successful efforts of skilful arrangement and correct rhyme. This was followed by one of the company repeating a set of lines on the letters of the Arabic alphabet, similar to those known to all nurses in England.

A — was an archer, and shot at a frog,

B — was a butcher, and kept a great dog.

Tales from the Arabian Nights were recited by some of the younger members of the party; and after this, the priest who was present closed the evening's entertainment by narrating, in set phrase and pompous manner, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, by their being engulfed in the Dead Sea. The peculiarities of this Sea, though within a day's journey of the spot on which we stood, were not accurately known to any one of the party, so indifferent had

of which customs they have hitherto secured themselves, and preserved their liberty. They live in the plain and open fields, calling that Desert their country, wherein are neither inhabitants, rivers, or springs, whereby an enemy's army can be relieved. It is a law amongst them neither to sow, plant, build houses, or drink any wine; and he that is discovered to do any of these is sure to die for it. And the reason of this law is, because they conceive that those who are possessed of such things are easily (for fear of losing what they have, or in hopes of gaining more,) forced to comply with the will and humour of those that are more powerful. Some of them breed up camels, others employ themselves in feeding of sheep, roving to and fro in the wilderness for that purpose. There are no few indeed of the Arabians, that though they give themselves to the pasturage of cattle in the Desert, yet are far richer than the rest, but exceed in number above 10,000. For many of them use to carry frankincense, myrrh, and other rich perfumes down to the sea-side, which they traffick for, and receive from them that bring them from Arabia the Happy. • They highly prize and value their liberty, and when any strong armies invade them, they presently fly into the wilderness, as into a strong fortress and castle for refuge; for, no water being there to be had, none can follow them through those Deserts." — *Diodorus Siculus*, book xix. c. 6.

they all been to an object of so much natural curiosity, and doubly interesting from its association with the history of their religious faith. No two persons were agreed as to *all* that was said respecting it: some of their assertions indeed were so extravagant, that no reflecting person could give them credit; but most of the individuals present concurred in these facts; namely, that the sea was seldom or ever agitated by storms; that its waters were heavier than any other known; that though the river Jordan, which comes through the fine fresh lake of Tiberias, and continues sweet to the end, discharges itself into the Dead Sea, its smell is offensive, and its taste salt, bitter, and highly disagreeable; that neither are birds seen to fly over it, nor fishes found in its waters; that the heaviest bodies float on its surface; and that it is constantly throwing up from its bottom large masses of black bitumen, which is secured, as it drifts on the shore, by the Arabs, who take it up to Jerusalem for sale. These facts appeared to be well authenticated, and even these correspond in a striking degree with many of the descriptions given of this sea by ancient writers. As one of the wonders of these parts, the Dead Sea engrossed a large share of the attention of all who wrote on Syria and Palestine; but their accounts of it, differing as they do in many particulars, are not half so discordant as the verbal description which I heard with my own ears at Assalt in a company of twenty persons, not twenty leagues from the spot, and each of whom had seen the sea for himself, an advantage enjoyed by few or none of the ancients who wrote of it.*

* Having collected, in a little book set apart for the purpose of extracts, several passages from different works, as accident threw them in my way, relating to the Lake Asphaltes, I shall, perhaps, save others the trouble of reference, by subjoining a few of them in a note.

“ There is a lake also in that country (the valley of Jericho), which, by reason of its greatness and immoveableness of the water, is called the Dead Sea; for it is neither stirred with the winds, (the glutinous substance with which all the water is covered resisting their violence,) neither is it patient of navigation, for all things wanting life do presently sink into the bottom, neither doth it sustain any matter unless it be washed over with rock alum.” — *The History of Justin*. Codrington's Translation. London, 1688. 12mo. 5th edit. Book xxxvi. p. 253.