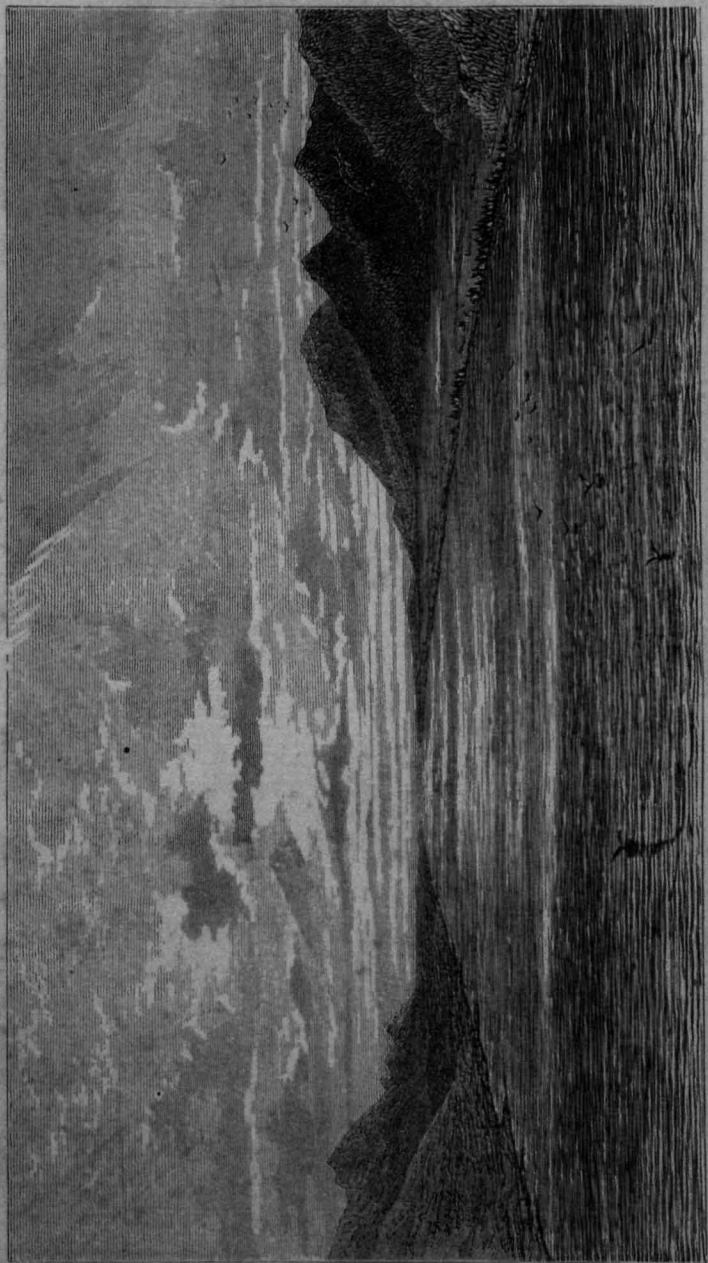


the Gulf, not even a row-boat or a canoe! About two o'clock this morning the man on watch saw a green (?) and red light, which he took for a lighthouse—not very likely to be met with here. It must have been a fire lighted by some Beduins.

The mountains seem to fall as we go north, but still they are high in the background. Akaba is in sight, thank God! and the Captain is going to hoist his colours. It is just eleven o'clock. Milne made a drawing of the approach to Akaba and head of the Gulf, from which it will be seen that the earth and sky seem to meet, so little is the rise. Not a mound in front. It is a basin, where the sides slope down to a mere line in the horizon. As we approach nearer Akaba, the granite continues on both sides of the Gulf, but on the left there is also what appears to be limestone. On the right are numerous date-trees along the beach, and also a few round the head of the Gulf. The sea is as smooth as a millpond; the plain behind is thickly covered with trees, and the Castle of Akaba is nearly hidden by the date-palms which surround it. We can see the people flocking down to the shore in great numbers, surprised, no doubt, at seeing so novel a sight as a steamer arrive in these waters, and wondering what it can mean.



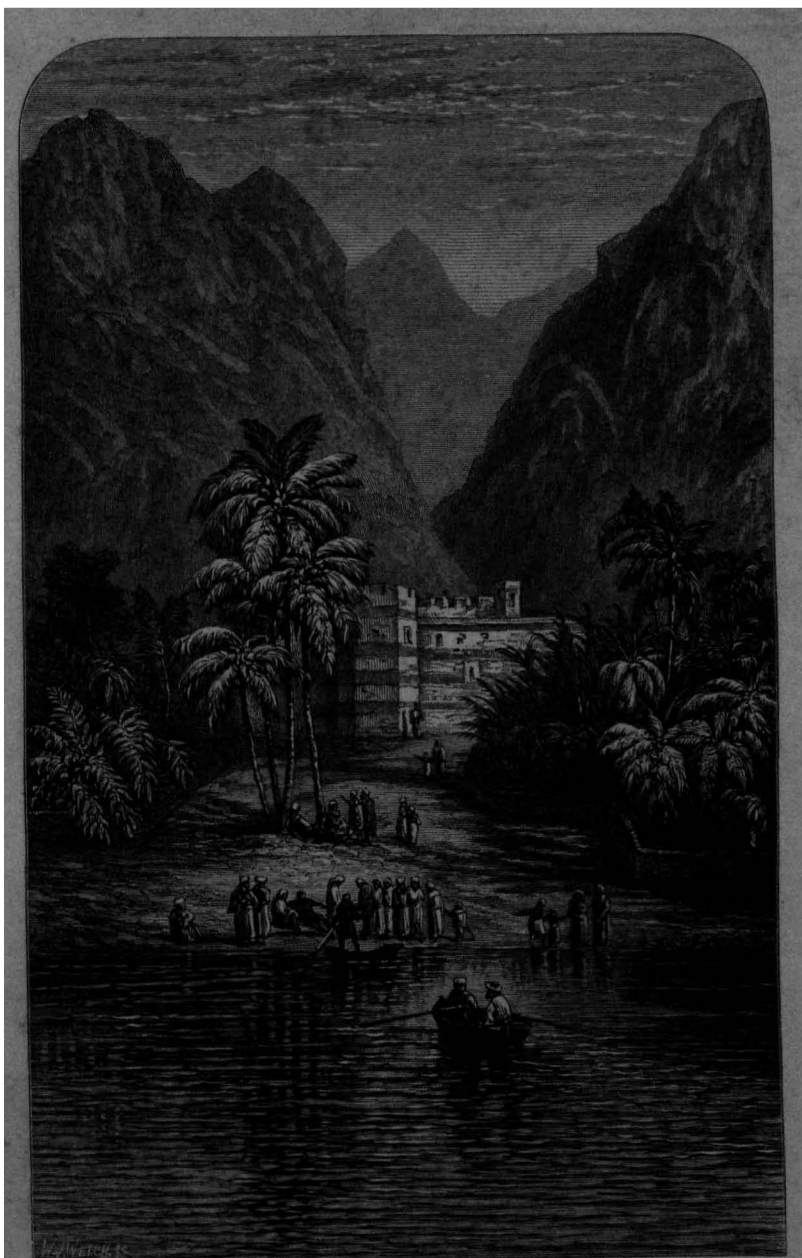
HEAD OF THE GULF OF AKABA, OR 'PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA OF THE ISRAELITES.'

The Caravan Hadj road goes up a wady behind the castle. The mountains on the west side of the Wady Arabah are visible a long way to the north; in fact, as far as the eye can see. Abu Nabut now tells me that he does *not* know of any cave here, and you know he so positively assured me he had *seen* it.

At 12.30 we approached the shore, and gave a whistle, and at 12.40 we anchored opposite the castle, at a distance of nearly half a mile. The Captain dressed himself as well as he could without his uniform: in clean shirt and blue coat with naval buttons (crescent and anchor), and went on shore. As he stepped from his boat all the people crowded round him: the soldiers came running down from the castle, and (as he told me on his return) they received him with military salute. I feel very ill and very shaky. I am dreadfully nervous, and scarcely know what to do with myself. At half-past two o'clock the Captain returned bringing with him the Egyptian Muhafiz or Commander, a Lieutenant in the army, with forty soldiers under him. We saluted one another, and I ordered coffee for him; but he is fasting to-day, on account of the festival to-morrow, when they kill the ram on Mount Arafat at Mecca, and he therefore could not take any. He

has already received orders from the Khédive to receive me, and has sent to the Sheikh of the Arabs, who is absent. Without him, he says, he has no power to do anything for me. There are Arab tribes in every direction, and the Sheikh alone is able to protect me. When he comes I shall be consigned into his hands, and when I have done all I want to do, he will bring me back again to the Muhafiz. The letter to him which Consul Rogers had given me I handed to him. There are no ships here, not even a boat; but they tell me a steamer came here in the time of Ibrahim Pasha, and every year a vessel comes from Suez to the garrison. So, after all, the Gulf of Akaba is not so unknown as I fancied. This does away with a good deal of the romance, does it not?

Most of our things having already been landed, at 3 P.M. we went on shore. Before leaving the ship I gave the Captain six dollars for the pilot, and a couple of Napoleons for the crew; for they have been very attentive and obliging—so much so, indeed, that I was almost tempted to add another Napoleon; but I hold my hand on starting lest I should run short before I get back to Suez. When we got on shore we found our tent ready pitched, and that of the cook nearly ready.



'MIGDOL,' OR CASTLE OF AKABA.



But, without going into our tent, I went straight to the fortress with the Commandant, who was on the beach waiting to welcome us. Inside the entrance the soldiers of the garrison were drawn up to receive us, and saluted me as I entered. They had not their guns.

The place consists of a large square courtyard, just like our barrack squares, with the dwellings of the soldiers all round. On one side are magazines for the provisions, both for the soldiers and also for the pilgrims of the Hadj. There are loopholes all round the building for musketry, and at each corner is a cannon of seven or eight pounds. In the courtyard stands a fieldpiece of four or five pounds. Altogether, it would make a sure defence against any number of Beduins. The castle has lately been done up, and looks really quite respectable. A kind of divan was formed for us on one side of the courtyard, a mat and cushions being placed on a sort of raised bank. Coffee was then brought to us, of which I had to drink three cups. The Commandant now excused himself because he had to go and superintend the distribution of the rations of meat for the feast, which commences this evening; and whilst we were sitting there a cannon was fired off to signalise its commencement.

The garrison consisted formerly of the Towara Arabs, but eight months ago these were replaced by Egyptian regular soldiers. Besides the Commandant there are two other officers, one of whom is the scribe (adjutant or quartermaster), who came to arrange with the Captain as to the bill of health, which, on leaving the ship and landing here, has to be entered, the Commandant affixing his seal. After sitting and talking some time, we came on to our tents, accompanied by two officers, to whom we gave coffee. I was then left in peace to write up my journal.

I am in great anxiety as to what I am to do. I wanted to give you some *certain* news by the 'Erin' on her return; but this unfortunate absence of the Sheikh of the Arabs, and this holiday, interferes with me, and I fear the Captain will be obliged to leave. But he must be dismissed by me, and I have told him I cannot do this until the arrival of the Sheikh, so that I may be able to report. He tells me—though I scarcely can believe him—that his first orders were to bring me to Akaba and *wait* for me. This is contrary to all I heard at Suez, and even to what M^cKillop Bey wrote to me. I have M^cKillop's letter now before me, in which he expressly says she was not

to return to Suez, but to coal at Tor, and proceed to Massowah. I have spoken to Milne about it, and he tells me it was Seid Bey who *thought* so at first; but of course he knew nothing of the arrangement.

A sentry is placed at the door of our tent, and three others are picketed here, their arms being piled near the other tents. The Muhafiz is determined to do us all honour. At about six o'clock I saw the guard changed in due form, the corporal standing by while the one sentry gave the *consigne* to the other: we were then just sitting down to dinner, Milne having come in with sketches of all sorts. Whilst we were eating, the Muhafiz came from on board ship. As he looked in at our tent door, I could not but say, "*tifuddel*" (*favorisca*), on which he entered and sat down. Of course I said "*Bismillah*," but he said it was yet an hour before he could eat. Hardly had this conversation transpired when Abu Nabut came in and most unceremoniously told him to *ainolich*, he had no business to intrude; on which the poor man bundled off without so much as saying "Good-bye." It was hardly decent; but still we could not help laughing. In the evening a few drops of rain fell. There must have been a good deal of

rain in the upper country. After dinner I felt myself so tired and exhausted that I was glad to go to bed early.

January 28, The Feast of Bairam.—At sunrise three guns were fired from the fortress. I find that Abu Nabut has sent away our guard in order that they may keep the feast. I fancy he does not care to have to support them, which would hardly fail to be the case were they to remain here. The 'Erin' is decked out with all the colours of the rainbow: the British flag being now at the foremast head. I have had a famous good wash, and put on all clean clothes, of which I was in need, after all the dirt we had experienced on board. I did not sleep very well, but I feel myself very much better this morning. The wind is now from the *south*.

At 8 A.M. we heard lots of firing of musketry, but we did not trouble ourselves to go and see what was doing. There is a village here composed of miserable mud huts, and the whole population may be some two hundred souls, including the garrison. Each soldier has his "wife." The date plantations are enclosed within mud walls. I have invited our Captain to dine with us to-day, and have been writing letters for him to take back to Suez, ex-

pressive of my satisfaction. The wind continues to blow strongly from the south, and it is raining hard and thundering! By 3.30 P.M. the storm had become terrific, so that Captain Sciassar could not leave if he would. After luncheon he came to ask me for some medicine for the people in the village, so I had to open my medicine-chest. You naughty girl! what a variety you have given me. I won't take any of them, but shall bring them all home to you. Thank God, I have as yet no occasion for them.

In the course of the afternoon the Commandant paid me a visit, accompanied by his Lieutenant. We talked of things in general, and, in the course of conversation, I learned that his pay is equal to £4 per month, of which fifty shillings are in rations, and thirty only in money! He has three rations, and can sell two if he does not use them. Glorious pay this for a Commandant! The garrison here were Bashi Bazuks—irregular native troops—till the present, regular, force came eight months ago.

January 29, Thursday.—Fine still weather. The Sheikh has not yet come, and there are no signs of him; but they say he will surely be here to-day. However I am impatient, and have sent

Abu Nabut to the Haz Bashi (centurion) to say that, if I cannot move about from here, I shall go back in the ship to Cairo, and report it to the Khédive: that I did not come here to remain 'seated' day after day. This had the desired effect, and soon brought the Centurion (such is the Commandant's rank in the army) to me. At first he said he had no power to protect me, except close to the fortress. But on my explaining I only wanted to go to Wady Ithem first, he said he would himself accompany me so far. He therefore went off to prepare the escort. Abu Nabut thought I was going myself, and got ready the camels and also commenced preparing the *takhterawân*; but I stopped this, telling him Mr. Milne would go alone.

I want him to see the three low hills Dean Stanley speaks of, and to tell me what he thinks of them—whether volcanic or not. As he comes back he will look at the head of the Gulf, and at the mountains on the other side of the Arabah, where *he ought* to find caves. I am told there are caves six hours up the Wady Arabah, but they are too far off for my purpose. There is also a cave *up the mountain* opposite. This shows that there are plenty of "caves" about here. And so it must be,

inasmuch as this is the country of the Horites, or "Dwellers in Caves"—Troglodites. Close to the shore here, within a few feet only, fresh water may be obtained by making a hole in the sand with the hands, a few inches deep. This shows that we are at the mouth of a large wady, with plenty of water above. North-north-east of us I have had pointed out to me, at a distance of half a day's journey or so, Mount Bághir, where I was at first told was some memorial of Moses. But it turns out to be, upon further inquiry, a *Wely's* tomb, which is visited by the Beduins.

I have written to Mr. Bates a few lines, which I enclose. If you please, you can refer him to what is said anywhere in the newspapers about my journey. It would be well for Sir Bartle Frere to be able to make some communication respecting my proceedings, as the meetings of the Royal Geographical Society are now being held. When Captain Sciassar was dining with us last night, he told me that he had mixed the charcoal which he got from Ainúnah with his coal, and so made up some eight tons of it; but it is very weak fuel.

When we were at Midian (Madiān) it appears that a *hole* was found in the 'Erin's' bottom; but it was stopped by the pilot's diving. I noticed his

plunging into the water, but thought he was only enjoying a swim.

9 A.M.—Milne is off with the Haz (Turkish for 100) Bashi, and Hashim (as interpreter), mounted on camels. They take their lunch with them, and will, doubtless, be away all the day. Before night I may probably know something definite. If Milne finds that Dean Stanley's "three low peaks" are volcanic, the point may be looked upon as settled. If not, it will not follow that I am wrong; only we shall have to go further afield. Still I confess I shall be disappointed. All I can say is, that I am in God's hands. I am now getting everything ready for the departure of the 'Erin,' which will take place either to night or to-morrow morning. I have just seen the Captain and arranged with him. Abu Nabut has just been to me for more money, so I have given him five pounds. I am now awaiting Milne's return and report; but I am not nearly so nervously anxious as I have been. At all events, I am resigned to my fate, whatever in God's providence it may be, and I am sanguine and confident as to the result. I can now do little or nothing of myself. I am in His hands, to do with me as it seems good to Him.

3 P.M.—I have had a nice nap for a couple of

hours. As to the Sheikh, there is still no sign of him, and I fear I shall have to wait. It is well that I have acted without him. Captain Sciassar has come on shore with his sextant to regulate his, and my time by the sun. He makes my watch fifty minutes fast. I know that I have been gaining, but hardly think it can be so much. However, this cannot much signify, as we have no astronomical observation to make. In other respects I am well satisfied with my watch: it only wants regulating. In Egypt I could do nothing with it, as every timepiece there seemed to keep different time. When you receive my telegram from Suez of my safe return, you must telegraph back to me at once. It is blowing so hard again that I cannot write. I am just told that the Sheikh is coming.

3.45 P.M.—At half-past four o'clock the Sheikh of the Aluwín came in with Milne, whom he had fallen in with on the mountains, and wanted to know what right he had to be there without his leave. He was dressed in all the colours of the rainbow, with a long curved silver-handled sword by his side; and Milne says he is stuck all over with pistols; but I do not see them on account of their being covered by his *abba* (Arab cloak). He was accompanied by two

other Sheikhs of lower rank. I had gone to the door of the tent to look out, and so came upon him there, which I was sorry for. He said "Good morning" in English, which is the extent of his knowledge of the language.

Having entered the tent and sat down, the usual compliments took place. Abu Nabut explained, at my request, that I had come to see the country ; that I had been to Ayoun el Kassab, the Madiān, &c. I then gave him the Khédive's firman and Mr. Rogers's letter. The former he opened, and the Muhafiz, who had come back with Milne, and was sitting by the Sheikh, read the contents, or at least gave him some idea of them. He listened, but made no remark, and soon afterwards asked for *chukha* (tobacco). Abu Nabut interpreted this to me, but, with my slight knowledge of Arabic, I had already understood, and I asked him if this was decent and respectful conduct in *my* tent ? Abu Nabut said they were Beduins, and such was their custom ; and I replied that it was a bad custom, and ought not to be encouraged. However, I gave him a packet of tobacco, one of several I brought from Cairo. He then began talking, and coffee was brought, of which he drank one cupful, and immediately held out his cup for a second.

These manners do not suit me, so I thought it time to mount the high-horse, and I therefore said he had read the Khédive's firman, and I wished to know what answer he had to give to it. If he was ready to obey it, good : I wished to start to-morrow morning, and I should write to Nubar Pasha to that effect. If not, I would return to Suez on board the 'Erin.' He replied that he would study the contents of the firman and let me know. But I said this would not do—I must have his answer directly.

I then asked Captain Sciassar to thank the Haz Bashi for his politeness in accompanying Mr. Milne, and wished to know his name in order that I might have the pleasure of mentioning him to the Khédive. It is Mohammed Mahmūd, Muhafiz of Akaba. This I duly noted down. While I was thus engaged the Sheikh wanted to speak to me, but I told Abu Nabut he must wait, as I was engaged. When I had done with the Muhafiz, he took his leave with Captain Sciassar, and then I sat down and told Abu Nabut I was ready to attend to the Sheikh. The latter now stood up, and, with the strongest protestations and asseverations, expressed his readiness to take me everywhere I pleased to go, to supply me with camels and horses

if I wanted them, and to place himself and all about him at my disposal. I said I was satisfied, and it was settled that we are to start to-morrow morning early ; and so he left.

Now as regards Milne's explorations of the day. He tells me he went some two miles up Wady Ithem, and saw *no* "three low peaks"—nothing but high granite mountains. He ascended the winding valley to a height of 900 feet, and then went up the side of a mountain some 600 feet more, but could see nothing before him but lotty granite mountains. I cannot understand how Dean Stanley could have been so mistaken. I am therefore so far disappointed : especially as I shall have to travel some six hours before I get to *the plain* described by Burckhardt—whose veracity and accurate descriptions are unquestionable—as being covered with "flints," and which I believe to be the *Harra Radjlâ*. Thus nothing has occurred to affect my views generally. I can only say I should have been misled by Dean Stanley's description.

It is blowing very hard, and the Captain is obliged to get up his steam in order to prevent the ship running on shore. We may congratulate ourselves on being out of it.

CHAPTER VIII.

JOURNEY INLAND—EXPLORATIONS IN ARABIA PETRÆA—DISCOVERY
OF THE TRUE “MOUNT SINAI”—JEBEL BĀGHIR, OR MOUNTAIN
OF LIGHT—RETURN TO EGYPT THROUGH MITZRAIM.

January 30, 1874.—Yesterday evening I made up my letters and gave them to the Captain of the ‘Erin’ at half-past five o’clock, but the weather was so bad that the boat could not come off from the ship to take him on board. Milne made up a box of stones (geological specimens) we have collected for the Captain to take to Suez and leave in charge of the P. and O. Company’s agent there. At 8 P.M. Abu Nabut came to me for more money, saying the Arabs were “eating him up;” so I gave him five pounds more. Then I went out to look at the weather. It was rather calmer, but still not sufficiently so for the Captain to go on board. I found the sentry again at my tent door, with four others picketed; the Sheikh’s spear being also stuck in the ground between the two tents; so that if we are now not protected enough it is a pity.

The Captain took tea with us, and told me the story of the little 'Erin.' She was built in 1856 for Bazaine's Company at Constantinople, and came over to Alexandria, where she was laid up for several years; till one day M^cKillop Bey was induced to buy her to use as a tug. She was, however, not found strong enough for the work, so a tank was put in her, and she was employed to carry water to the ships; but as she consumed *at least* one ton of coals for every ton of water, this did not pay. On one occasion Sciassar, who was in command of her, took water to a Turkish frigate, which only wanted two tons at two shillings = 4s. It cost £5 to carry this on board—namely, one ton and a half of coals at 6os., with oil, &c., for the engine, to say nothing of the ship's own expenses! So this was given up; and Munzinger Bey wanting a steamer at Massowah, it was settled that she should go to him, when *I* came in the way. But she is unfit for Munzinger, and unfit to have brought me here, as her bottom is perfectly rotten and not thicker than a sheet of paper. When painting her, the brush actually went through the iron, so completely is it rusted. It is quite a miracle that we reached Akaba in safety. Of course the Khédive knew nothing of this, or

he would not have given her to me ; but the authorities ought to have known.

It will be high-water here to-day at about 4.30 A.M., so Captain Sciassar reminds me that I shall want to note this for my calculations this day week. I was up this morning at half-past five, and ordered Abu Nabut to begin packing. He demurred, and talked about this being the first day, and that we could not do much, and he had to make purchases, &c. Whereupon I told him that if he delayed it should be on his own account.

There was now a regular row between Abu Nabut and the Sheikh of the Aluwîn, into which the former wished to bring me. He pretended that I was to pay for the Sheikh's escort, and also for the camels which he insists on forcing on him. Those that Abu Nabut has engaged belong to the Towára tribe, and have therefore no right to go on the ground of the Aluwîn. I think Master Abu Nabut has made a mull of it ; but that is no affair of mine. I blew up Abu Nabut furiously, and told him I would report him when I got back to Cairo. The contract is that he is to pay everything, and I hold him to his contract. The Captain was fortunately still here, and he spoke seriously to him, telling him how unreasonable his conduct was,

and that if I was content to give *him* money to pay the Beduins with, he should receive it under protest, if he pleased, and then refer the matter to the Consul in the usual way. And so it was settled that I should give him ten pounds more, which he handed over to the Sheikh—half for an escort at twelve dollars a head, as agreed with the Khédive, and the other half for the camels, which he does *not* furnish, and so all was arranged peaceably.

Other money matters had, however, to be agreed upon by Abu Nabut, causing no end of quarrelling and noise. Among other things, the Muhafiz desired to be paid for the guard he had placed over us. If we had gone into the fort as he offered, there would have been nothing to pay, so he said; but as we chose to encamp outside, it was his duty to place a guard over us, and these must be paid. Abu Nabut offered ten francs, with which they were not satisfied; but at length it was taken, the Captain of the 'Erin' saying that when we came back to Egypt it should be seen into.

At length the camels were loaded, and we were off at 8.15 A.M. Captain Sciassar remained to see us start. He was exceedingly kind, and has been very useful. I hope the letters I have written about him will be of service to him, for he is a very

good fellow. I must mention that before we started the Sheikh gave the Muhafiz a *receipt* under his seal for the bodies of me and "my son," whom he binds himself to restore to the Muhafiz safe and sound, barring any visitation of God. I mounted to my *takhterawân* by means of a ladder, which Abu Nabut had made and brought on for the purpose ; and really I find my travelling carriage not at all uncomfortable. There is absolutely no fatigue, and the shaking is insignificant at the slow rate of travelling of the camels : no doubt I should be a good deal shaken if they went fast. I shall not trouble you here with the details of the journey, which are duly consigned to my route-book. All I need say is, that we went along at the head of the Gulf of Akaba, and up Wady Ithem, in a north-easterly direction generally. Our escort consisted of the great Sheikh of the Aluwîn and two other Arabs mounted on horses, and there was a Beduin on a camel who carried the great man's spear : we form quite an imposing caravan altogether ; and there was the *little* daughter of one of the tribe, who ran along, followed by three young goats almost as big as herself. I busied myself in making notes, and Milne on the back of his camel amused himself reading Macaulay's "Biographical Essays." On our

road we met some Arabs, who went up to the Sheikh and shook hands with him, and then kissed their own hands. He, like our own great people, held out his hand to be shaken or kissed.

At about 2 P.M. we passed Jebel Bâghir, which we had seen from Akaba. This is a most important subject, as I shall have to tell you by and by. Soon afterwards the Sheikh stopped at a place where he wished us to encamp; but I, who have made up my mind that he shall obey me, and not I him, said I preferred going on, to which he assented. But I had for some time past during the journey been thinking that my going farther *north*-eastward along Wady Ithem would be to no purpose, as it would only lead me out of my road. If "Mount Sinai" was a "volcano" seen by the Israclites on their way from Succoth [Kellaat-el-Nakhl], it would be to the east, or somewhat to the *southward* of east; and, therefore, every step I was taking to the north must of necessity be out of the way. I therefore seriously thought of not going further, but of retracing my steps and proceeding up Wady Amran, a branch wady of Wady el Ithem, running to the east or southward of east. Therefore, after I had gone a short distance further than where Sheikh Mohammed had thought of stopping, I decided on halting at a spot

behind a mountain screened from the wind, which his was not, as he and every one else admitted. So far all was right.

On the road the Sheikh and I had kept apart, each standing on his dignity; but shortly before we stopped he passed me and saluted me, and I returned his salute, and since then we have been bosom friends! And one of the results of our alliance is, that he has been telling me the story of *Jebel Bághir*, which, he says, is a holy mountain; on the summit of which is the tomb of a wely or saint, and at the foot of it is a mosque; and every time the *Hadj* returns from Mecca to Cairo, sounds are heard in the mountain like the firing of a cannon. This, he solemnly assures me, he has himself heard with his own ears, and, he says, he is prepared to bring me ten, or even twenty persons, who have likewise heard it. Our servant, Hashim, tells me he heard the same story from several persons at Akaba!

I am writing now at 8.30 P.M., and Milne and I have just heard thunder, or *something* which, he says, must surely come from *Jebel Bághir*! Well, this mountain turns out, in fact, to be the "*Jebel-e'-Nūr*," which, you will recollect, I heard of at Cairo; and the long and the short of it is, that to-morrow

Milne is going up it, accompanied by Hashim and a couple of Beduins. It is very steep and very high; and from its summit are seen the pseudo-Mount Sinai, that is to say, "Mount 'Tor," on the one hand, and "Mount Hor," near Petra, on the other; and if any volcanoes are to be seen, they will be visible also from this mountain. Milne and Hashim are to have horses to the foot of the steepest part, which latter they must ascend on foot. Abu Nabut tells Mr. Milne he must take with him a telegraph—or, correcting himself, a photograph—meaning a telescope! The fellow made me laugh till I was almost ill, and I cannot refrain from laughing whilst I am writing about it.

It has now begun to rain heavily, and a Beduin is at work making a trench round our tent. Milne remarked that the only use he has found for the umbrella he bought to protect him from the *burning sun* is to keep off the *rain*. It is thundering heavily, accompanied by lightning.¹ This is the sound from Jebel-e'-Nūr, which, even if I should be disappointed in finding a volcano, will prove a rival "Mount Sinai." Abu Nabut tells the people that I am sent here by the Khédive, the Queen of England, the Emperor of Russia, and all the other

¹ Exod. xix. 9-16.

great people, to find out the 'true Mount Sinai,' and that then all the *Khawājas* will visit it, instead of the traditional Mount Sinai within the Peninsula of Tor, or Pharan, as I prefer to call it. There is nothing like it, except the storm that is now raging in these mountains!

January 31.—It was really a terrific storm last night, the rain coming down in torrents, and the lightning and thunder were frightful, some of the claps being right over our heads. This storm is almost like a judgment upon me, who feel like Balaam, the son of Beor.¹ If this is really the true Mount Sinai, it is as little a 'volcano' as the traditional one is, or else geology is all at fault. The same arguments that Sir George Airy uses to prove that the traditional mountain was volcanic, will, however, apply to this mountain also, for the geological formation of both appears to be the same. On this point I hope to be satisfied during the day; for this morning my companion Mr. Milne is off up the mountain, accompanied by Hashim and a Beduin on horseback, with others on foot. Before he started, and as soon as we had breakfasted, we got out the Royal Geographical Society's azimuth compass, aneroid, and thermometer, and after having

¹ Numb. xxiii. 11.

compared the aneroid with the one Milne has, he took with him mine, and left me his own to compare during the day; and at 8.15 A.M. off he started.

The sky is still overcast, and, unless it improves, I fear he will not do much good; but it is better he should get near the summit, and there await his opportunity. I envy him his trip more than I can tell you; but I feel my utter incompetency to undertake the ascent, and therefore I am resigned.

Sheikh Mohammed tells me that he has heard from his father, who was ninety years old, and who heard it from his father, that in former times signals were made from the three mountains, Jebel Tor, Jebel-e'-Nūr, and Jebel Hârûn (Mount Hor, near Petra), by fires lighted during the night. The view from the summit of Jebel-e'-Nūr (Mount Bâghir) is most extensive, and Milne, with his azimuth compass, will take the bearings of all places visible from it. He will, in particular, be able to see whether there are any volcanoes within sight: if not, I shall most certainly not go to look for any, as in that case they would be too far off for the position I attribute to Mount Sinai. I have *enough* in this Jebel-e'-Nūr. I spell the name with our English 'J' instead of the German 'Dj': and I shall write *e' Nūr*, instead of *en Nūr*,

which is the usual, but, I think, needless way of representing *el Nūr*,—the proper Arabic spelling being *Jebel-el-Nūr*. You know the *Koh-i-nur* is spelt with "i," the meaning of the name being "Mountain of Light" in Persian, as *Jebel-e'-Nūr* is in Arabic. Do you not think, dearest Milly, that I have been highly favoured?—for, should I not succeed in finding a volcano, I shall, at all events, have found a "Mount Sinai" precisely where I have said for so many years that it ought to be found. I expect that the summit of this "Mountain of Light," will have been visible to the Israelites on their march all the way from *Kellaat-el-Nakhl*, where I place *Succoth*, and through which place I shall have to go on my return to *Suez*.¹

The reason why *Abu Nabut* has joined the Emperor of Russia with the Queen of England as being interested in my researches is, that when at *Akaba* I was telling him of the marriage of the Duke of Edinburgh with the Grand-Duchess Maria, and of the alliance between these two great nations. He is a man of vivid imagination, like our old dragoman, *Mikhail Hene*, hence his mistake. But after all, you see he was right about *Jebel-e'-Nūr* at

¹ On his way from *Akaba* to *Suez*, Dr. Beke mentions the extensive view of the summit of Mount *Bághir* and the head of the Gulf of *Akaba*, "from *Ras el Sakh*." See page 455.

Cairo, only when pressed for explanations he could not give them. I am now writing in my tent alone, very happy, but very cold ; however the sun is brightening, and I trust it will turn out fine after all. The scene from my tent door is very grand and imposing, but still solemn and peaceful withal. The little Arab girl who came with us is sitting up on the side of the mountain in front of my tent door, looking after her goats, which are browsing near her.

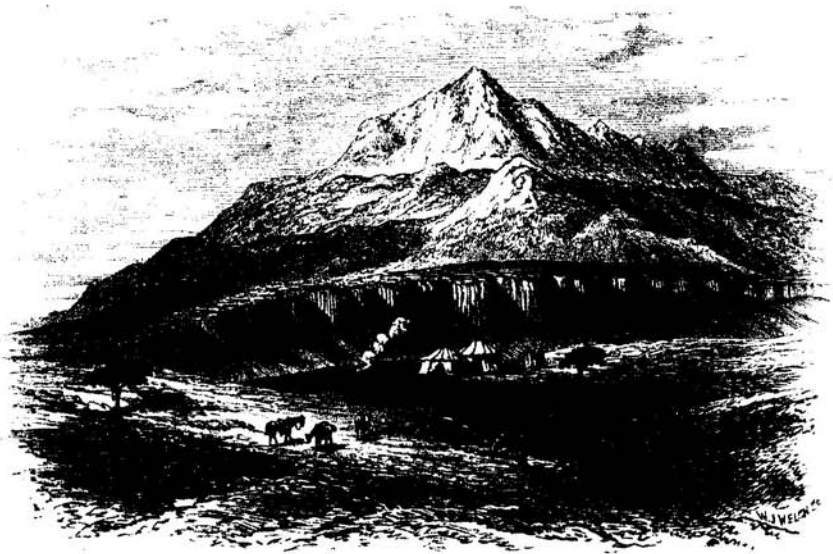
During the past night Abu Nabut had his tent full of Arabs, who all came swarming in out of the rain. It ran through our tent, and the trench outside had to be deepened round it. You know all about this from your experience in Syria and Abyssinia, and will understand the discomfort and the difficulty we have in keeping the water from flooding the inside of our tent. My man has been for some more tobacco for Sheikh Mohammed. He is now so amiable and obliging that the least I could do was to send him a small packet. He came to my tent door this morning to wish me 'good night'—his English extending only to 'good morning' and 'good night,' which he does not always apply properly—like Abu 'Nabut with his 'telegraph' and 'photograph.' Milne did not forget to

take his '*telegraph*' with him, as the poor old fellow calls it.

With this and his other instruments, and his hammer and his drawing-block, box of paints, and my brandy flask, &c., he was pretty well loaded for such an ascent. But he is a famous fellow when there is work in hand, and turns to it like a man. He is really a very clever young man, and invaluable to me on this journey, and I am anxious to give him full credit for all he does. He feels that he is working for himself not less than for me, and in a good cause. I hope and trust it may bring us both good ; *but I am more than fifty years older than he is, and my life is now almost spent.* I gave Milne my pocket-flask filled with whisky, as he may want it, for he will find it dreadfully cold up there : in this respect I do not envy him his trip. How thankful I am to have some one so competent to do my work for me. But there is still a great deal of work to do, and here I must positively remain till I shall have been able to make proper observations ; and although the glass is rising and it promises to be fair, I fear that Milne will not have been able to do anything (or little) to-day, on account of its being so overcast. I must give a full account of '*my Mount Sinai.*'

Abu Nabut has a regular poultry-yard round the door of his tent—he having let his fowls, some fifteen or sixteen, and a turkey, out of their coop : I will do him the justice to say that he feeds us well, infinitely better than Mikhail did when we were in the Holy Land. We have always soup, boiled and roast, sweets and dessert!! Only think of that in the Desert. It is almost as good as you and I had in Abyssinia at the foot of the Shumfaito Mountain, when going up the Taranta Pass to Halai. I allude to the (tinned) rump-steak, with oyster-sauce, and plum-pudding, the latter made by our old cook, and carried all that distance from home.

I am sorry to see the ‘glass’ going back a little ; by this I mean the aneroid, which acts as a barometer. I see that the Sheikh’s spear is laid on the ground at the back of my tent, in the opposite direction to the other tent in which he himself is : this serves as a safeguard to me on both sides ! I am getting very anxious to know what Milne has done. Abu Nabut has just been to inquire how many hours he has been away. I fear he will have done but little good to-day, and if so, we shall have to remain here. It cannot be helped : it is a necessary part of my mission. As it is, I am quite satisfied. I have found *my* ‘Mount Sinai,’ which turns



EAST SPUR OF "MOUNT SINAI," JEBEL-E'-NŪR (THE MOUNTAIN OF LIGHT).

To face p. 403.

out not to be a volcano, or at least cannot be *proved* to have been one; but at the same time cannot be proved *not* to have been one. This will surely please both parties, I hope [or perhaps no one at all]: the anti-traditionists, who will have seen a deathblow given to the traditional Mount Sinai; and the traditionists, who do not like the Scripture History to be deprived of its miraculous character. However, I have still to hear from Mr. Milne whether there are any volcanoes to be seen from the summit. I only desire to ascertain the truth. The prayer that the Hadjis say when they come in sight of this mountain is the *fátha*, or first chapter of the Korán—"Bismillah er rakhman er rakheem, Alhumdul-illah," &c.

1 P.M.—I am sorry to say it has just begun raining again. A Sheikh of this neighbourhood has come into the camp, who tells me that Mount Bághir has always been known as the "Mountain of Light." At the foot of it is the mosque or praying-place of Ali ibn 'Elem, a famous saint from Jaffa¹ or its neighbourhood, who (so Abu Nabut says) has a large mosque there; and at the very summit of this mountain is a place of sacrifice surrounded with stones, where may be seen the horns

¹ In Chapter ix. it will be seen that this information was correct.

(and bones?) of sheep and goats sacrificed there. If such be the case, Milne will have something to say on the subject.

As I was noting the saint's name down in my pocket-book, Sheikh Mohammed looked with curiosity at the 'style' with which I was writing, as being something unusual; so I took a bit of paper out of my pocket, and wrote on it with the style, but of course without making any mark; I then wrote on the prepared paper in the book, and likewise, of course, made marks. This astonished him and the bystanders vastly; but they were still more astonished and amused when I took one of Bryant & May's safety matches and rubbed it on the box on all sides without its lighting, till I touched the black side, when it at once blazed up. This, said Sheikh Mohammed, was like myself: I looked around me at the mountains on every side till I came to the right 'Mountain of Light!' What think you of that for a figure?

This Mountain of Light is undoubtedly a great discovery. And yet, can it be that it has never been known before? It is astonishing to me, and yet we see such strange things to be every day. I wonder what Milne is about? It is now more than 2.15, so that he has been away fully six hours. At half-

past two I went down to the watercourse in the 'plain' to get a view of the mountain, of which I have made a rough sketch, which will serve if Milne does not make a proper drawing of it; but he must do so, as it will make a beautiful picture, and a most impressive one too, for the view is a really magnificent one. Mount Sinai (Jebel Bághir) would have been visible to thousands or hundreds of thousands of people encamped in the 'plain' here below.

It is beginning to rain again, and I am really getting anxious about Milne and his party; I wish they were back. Anticipating that he would return very cold and tired, I ordered the soup to be got ready for him on his arrival. It was not, however, till 4.25 P.M., that he came in, very cold, but none the worse for a most interesting excursion. Abu Nabut having understood that I wanted the whole dinner to be got ready, it was at once served, and Milne proceeded to pour into my eager and *impatient* ears the particulars and adventures of the day. He went to the very summit, and found the horns and heads of the animals slaughtered there, just as I had been told. It was so cloudy that he could not see very much, but he was able to distinguish a large 'plain' to the north-

east of this, into which, in fact, this valley opens. The view in this direction is shut out by a very lofty mountain on the other side of Wady Ithem.

On inquiring of Sheikh Mohammed the name of that mountain, he told me it is Eretówa (or Ertówa), and Abu Nabut says that when people have been travelling two days or more without water, and then find it and drink it, they say "Eretówa." What this means literally I cannot pretend to say, but I think that we have here the *Rephidim* of Scripture,¹ and this mountain is Horeb.² The Great Plain beyond the two mountains will be the encamping ground of the Israelites before Sinai.³

It is clear therefore to me, that it is my duty to go up into the plain, which is only six hours from hence. We shall then return on the following day, and passing the spot where we are now encamped, shall go down as far as the junction of Wady Amran, where we shall stop; and on the following day we shall proceed to the opposite (west) side of the Arabah, at the head of the Gulf of Akaba, without returning to Akaba itself, where we have no need to go. Thence I would hope to proceed on our homeward journey.

¹ Exod. xvii. 1-3.

² Exod. xvii. 5-7.

³ Exod. xix. 2.

This *plain* beyond "Sinai" and "Horeb" explains most satisfactorily the journey of the Israelites from Elim. They went down on the west side of the continuation of the range of mountains on which we now are, and returned on the eastern. This plain we are going to see would hold millions, Milne says.

He has brought me a fine piece of quartz from the *very summit* of Sinai, which I have put by for you: It is the same kind of stone as the Brazilian pebbles, of which they make the best spectacles. He is very busy with his specimens and notes, and has not time yet to tell me further particulars; as it is of the first importance that he should place what he has done in order. He fell in with some Beduins up the mountain, who, thinking the Sheikh had come, killed a sheep in his honour, of which Milne had to partake, and as the Sheikh was not there, they smeared his horse with the blood in order to let him know what they had done for him. Altogether Milne is in high spirits at his trip, and with reason. He has found and copied some "Sinaitic Inscriptions" of our own. He tells me that the Gulf of Akaba, though at least eight miles off in a direct line, seems as if one could drop a plumb-line into it, so

close and straight down below it seems. On a rough estimate he was 5000 feet high !

But I will now relate the particulars of the ascent of Mount Sinai (Mount Bághir), in Mr. Milne's own words :—

“ At 8 A.M., although it was cloudy and thundering, I mounted the Sheikh's horse, which he lent me, and with five others, two mounted (Hashim and the Sheikh's son), and three Arabs on foot, started for the summit of Mount Bághir. (The Sheikh said ‘ Good night. ’) Our way was, for a mile, up a narrow wady, which grew narrower and narrower until it became a gorge. On the way we passed a stone on which were cut the words, ‘ Ya Allah ! ’ Something else had been written, but it was defaced, in Cufic, or old Arabic characters. In the gorge we stopped to admire a large stone near which the Beduins come and say their prayers. This stone where the Arabs pray is about five feet long and two feet square, and is made of granite. It originally stood upright on the ground, about two or three feet away from the side of the gorge. It is now fallen over, and rests between its pedestal and the side of the gorge. The ‘ pedestal ’ is merely another stone on which it appears to have stood.

“At the gorge we had to leave the horses with two of the Arabs, and going up a steep ascent to the left, we came to a low wall across the gorge, which was filled with large boulders; and close above the wall on the right-hand side is a well about three feet across, and about the same to the water in it, which may be two feet of water.¹ By it are two nebbuk trees, one of which overhangs and shades it, and one stunted palm. The well and gorge lie in the line of a dyke of greenstone, which goes far up the mountain, and most probably reaches the summit, only it cannot be traced for the *débris* covering it. Vegetation may here be said to cease, for, with the exception of a few stunted plants and bushes, nothing seems to live.

“Our ascent was now a climb, the rock in places being nearly perpendicular. On reaching the summit of the mountain, we found numerous skulls and horns, and a few bones of animals—it being the custom of the Beduins to come up here to pray, bringing with them a lamb, which they kill and eat on the spot. Round about were a number of low walls, more or less rounded in form, evidently built to keep the wind off. On the ridge on the left-hand side of the gorge, about a hundred and fifty

¹ Exod. xvii. 6.

yards distant from the well, we came to a pile of large rounded boulders of granite, on several of which were inscriptions,¹ which I copied as well as my cold fingers would allow me to do. The stones, which were much weathered, were externally of a dark-brown colour, against which the inscriptions stood out and made themselves visible from their being of a somewhat lighter colour. Before reaching the summit we found snow in the crevices, and, for the sake of saying I did it, I snowballed Hashim, who joined 'warmly' in the sport. Whilst we were at the top it hailed and snowed, and was bitterly cold, and it was as much as I could do to take a few angles with the azimuth compass. My companions made a fire, and it was only by continually warming my fingers that I could do anything. Akaba seemed just below my feet, but on so diminutive a scale, that I failed to detect the castle among the palm-trees, the general outline of which alone was visible; the landscape in other directions was almost blocked out by banks of cloud, rain, and fog.

"Coming back—which was on the opposite side of the mountain (which is about 5000 feet high), and far easier than the ascent—we reached a valley,

¹ For illustration see p. 422.

where we fell in with some Beduins, who thinking it was the Sheikh who was coming, had killed and cooked a lamb, which was ready for his reception, and of which I had to partake. It was a filthy, dirty mess, quite tough and scarcely fit to eat ; but I was afraid I should offend them if I refused. It is the custom whenever a Sheikh comes to give him mutton and milk. As it was not the Sheikh, but only the Sheikh's horse, they daubed the animal's back, just behind the saddle, with stripes of blood, to show the Sheikh, when he got his horse, what they had done for him.

" We went into one of the miserable tents to partake of their feast, and squatted down in front of a small fire, and got nearly smothered with the smoke. It was so low that one can only crouch down in it. It consists of a black cloth made out of goats' hair by the women, and is supported by six or seven sticks, with a rope along them, the cloth being pegged with small wooden skewers over the rope. It is a loose, slack, comfortless affair, open on one side, and on the others protected with heaps of bushes. A bit of cloth hanging down the middle divided us from the women, children, and goats, which are all mixed up together. Several of the children were almost naked, having

merely a bit of cloth thrown over their shoulders. I never saw such a picture of dirt, misery, and want. Their all would seem to consist of a few dirty rags, a bit of cloth for a tent, and a cracked wooden bowl in which they served their meat, which of course we had to tear in pieces and eat with our fingers. Eight hours after starting I arrived at our tents tired and cold.

“Mount Bághir is one of the loftiest peaks of the range of mountains on the east side of Wady Arabah and the west side of Wady Ithem, overhanging the latter. It consists of a mass of red to pink granite, which in places where it is weathered has assumed a dark brown hue. Where it is disintegrated the felspar and lighter mica have to a great extent been washed away, leaving a rough gravelly surface of quartz, which is of course only superficial, crushing under one's feet as one walks along. This granite contains but little mica as compared with other granites, and there are places where the rock consists of quartz and massive felspar alone, no mica being visible.

“On the north-west side of the mountain a portion of the granite looks, at a distance, like a brownish yellow coarse sandstone, weathering with rounded surfaces. In this, numbers of cavities can be seen,

generally ranging in size from a cocoa-nut to a man's head. On striking the rock with the hammer, it has not the usual clear ring of a solid rock, but gives a dull sound, owing to the surface being disintegrated, and tending to split off in flakes, which can be easily separated with the sharp edge of the hammer.

“On the same side of the mountain are many large boulders the size of a house. Several of them are so much disintegrated on their under sides as to form small caverns. One in which I entered was as much as about twenty feet across each way, and ten or twelve feet high at the entrance, sloping down towards the back, the roof being dome-shaped and the sides curved—the absence of angular forms showing the granite to have flaked off in curved laminæ. The peaks on the summit of the mountain are composed of granite, the hollows between them marking the position and direction in which the mass is traversed by dykes. And it may be stated as a general rule *for this mountain*, that the dykes do not protrude above the granite, but all tend to produce hollows. As an exception to this is the dyke on the north-east side of the mountain near the well, which forms a ridge running up the side of the mountain. These dykes are generally of a dark green colour, and very soft ;

in places so much so, that, under the hammer, they crumble off like a hard clay. Where one of these dykes is exposed as a hard mass, it appears to be dioretic. They are of all sizes, varying from a foot up to eighteen feet, and perhaps more: the run of them being four or five feet. They are numerous, but not so much so as on the mountain towards the north, looked down upon from the summit, where innumerable dykes are to be seen streaking in parallel lines the entire ridged surface of the mountain."

Bághir and *Erétowa* ('Sinai' and 'Horeb') are, I now fancy, two of Stanley's 'three low peaks.' We shall be able to decide this when we get down into the Arabah.

February 1.—This morning before starting we made preparations for taking the elevation of this place by Captain George's mountain barometer, and also by boiling-point thermometers. We therefore had the tent cleared after breakfast, spread a sheet on the ground to catch the mercury spilt, and opened the case, when, to our great annoyance, we found the tube for the mercury broken in half. I had been careful in not having the instruments undone before we wanted them for use. Here, where we really wanted the barometer, we found it useless. We put this then aside, and rigged up the boiling-

point thermometer, but, when we unscrewed the spirit lamp, we found it dry, and there was no supply of spirits. So this too was a failure ! We tried to boil the instrument in a saucepan of water, lighting a fire for the purpose ; but the water inside the case would not boil ; so we took the thermometer out, and boiled it naked in the water, as I used to do, you will recollect, in Abyssinia. It gave 209° , equal to somewhere near 1500 feet elevation. But this will have to be calculated when I get home. So the instruments from the Royal Geographical Society have not been of the service I anticipated. However, Milne has an aneroid as well as myself, and between the two we shall come quite near enough to the truth.

Before we started, the Beduins who accompanied Milne up the mountain yesterday came for bakhshish. This Abu Nabut gave them through the Sheikh. I know not how much ; but they were dissatisfied, as usual, and he had to add to the amount. Hashim explained to me that the Sidi Ali ibn 'Elem, about whom I wrote yesterday, has his tomb or mosque about half-way between Jaffa and Haifa.

We started at 8.15 A.M., and kept ascending Wady Ithem in a general north-easterly direc-

tion. On the way we fell in with a cannon ball, which, Milne says, weighs about fourteen pounds, but I think it is not so much; and soon after a ball of about an inch in diameter. These are signs of Ibrahim Pasha's presence here in 1840-43. The road all the way up the wady is practicable for carriages! As we came to the top, the mountains seemed to fall and the valley to open, giving us a splendid view of *Mount Shera* in front, only separated from us by a *broad sandy plain*, up which, if I mistake not, the road to Petra proceeds, keeping towards the left. I cannot make the way out at all by the existing maps; at all events, not by the one Mr. Bolton, of Stanfords, sent me out to Cairo.

At 11.45 A.M. we came to the water parting between Wady el Ithem and Wady Hesma, and proceeding along the latter, we stopped at noon in a broad sandy 'plain'! It was the Sheikh who came to a halt, telling us that he could not take us any further, and that if we proceeded we should have to take other camels; that there were a lot of strange Beduins about, and a long rigmarole which I did not care to listen to. I have been entirely disappointed in to-day's journey, which I plainly see tends to nothing, even if I were inclined to go on, and this I am not. I am content with the dis-

coveries I have made. And the best of it is, that the Sheikh says he has given orders to all the Beduins to discontinue the use of the name Bághir (Mount Sinai), and to call it Jebel-e'-Nūr alone. So that in a few years the "tradition" will be that it has always been known by that name, as the *true* 'Mount Sinai,' by people who have never heard of Dr. Beke, just as it is with Harran ; and Cook's tourists will be sent to the "Mountain of Light" as the true Mount Sinai : its being so very little out of the way of the ordinary tourists' route to the Holy Land, and so absolutely free from danger, will induce numbers of them to come ; and my views will doubtless soon be adopted by many both at home and abroad.

We should have stopped here for lunch at all events ; and as it was, I ordered the tents to be pitched for the day, and Milne will go up the neighbouring mountain, Jebel Atághtagíeh, and see what he can see from the top. To-morrow morning we go "bock agen." How by this road we are to get to Jebel Eretówa, of which Abu Nabut spoke last night, I have no idea. I shall not now attempt to follow it up, but shall merely throw out the hint, leaving it for others to follow up if they like. After lunch Milne packed up his traps, and mount-

ing the Sheikh's horse, went off to the mountain with an unpronounceable name like "Ghabaghib," on the way from Harran to Gilead. I must not omit to mention that up here in this plain we found a large patch of decent grass, so we had the cloth (a prayer carpet) spread out on it, upon which we stretched ourselves out, and had a *pique nique à l'Anglaise*. Milne felt so jolly that he said he had no inclination to move afterwards.

When he was gone I occupied myself reading over his geological notes of yesterday. One remark is very striking. He says that the granite rock is wearing away in spheroidal flakes, making *caves* and hollows in it; one he saw would hold twenty persons. In places the side of the mountain is quite pitted with holes. I do not know whether Mount Tor has any of these caves; but the Scripture History requires one, both in the case of Moses and in that of Elijah. For in Exodus xxxiii. 20-23, we read, "And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live. And the 'Eternal' said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by:" And in 1 Kings

xix. 8, 9: "And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the Mount of God. And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there."

I cannot make out the country where we are at all. Before us, north-east-by-east, is a white (limestone) mountain called Jebel Hesma, and beyond that is Jebel Shera. Sheikh Mohammed says we are here *half way to Petra*; but Abu Nabut says we are not yet so far: a low hill to the left of Jebel Hesma—also seen from hence—is, he says, half way. I hope Milne will come down with some definite information. One thing is clear, and that is that Burckhardt has given the name of Jebel Shera to what is, in fact, Jebel Shafeh. This will be seen from the following description which he gives of this part of the country at p. 435 of his "Syria and Holy Land." On leaving Ma'an he says:—

"We turned to the S.E., and in half an hour from the Djeilat, passed the fine spring called El Szadeke, near which is a hill with extensive ruins of an ancient town. From thence we descended by a slight declivity into the eastern plain, . . . the same immense plain which we had entered in coming from Beszeyra, on the eastern borders of the Ghoeyr,

here presented itself to our view. We were about six hours south of Maan, whose two hills, upon which the two divisions of the town are situated, were distinctly visible. . . . About eight hours south of Maan, a branch of the Shera extends for three or four hours in an eastern direction across the plain ; it is a low hilly chain. The mountains of Shera are considerably elevated above the level of the Ghor, but they appear only as low hills when seen from the eastern plain, which is upon a much higher level than the Ghor. . . . This plain terminates to the south near Akaba, on the Syrian Hadj route, by a steep rocky descent, at the bottom of which begins the Desert of Nedjed, covered, for the greater part, with flints.

(p. 436.) “It might with truth be called *Petræa*, not only on account of its rocky mountains, but also of the elevated plain already described, which is so much covered with stones, especially flints, that it may with great propriety be called a stony desert, although susceptible of culture. In many places it is overgrown with wild herbs, and must once have been thickly inhabited, for the traces of many ruined towns and villages are met with on both sides of the Hadj road between Maan and Akaba, as well as between Maan and the plains of

Haouran, in which direction are also many springs. At present all this country is a desert, and Maan is the only inhabited place in it. All the castles on the Syrian Hadj route from Fedhein to Médina are deserted. At Maan are several springs, to which the town owes its origin; and these, together with the circumstance of its being a station of the Syrian Hadj, are the cause of its still existing. The inhabitants have scarcely any other means of subsistence than the profits which they gain from the pilgrims in their way to and from Mekka, by buying up all kinds of provisions at Hebron and Ghaza, and selling them with great profit to the weary pilgrims, to whom the gardens and vineyards of Maan are no less agreeable than the wild herbs collected by the people of Maan are to their camels. The pomegranates, apricots, and peaches of Maan are of the finest quality. . . . (p. 437.) Maan is situated in the midst of a rocky country, not capable of cultivation; the inhabitants therefore depend upon their neighbours of Djebal and Shera for their provision of wheat and barley."

Palgrave's "Arabia" gives the following account:—

"*Ma'an*, 30° 20' N. 35° 50' E.—Before and around us extended a wide and level plain, blackened

over with countless pebbles of *basalt* and *flint*, [obsidian ?] except where the moonbeams gleamed white on little intervening patches of clear sand, or on yellowish streaks of withered grass, the scanty product of the winter rains and snow dried into hay.

“*Wokba Wells*, 30° 15' N. 36° 15' E.—The blue range of *Sheraa'* [bounding the Ghor] was yet visible [behind], though fast sinking in the distance, while before us and on either hand extended one weary plain in a black monotony of lifelessness. Only on all sides lakes of mirage lay mocking the eye with their clear and deceptive outline, whilst here and there some dark *basaltic* rock, cropping up at random through the level, was magnified by the refraction of the heated atmosphere into the semblance of a fantastic crag or overhanging mountain.”

Volney, writing at a much earlier period on the same subject, says:—

“Ce pays n'a été visité par aucun voyageur ; cependant il mériterait de l'être ; car d'après ce que j'ai ouï dire aux Arabes [du Chaik] de *Bakir*, et aux gens de *Gaze* qui vont à *Máan* et au *Karak* sur la route des pèlerins, il y a au sud-est du lac Asphaltide, dans une espace de trois journées,

plus de trente villes ruinées, absolument désertes. Plusieurs d'entre elles ont de grands édifices, avec des colonnes qui ont pu être des temples anciens, ou tout au moins des églises Grecques. Les Arabes s'en servent quelquefois pour parquer leurs troupeaux ; mais le plus souvent ils les évitent, à cause des énormes scorpions qui y abondent. L'on ne doit pas s'étonner de ces traces de population, si l'on se rappelle que ce fut-là le pays de ces *Nabatheéns* qui furent les plus puissants des Arabes ; et des Iduméens qui, dans le dernier siècle de Jérusalem, étaient presque aussi nombreux que les Juifs ; témoin le trait cité par *Josephe*, qui dit qu'au bruit de la marche de Titus contre Jérusalem, il s'assembla tout d'un coup trente mille Iduméens qui se jetèrent dans la ville pour la défendre." ¹

Speaking of the peninsula, he adds—"Ce grand espace est presque tout occupé par des montagnes arides qui du côté du nord, se joignent à celles de la Syrie, et sont comme elles de roche calcaire. Mais en s'avancant au midi, elles deviennent graniteuses, au point que le Sinaï et l'Horeb ne sont que d'énormes pics de cette pierre. C'est à ce titre que les anciens appelèrent cette contrée *Arabie pierreuse*." ²

¹ Volney's "Voyage en Syrie et en Egypt," vol. ii. pp. 317, 318. (Paris, 1787).

² Ibid., pp. 320, 321.

I must try and put all this right for my map, as the existing maps appear all wrong.


Milne returned about half-past four o'clock from his ascent of Jebel Atághtagíeh, having done nothing of consequence, except to decide positively that there are no volcanoes or lava fields visible. So that "Mount Sinai is not a volcano." I can with a very easy conscience retract what I have said, which is, after all, simply matter of opinion. The matter of *fact* remains the same. We have the "Mountain of *Light*" nearly in the position which I gave to "Mount Sinai" forty years ago! And on this I can hold my ground very well. I am not ashamed to make a clean breast of it. Abu Nabut came into my tent to tell me I should "tankey God" for having let me find *Jebel-e'-Nūr* on the first day from Akaba, and for thus having been saved four or five days wandering to no purpose. What he says is true enough, and yet I should like to make *quite sure* that there are really no volcanoes hereabouts. From the geological features of the country Milne can see no traces of anything of the sort; but volcanic regions are anomalous, and may be lighted on in an unexpected manner.

In the evening I copied out Milne's notes of his visit to Jebel-e'-Nūr, which I have entered in my

route book. His original drawings of the inscriptions found near the summit I send herewith. They are of no more *real* value, I expect, than the other "Sinaitic Inscriptions," but they are just as good, and there is no reason why they should not be published. The lines are about three-quarters of an inch broad, and very shallow, perhaps not more than one-eighth of an inch, engraven on rounded boulders of granite, of the material of the mountain, standing up against each other, three facing to the north, and one to the south (at the back).¹

February 2.—It rained all night, and continues to do so this morning. We cannot move. Happy are we to be in a good water-tight tent.

¹ Mr. Holland tells me that Professor Palmer considers them to be tribe-marks. Writing of Wady Muweilih ("Desert of the Exodus," pp. 354, 355), the Professor observes—"These caves are also covered with the Arab tribe-marks which I have before described, each Bedawi visitor to the place delighting to set his sign-manual on the wall. M. de Sauley (and, following him, many subsequent writers), who had noticed them in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea, calls them 'Planetary signs' (see Dr. Tristram's "Land of Israel," p. 310), and in truth they are not altogether unlike the mysterious astrological emblems on the coloured bottles which adorn a chemist's window.

"These tribe-marks consist in reality of distorted Himyaritic letters, generally the initial letter of the name; thus, the mark of the 'Anazeh tribe is , a circle with a dot in the centre, the ancient Himyaritic letter, 'Ain, with which the word 'Anazeh begins. The Arabs themselves, being ignorant of writing, are of course unaware of this fact; they consequently designate their tribe-mark by the name of the article it may chance to resemble, *ed dabbûs*, 'the club,' *el bâb*, 'the door,' and so on."

I have been occupied in collecting all sorts of information from the Sheikh and Abu Nabut. They tell me this road has been taken by many travellers; but none of them would seem to have taken any particular notice of Mount Bághir, apparently for the reason given by Abu Nabut, that "it was not noticed in their guide-books." Sidi Ali ibn 'Elem came here to pray because he was sent here by God! This is the answer given me when I ask *how* he came to this particular spot. For the tradition hanging about it I can find no reason given, except that there is a *light* at times seen on the summit, and that noises like those of a cannon are heard when the Hadj returns from Mecca! Those who, like Deans Milman and Stanley, attribute the appearances on Mount Sinai to a severe thunderstorm—and nothing else—do not appear to have taken into consideration the heavy *rain* which would have accompanied it, and soaked the poor Israelites to the skin, unless they had good tents, which I doubt their having carried away with them in their flight from Mitzraim.

When Sheikh Mohammed had given me the information I required, he asked me for some more tobacco. I demurred a little, having twice given him some, which Abu Nabut said he had given to the



INSCRIPTIONS ON MOUNT SINAI (JEBEL BÂGHIR)

other Arabs; and he suggested to the Sheikh that in future he should keep what I gave him for himself; to which the other replied that if he did not divide what he had with the others of the tribe, he would not long be Sheikh! On the road yesterday, Milne made a drawing of Mount Bâghir, which he has finished this morning. I do not like it much; but I wished him to finish it at once as I said we must absolutely have a representation of "Mount Sinai." My own little pen-and-ink sketch of the east spur will come in very well in addition. Towards noon it seemed to be clearing up, and we saw snow on the mountains; but it still kept overcast with occasional showers, so that there is no chance of our moving to-day.

Sheikh Mohammed ibn Ijât—that is his right name I find—was, on Abu Nabut's suggestion, invited by me to lunch with (or rather after) us. We had some tea with our lunch to keep us warm, for it is bitterly cold, and afterwards the teapot was filled with water for our guest! We were at dessert when he came in. I at once offered him a cup of tea which I poured out, Abu Nabut filling the cup half full with sugar; and he had then a dish of *baccalhão* or dried fish, stewed with plenty

of sauces, set before him with a loaf of bread. He *began* to eat very decently with a spoon, but soon set to work with his fingers, and made a good hearty meal, taking care to make plenty of noise in eating to show his gentility, and after he had finished he did not fail to say, "Istaghfar Allah," which appears to be the correct expression, and not "bismillah." He had managed to suck his fingers as well as he could. Hashim ought to have brought him water, but as he did not, as he was drawing away from the table, our guest gave a clutch at the end of the tablecloth, and used it as a finger-napkin. His tea he left to the last, except some dates and an orange. In the course of conversation he let us know that he is not in the habit of accompanying strangers, but usually sends one of his under-Sheikhs. But as we came in the steamer, and were specially recommended to his care by the Khédive, it was only proper that he should escort us in person; for all of which we duly thanked him, and then he took his leave.

He, the Sheikh of the Aluwín, has a fine old Persian (Ajámi) sword, which bears the date 118. If this is of the Hegira, it means that it is 1174 years old!! But perhaps the date may be of some other

era It has inscribed on it the names "Allah, Mohammed, Abubekr, and Ali"—Omar, the second Khalif, is omitted. With respect to Mohammed ibn Ijât, and to Beduins generally, I may here tell you what Professor Palmer says on the subject in his "Desert of the Exodus," p. 297 :—

"I cannot expect respectable and taxpaying Englishmen to enter with much appreciation into the Bedawín question, and I know the prejudice that exists, in this country particularly, against the extinction of a *romantic* [*whence the romance?*] and interesting race. The sympathy already wasted on the Red man of North America [*false sentiment*] warns me that I am treading on delicate ground, but I must nevertheless state my belief that the *noble savage* [*a savage race is to mankind what the *savage* member of society is to society*] is a simple and unmitigated nuisance. To the Bedawí this applies even more forcibly still, for, wherever he goes, he brings with him ruin, violence, and neglect. To call him a 'son of the desert' is a misnomer; half the desert owes its existence to him, and many a fertile plain from which he has driven its useful and industrious inhabitants becomes in his hands, like the 'South Country,' a parched and barren wilderness.

“Several plans have been tried from time to time to make him a respectable member of society, but have signally failed;—missionaries have gone to him, and, so long as they could supply him with tobacco and keep open tent for all comers, have found him sufficiently tractable. But they have made absolutely no impression upon him after all. The Turkish Government once devised a creditable and brilliant scheme, namely, to fill up all the wells in the desert round Palmyra; for a time this kept him out of Syria, and sent him to worry some one else; and so far it answered its purpose. But the Pasha entrusted with the execution of the order planted tamarisk bushes to mark the spots where the water lay, and received a good sum from the ‘Anazeh Arabs for the information which enabled them to recover it.

“Ráshid Pasha, one of the most energetic and enlightened officials the Ottoman Empire has ever produced, came near to solving the problem. Shortly after we left the Tih, he sent word down to Gaza that the Bedawín of those parts must for the future live in huts instead of tents; our friends were acute enough to see that this was a deadly blow aimed at their very existence, and the first fifteen Turkish soldiers who appeared amongst the

Teyáhah were killed. A detachment of troops was sent down, and all the flocks and herds were confiscated, brought to Jerusalem, and sold for a nominal value to the Fellahín. The Bedawín sought and obtained the protection of the Viceroy of Egypt, and thus the far-seeing policy of the Governor-General of Syria was thwarted.

“If the Governments of Egypt, Turkey, and Arabia would but act in concert, and consult the real interests of their subjects, this terrible scourge might be removed, and the Fellahín relieved from the constant dread of rapine, and freed from the *sic vos non vobis* misgivings with which they now till their ground. They would then become a more contented and honest people.

“I do not advocate a war of extermination against the Bedawín, because I do not think it policy to destroy so much muscle which might be made serviceable to the community, and I have still, even in the days of mitrailleuses, some old-fashioned notions about the sacredness of human life, but I would put an end to their existence *quâ* Bedawín. The Bedawí regards the Felláh with unutterable scorn. He has a constitutional dislike to work, and is entirely unscrupulous as to the means he employs to live without it; these

qualities (which also adorn and make the thief and burglar of civilisation) he mistakes for evidences of thorough-breeding, and prides himself accordingly upon being one of Nature's gentlemen. [And we encourage him !]

"Camels and sheep are, as I have before said, the Bedawi's only means of subsistence, and so long, then, as he lives his present unsettled life, and can support himself with the milk which they produce, he is independent of all occupation save plundering. The effect of this is, that the soil he owns deteriorates, and his neighbours are either driven away or reduced to beggary by his raids and depredations. If the military authorities were to make systematic expeditions against these tribes, and take from them every camel and sheep which they possess, they would no longer be able to roam over the deserts, but would be compelled to settle down to agricultural pursuits or starve." [They would prefer this almost.]

"The superior advantages which the peaceful agriculturist would then possess over them would curb their unreasonable pride, and the necessity for keeping pace with him, *if they wished to live at all*, would bring out the resources of their undoubtedly keen intellects ["Eutopic!"]. They might

thus be tamed and turned into useful members of the community. Such a plan would probably entail some hardships and injustice at first, but a virulent disease requires a strong remedy, and we must not wince at the application of the cautery to cure the plague.

‘ Οὐ πρὸς ἱατροῦ σοφοῦ
θρηνεῖν ἐπιδάς πρὸς τομῶντι πῆματι.’
—*Sophocles*, *Aj.* v. 579.”

In connection with this important subject Colonel J. C. Gawler wrote a very interesting “Letter to Sir Moses Montefiore,” which contained much valuable information ;¹ and as this question, as affecting so seriously Syria and Palestine, cannot fail to call for grave consideration and for some adjustment before long, let us hope that a brighter future is yet in store for the Holy Land.

But to return to the subject of my journey. I am so cold that I can scarcely hold my pen. Milne has been *shading* my sketch of the mountain, and has spoilt it, I tell him ; but, in fact, he has improved and secured it. It makes a very pretty picture, I think. This afternoon, as Abu Nabut was sitting outside over a fire with the Sheikh of

¹ This “Letter” was read at a meeting of the Board, held at the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue Vestry Chambers, Bevis Marks, and printed by Wertimer, Lea, & Co., 1874.

the Towara Arabs, who has supplied our camels, he made the *amende honorable* to me. He told me of his contract with the Sheikh, which was, that he should find the camels for the journey to Akaba, and that then I was to go excursions from thence into the neighbourhood, returning at night to Akaba. I told him how absurd this was, as in the *contract* it is expressly stated that he was to take me as far as Jebel-e'-Nur and Marghara Sho'eib, and that if I had not happened to go to Madian (Midian) in the steamer, I might have required him to take me as far as Marghara Sho'eib. He admitted this, and said he had no thought of bringing the matter before the Consul, but would be satisfied with whatever I said and did. All he desired was to give me satisfaction, and to obtain a testimonial from me, which would let the world know that he is not dead, but that he is the same Abu Nabut who accompanied Lepsius on his travels, &c.¹ So all this is settled in the most amicable way possible.

¹ In substantiation of Abu Nabut's assertion, I may quote the following from Professor Lepsius's "Letters from Egypt," p. 232 —

"We have now a servant from Derr, the capital of Lower Nubia, who speaks tolerably good Italian, is animated and intelligent, and is a great assistance to me in acquiring a knowledge of his own dialect, the Mahass. I have sometimes tormented him with questions in the boat for five or six entire hours in one day, for it is no

February 3.—It did not rain when we retired to rest last night, and I was in hopes it would be fine, as the “glass” is rising a little; but in the morning before daylight it began to rain again most heavily. This is dreadfully annoying and distressing to me, as the delay is so important. At the same time there is this consolation, that it convinces me more and more that the Scripture account of the Delivery of the Law does not describe a mere thunderstorm. The Israelites without tents could never have withstood it. It is now nine o’clock, and we cannot start yet. It is very unfortunate, for I want to be down on the Red Sea (at Akaba) on the twenty-first day of the moon, Friday or Saturday next, in order to witness the phenomena corresponding to those of the passage of the Israelites through the sea. I am now afraid I shall not be there in time. Thus one is the slave of circumstances; or rather, we cannot control events, which are at the disposal of *One* above us.

small trouble for both of us to understand each other about grammatical forms and inflections. He has, at any rate, at the same time acquired more respect for his own language, here everywhere considered bad and inferior to the Arabic, and which it is thought one ought rather to be ashamed of.”

And on page 241, when alluding to the “Wadi Nuba” of the maps, he says—“Neither our Nubian servant, Ahmed, a native of the district of Derr, nor any of the people who are settled in the country, are acquainted with this name.”

All that I now long for is, that I may get down to the Red Sea in time.

Seeing there was little chance of its being fine, we made up our minds at eleven o'clock to start. So we had a hurried lunch, loaded the camels, and were off in the rain. My *takhterawân* had its cotton and then its oilcloth cover put on; but as the rain came principally in my face, I had to put up my umbrella, and wrap up my legs in my railway rug. My overcoat I had already put on, so that I managed pretty comfortably, though it was miserably cold. Before starting, Sheikh Mohammed ibn Ijât remarked, that whenever he was asked who discovered Jebel-e'-Nûr he would answer "Hakim Beke."

When we started we were among the clouds, which we got in part clear of as we descended. Approaching Jebel-e'-Nûr—or, as I shall now call it, "Mount Sinai"—it stood out majestically before us, but with at least half its height enveloped in, and hidden from us by clouds. The views of this mountain are far more imposing than those of the "traditional Mount Sinai." It stands out quite distinctly, and might have been viewed all round by the Israelites encamped at its base—that is to say, towards this side, from which they must have approached it coming from the south.

It was only just 2 P.M. when the Sheikh came to propose that we should stop and encamp. We were far from as low down as we were on January 31; but he said that it was a good *sandy* spot, where we should be dry, and this we should not be at the lower station. So at 2.15 P.M. we stopped. It had cleared up a little on the road, though I can hardly say we were free from a thick mist; but scarcely were the tents pitched when it began raining again. We have descended about two hundred and fifty feet from the last station. On opening my port-manteau, I found the water had entered it, owing to its having been loaded bottom upwards on the camel. I have told Hashim to look to this in future.

There is not much we can do here to-day; but I am thankful we are so much nearer the head of the Gulf of Akaba. I am assured by the Sheikh that we shall be there *to-morrow*; but I doubt it. I must remain at the head of the Gulf till the time of the moon corresponding to that of the passage of the Israelites. It will make an important feature of my narrative, as being a *matter of fact*. If I were to leave beforehand, it would be matter of speculation and opinion, whereas by remaining I shall have *facts* to narrate.

February 4. — Better weather this morning, though it is very cloudy and threatening. Last night I had a long talk with Milne about the results of my journey. He does not at all like our returning without a volcano. I say that the volcano, though almost a vital object with me, is in truth but of secondary importance. My desire is to interpret the Scripture History truly. I *believed* I should find a volcano where I placed Mount Sinai. I find the "Mountain of Light," but no volcano. I am therefore bound to confess that I was in error as regards the physical character of Mount Sinai, and that the appearances mentioned in Scripture were as little volcanic as they were tempestuous. Milne, who looks at the matter in a purely scientific point of view, says he would find a volcano first, and then endeavour to see if the Scripture History could be fitted into it. But this I cannot do. Even at the cost of the total prostration of mind I *must* believe in the Scripture History, and dare not twist it to suit my own views. I am like the Roman Catholic; I must not allow reason to interfere with my belief. The result however is, that to satisfy my companion—and I cannot deny some doubts of my own still—I have decided on going a little way up Wady Amran to-day, and

sending Milne alone to the top of it, to see what he can see in that direction.

To-morrow, please God, we will go down to Akaba. Accordingly, we started at 8.15 A.M., and at nine o'clock we passed our encampment of January 31st. Soon after this we saw one of our Beduins fetch water out of a rock ! We were passing under the east end of Mount Bâghir, when I saw a man carrying a *zemzemiye*h and a tin can ascend the mountain, stepping from stone to stone till he came to an immense mass of rock as big as a house, unto the top of which he ascended, and then began ladling the water out with his can and filling his *zemzemiye*h. Though we could not see it from below, there was evidently a hollow in the upper surface of the rock where the rain-water accumulated ; and being known to the people here, it serves them as a supply.¹

At 10.30 A.M. we came to the junction of Wady Amran with Wady Ithem (Etham),² when a long talk took place between Abu Nabut and Sheikh Mohammed, accompanied with gesticulations and cries, in which half a dozen others joined ; the up-shot being that the Sheikh wanted to be paid more. We were now going into the country of another

¹ Exod. xvii. 6.

² Exod. xiii. 20.

tribe, and they wanted coffee, tobacco, and money, and Abu Nabut had none of them; and a deal more. When I was appealed to, I said that all I wanted was to be taken up Wady Amran, in accordance with the Khédive's firman. If the Sheikh refused to take me, I should return to Misr and tell the Khédive. I had nothing more to say. So, after some more quarrelling between the two, we went on, and in an *hour* came to a halt.

It was now a question as to my intention. Did I mean to go further up the valley to-morrow? If so, they must send down to Akaba for rice and other supplies. I answered, "No:" but that after luncheon Mr. Milne would go up the valley, and look at the rocks, &c., and to-morrow, please God, we would all go down to Akaba. This arrangement gave general satisfaction, and at half-past twelve Milne went off on foot with one Beduin. Hashim caught cold yesterday (I don't wonder at it) and is unable to go. The Sheikh was most amiable. He said he was ready to do everything out of respect for me; but, when it came to the scratch, he would do nothing. He says that he is not now the Sheikh, but my servant, and a great deal more—the *fin mot* being that he wanted some tobacco. I gave him two packets; and as Milne's guide, a worthy old

fellow, who accompanied him on all his excursions, is always begging for tobacco, I gave him a packet "on the quiet" to give to the old man on the road. It is surprising how I bear all this knocking about and rough weather; for I am, thank God, pretty well. The other day, as I was hammering at some stones, I hurt my finger, but I strapped it up immediately with some of Mr. Maw's sticking-plaster, and it is all right again.

3.30 P.M.—Milne returned much sooner than we either of us expected. He seems to have come to the end of the granite, where the sandstone begins, but has seen no signs of any volcanoes. Therefore "Mount Sinai a *volcano*" must be given up. Whilst out, he heard two guns fired. They must have been from the Amrani Beduins, in whose country we now are, and whose fires we saw on the mountains on our right hand as we came along the valley.

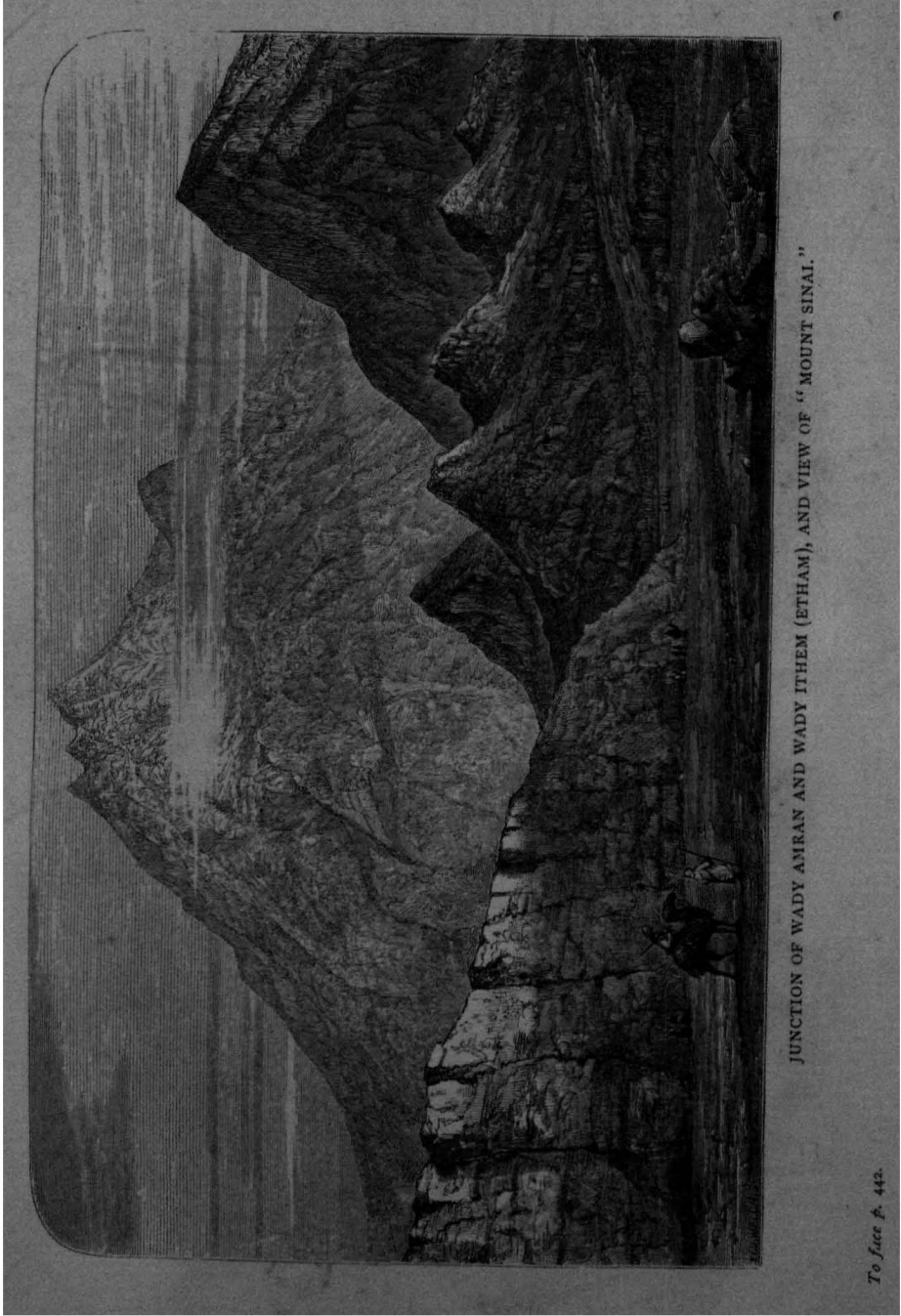
The dispute between Abu Nabut and Sheikh Mohammed was about the claim the Amrani will, or may, make for our being on their ground, and the end of it was that Abu Nabut agreed to pay thirteen dollars (five-franc pieces) for one day. We have not seen any of them yet, but they will come down, no doubt. * Our Beduins will keep watch to-night for fear of accidents. I shall now be glad

to get away from these parts and down to Akaba. As far as the result of my journey is concerned, I must be satisfied with the discovery of *Jebel-e'-Nūr* as the true "Mount Sinai," just where I originally considered it must be situated, east of the Gulf of Akaba.¹ The volcanic theory I must abandon. But I trust I have done enough to satisfy the world generally, and the subscribers to my expedition in particular.

The Harra Radjlâ of Yakut must be much further to the east. Perhaps the volcanoes seen by Irby and Mangles belong to it; but that is no longer my affair. The American Palestine Exploration Fund Expedition will in due course of time attend to this. My work is nearly done. I cannot but feel regret at not finding *all* my views to be confirmed, but I must be thankful indeed to find that *I am right as far as the main point is concerned*.

I must tell you that all the Sheikhs wear red garments, which are given to them by the Khédive, both the Aluwîn and our Towára, in whose hands I hope to be to-morrow. These are a very decent lot, on account of their immediate proximity to Egypt, and from their having during so many generations had the

¹ See "Origines Biblicæ," pp. 194, 195, London, 1834; and "Mount Sinai a Volcano," p. 44.



JUNCTION OF WADY AMRAN AND WADY ITHAM (ETHAM), AND VIEW OF "MOUNT SINAI."

charge of pilgrims and tourists visiting the traditional Mount Sinai (Mount Tor), and the road between Suez and Akaba being in their country. As I expected, two of the Amrani Beduins have come into our camp. Sheikh Mohammed has told them that we are on a visit to his country under his escort and protection, and that *en passant* we just wished to have a look up their valley. I hear that out of twelve of his own party he has sent eight away, so that they are now only four. This I imagine he has done in order that his visit might not have a hostile appearance. Our new friends have heard that I wish to go to Maghara Sho'eib and Madiān, and as these places are within their country, they are prepared to accommodate me; but when Abu Nabut told them I had already been there, they would not believe it.

February 5.—A lovely morning, but very cold: the thermometer at 7 A.M. stood at $38^{\circ} 5'$ —six degrees and a half above freezing. We had no more than the two Amrani in camp, but our Towaras kept watch all night, as they said they would. On the way yesterday we met an old woman, who wanted to know what we did on her "premises," the ground that Allah had given her and her people; but we managed to satisfy her. We started at 8.15

A.M., and about nine o'clock the saddle of my hind camel began to give way ; so I had to get out of the *takhterawdn* to have it put in order. I fancy they have changed the camel. As the camels walk their leaders and drivers cry out "Hottbi," which means "lift up your feet," or, "take care ;" and they urge them on by crying out, "Hait, hait ! arr-rig !"

At 9.20 we came to the junction of Wady Ithem, where we saw Jebel Bághir, that is, "Mount Sinai," right in front of us. This immense mountain is seen in all directions. Just below the junction we came on a large stone covered with a long Cufic inscription. Our cook's camel having strayed a little out of the way while he was walking on foot, he went after it close to the rock, when he saw this stone and told Milne of it. Milne sent to tell me, but I, having no idea of anything of the sort, imagined that it meant he had been writing or drawing something. So I called out to him to ask if he wanted me, and on his replying "No," which he did under the supposition that I did not care to stop, I went on. But soon after learning what the fact really was, I turned back, and asked Milne to make a sketch of it, which he did. I dismounted and examined the inscription, but could make nothing of it. I should have had difficulty in doing

so, even had I known the character, the letters being very slightly incised, and they are in part covered over with some other characters, which are perhaps intended for rude Cufic. These being of later date, are of lighter colour than the original inscription, which itself, again, is lighter than the stone. The inscription is on the west or front side of the stone, which is also written on, on the south side. The stone stands on the right-hand side (east) of the Wady, just below the junction. As this is on a now frequented road to Petra, it is strange that it should never have been noticed before. Abu Nabut has passed it no less than fifteen times with European travellers, and Hashim twice. We too, did not see it as we went up to "Mount Sinai," and had it not been for Ibrahim's camel straying, it is pretty certain we should have missed it the second time. As it happens, the stone, if not the inscription, is now secured. I am told of another stone on the other side of the Wady, a little lower down, but it was not till after we had gone by it, and I did not care to return a second time.

At 11.45 we passed the wall across the Wady, which is not so high as I thought, being only seven feet; but the parts nearest to the mountain are

higher. We came down to Akaba more quickly than we went up, reaching a very nice spot at a little distance north of Akaba at 2.15 P.M. We encamped in the midst of a date grove close to the sea, and not far from the head of the gulf.

My first task was to go down to the sea to see how the tide was. From 2.30 to 3.30 it seemed at a stand-still—low water; but when I went down at four o'clock, it had been rising. I marked low water with some stones, and I shall watch high water to-night. There seems to be very little tide, and if I can make it out to-day and to-morrow morning, I think of starting for Suez to-morrow. The palms here grow most luxuriantly, and as I said when I was here before, fresh water is found a foot deep close to the sea. This shows there is a powerful watercourse here like as at Zulla, in Annesley Bay, namely, the united wadies Ithem and Amran.

Our tents were hardly pitched when the Muhafiz and his officers came to welcome us and to hear the news. We told them all about our discovery of "Mount Sinai," the inscriptions, and so on, to their great surprise and gratification. I had coffee served, of course, and while they were drinking it, Sheikh Mohammed came in, and walking to the upper part

of the tent, sat down on Mr. Milne's portmanteau, there being no room elsewhere, for he did not dare to sit upon our beds *above* us, and the lower places were all already taken. His son came in too, and squatted on my portmanteau. Abu Nabut and the Sheikh of the Towara stood at the door; and then commenced a solemn *Kalam* about the "almighty dollar." They talked so hard and fast that I thought it time to interfere, and to say that this being no business of mine, it ought not to take place in my tent. Whereupon they went out to finish their talk. It is five o'clock, however, and they have not done yet—the end of it being that Abu Nabut came to me to beg as a favour that I would give him more money. I gave him ten Napoleons, and, with two pounds' worth of small money, I made up ten pounds, which he accepted most thankfully, as he said he found himself in a difficulty with this extra charge—for which he ought to have provided. I am now cleared out. As he has given me no receipt for the thirty pounds he has had during the journey, I got him to acknowledge it in my companion's presence, who then gave me a written declaration to that effect.

There is some question of Taiyáha and Terabin Arabs, through whose territories we have to pass