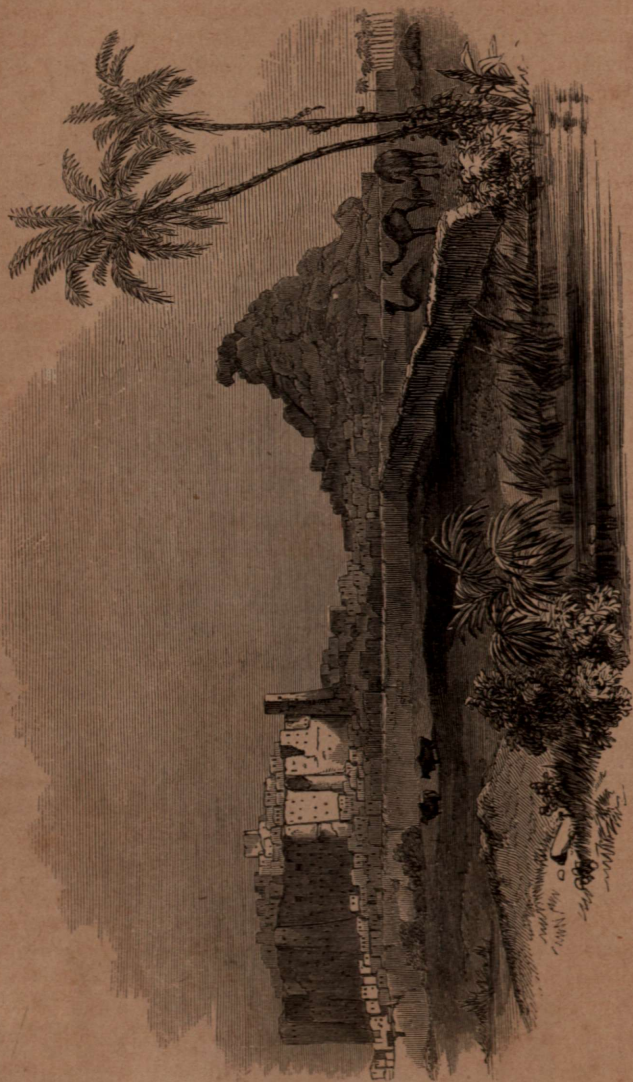




ST. JOHN'S LIBRARY DESERT







TOWN OF SIWAH.

R.260

*George Bonser .
Seaborough Court - Oct. 1894*

ADVENTURES
IN
THE LIBYAN DESERT
AND
THE OÄSIS OF JUPITER AMMON.

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BY BAYLE ST. JOHN.



VIEW OF GARAH.

LONDON:  
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1849.







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# ADVENTURES

## IN THE

# LIBYAN DESERT,

&c.

&c.

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### CHAPTER I.

Agreeable Associations of the name Oäsis — Alexander and the Oracle — Desire to visit Síwah — Difficulties of the Journey — Only one Englishman had preceded me; not a Dozen Europeans altogether — Preliminary Trip to the Arab's Tower — My Companions — Utility of the Knowledge of Arabic — Our Preparations — Donkeys — Camels — Attendants — Start for what the Iskenderanehs call the "Desert of Dogs" — Last View of Alexandria — Coast — Valley — Reach Abusír — Giovanni Sciarabati — Discussions with the Bedawíns — Life of Yúnus Abú Shayen — Ruins at Abusír — The Arab's Tower — Temple of Augustus — Traces of an ancient City — Illustration of Strabo — Former Cultivation of the Libyan Desert — Our Tent — Night Scene — Scorpions — Hyæna — "Flying Serpents."

WE have all, no doubt, at some period of life suffered our minds to dwell with pleasure on the idea of an oäsis—an island of verdure amidst a sea of sand. There is a sentiment in our nature which renders such an idea peculiarly agreeable in itself; and I am sure it can never be called up except in company with numberless delightful associations. In the case of the Oäsis of Jupiter Ammon, poetry and history have combined to shed their magic influence around it. Some of our very earliest notions of geography are derived at school from the classic descriptions of the Libyan Desert, clipping round with its tawny expanse the green spot of earth to which the world's conqueror, Alexander, journeyed in order to hear from a mysterious oracle the fable of his divine origin.



I had long cherished the desire to visit the Oāsis of Sīwah—now proved incontestably to have been that of Ammon—but was deterred by the difficulty of the undertaking, the imperfect accounts that could be obtained of the nature of the tract to be traversed, and the want of suitable companions. Not a dozen Europeans had ever before, to my knowledge, penetrated so far in that direction into the Libyan Desert, and only one Englishman. It appeared, therefore, at first a very serious affair. However, during a trip made by myself and a few friends to the Arab's Tower in the spring of 1847, we fell into conversation with some Bedawins on the subject, and, talking it over in the course of the summer, began gradually to look upon the excursion as very practicable. When autumn came, accordingly, it required merely the suggestion that if we delayed any longer the rains might interpose, and render the coast portion of the road impassable, to make us suddenly resolve on starting. My colleagues in this expedition were three—Messrs. H. Lamport, T. Forty, and N. Longshaw—all residents in Egypt and acquainted with the Arabic language. In making our preparations we went on the principle of taking with us as few encumbrances as possible:—one tent, a mat, the means of preparing tea and coffee, with a quantity of charcoal, a carpet-bag or portmanteau apiece containing changes of linen and various articles of utility, a number of tins of preserved meat, a sack of biscuit, a couple of cheeses, some brandy, some porter, a plentiful supply of tobacco and cigars—all these things and others were admitted, but only after due deliberation. The great difficulty was the water and the food for our donkeys, upon which animals, like true Egyptians, we determined to cross the Desert. To camels none of us was accustomed; and without previous practice it is not pleasant to mount them during a journey of seven or eight hundred miles. We were of course to be accompanied by some of these valuable creatures, which generally find food by the wayside, and never require to be refreshed from the scanty reservoirs they carry on their backs. The only attendants taken were two Arab lads, whose business it was to see after the donkeys and make themselves useful in various ways; but having no wish to travel as satraps, and knowing the importance of every mouth less in waterless tracts, we cheerfully anticipated a good deal of work ourselves. It was, moreover, a great



comfort to us that we were not compelled to look at the people we encountered through the stupid medium of a dragoman.

We started from Alexandria early on the morning of the 15th of September, 1847, and presented, I have no doubt, a pretty motley appearance. Each had taken his own precautions against the burning sun of the Desert; but, some respect for public opinion still remaining, we did not come out in all our comfortable originality until further advanced on the journey. Besides the animals we bestrode, there were six donkeys, two mules, and a pony, to carry our tent, our provisions, and the provender for our cattle, (which last item alone weighed, when complete, nearly half a ton,) as far as Abusír. A crowd of men and boys likewise accompanied us to that place—to most of them a perfect *terra incognita*;—all looking, no doubt, with compassionate contempt on their fellows who had undertaken to follow us into the gloomy depths of that savage region which they sometimes for want of a better name call the Desert of Dogs!

I shall not dwell on that day's ride. We soon passed the Necropolis, the new fortifications, the quarries of El Delcale; and having turned to take a last view of the tapering minarets and whitewashed palaces of Alexandria, with its broad port crowded with tall-masted ships, or dotted here and there by white lateen sails just swelling beneath a breeze that crisped the surface of the sparkling waters, left Marâbut island on our right, and entered a long narrow valley running parallel with the sea. It is formed by a low ridge of white rock and sand rising from the beach, and by a somewhat loftier line of hills that acts as a sort of dyke to Lake Mareotis. Here the Desert may be said to begin, although a few patches of vegetation, dependent on wells, do afterwards occur. We stopped at noon to lunch, with the thermometer at 106° in the sun; and a little before sunset pitched our tent at Abusír, known to Mediterranean mariners as the Arab's Tower.

We had now reached the real starting-point of the expedition. The most important arrangements—namely, those with reference to the guides and camels—still remained. Signor Giovanni Sciarabati, Nazír or superintendent of the quarantine station at this place, was supposed to be the fittest person to perform the duty of selection from the various candidates that might present

themselves ; and he had kindly offered to point out which among his neighbours was the least of a rogue and had cut fewest throats. From the correspondence we had had with him, indeed, we had been induced to expect to find everything ready against our arrival, so that we should be able to start next day. Matters, however, are not so managed in the East. The worthy Nazir had perhaps done his best, but that was next to nothing.

It were needless to enter into all the details of our negotiations. Suffice it to say, that after the customary display of cunning and duplicity — after quarrelling about the water-skins, about the food of the camels, about the price we were to pay — and after fifty alarming speeches about the enormous distance of the place we were going to, about the dangers of the journey, the disturbed state of the road, and the deadly fevers of Siwah — the two Bedawins, belonging to the tribe of the Waled Ali or Children of Ali, who had originally undertaken to conduct us, and whose names we had had included in the firmân, or passport, procured from Zeki Effendi, agreed to stick to their original bargain and start with us on the morning of the eighteenth.

Sheikh Yûnus Abû Shayen and his companion Saleh deserve to be delineated by a more skilful pen than mine. I do not pretend to do justice to their characters. The reader must appreciate them himself as the narrative proceeds. Yûnus had been a man of consequence in his tribe. His worldly possessions included forty camels, three hundred sheep, and I know not how many goats ; he had stores of sesame and other grain ; and sixty thousand piasters was the price of the ornaments of his women. But there had been a dark spot in the old Sheikh's life. Arnâout soldiers had taken up their quarters at his encampment. There had been a quarrel and a fight, or a murder. Three lives were lost in or near his tent. What part he himself took does not exactly appear. He says he was absent in Alexandria, that another man was guilty. The Pasha, however, formed a different opinion. Most of his property was seized ; and he became a fugitive, hiding amidst rocks and caves. For eighteen months — such is his boast — he evaded the vigilance of "Mehemmed Basha's" myrmidons ; until in fact another man was caught and hanged for the offence. Then he began to appear again in the world, to collect the scattered remnants of his fortune. But



although the hunt after him had ceased, he never again ventured to enter Alexandria; and always lived in a mysterious sort of way in the neighbourhood of Abusír, feady at the first alarm to decamp or creep into some of the caves or catacombs which there abound.

Such was the sort of person under whose guidance we were to perform our journey; and his good conduct to us was expected by himself and friends to prove a sort of stepping-stone on his return to wealth and power. For Yúnus was ambitious, and even in the midst of his fallen fortunes looked forward to becoming at some future day the chief of one section at least of his tribe. Saleh was his cousin, a person of much inferior pretensions and quite subordinate in every respect to his great relative. We were to hire two camels from one and three from the other.

During the time we were waiting the pleasure of these gentlemen I took occasion again to examine the ruins of Abusír, upon which I do not think that sufficient attention has been bestowed by travellers. Their vast size and imposing appearance have not succeeded in drawing tourists out of the common track, although they are the only remarkable ancient remains in Egypt north of the Pyramids; and Mr. Browne—the discoverer in modern times of the Oásis of Siwah—though he must have passed them on his road, does not even deign to mention their existence. Situated, however, on the crest of a steep ridge of hills, they have always been considered as important landmarks for vessels approaching Alexandria from the west.

As soon as you have proceeded half way along the valley that leads from El Delcale to Abusír, these majestic ruins come in sight; and remain in view, often raised high in the air and thrown into fantastic forms by the mirage, during the whole remainder of the journey. At first there appears to be only one pile of buildings; but the Arab's Tower, properly so called, soon becomes distinguishable from the great quadrangular structure that rises about a quarter of a mile to the west. The tower itself is of a singular form, square at the base, then octangular, then round. It would seem that formerly the upper portion was considerably loftier than at present, and in shape like a column, but it is now broken and ruined. The base and first division





would still be perfect had they not been purposely broken to discover some hidden cavity or means of ascending to the summit, in which the searchers failed. After attentive examination, however, on the occasion of our first visit, Lamport distinctly traced the remains of a staircase, which had formerly existed on the northern face. I am disposed to think that this construction was originally intended for the purpose it now serves, namely, as a landmark. Probably also it had a light. Underneath is a chamber in the rock, with an entrance from the south; which, although I am told it was opened in modern times, I believe to be of the same period with the catacombs which are to be found on all sides.

The path from this place to the Temple of Augustus—for such is supposed to have been the nature of the other building—is along the edge of extensive quarries. The temple has a semi-Egyptian character. It is a hundred paces square, and consists at present simply of a ruined enclosure of solid masonry with two side-entrances and a pylon. The latter, which is turned due east and in pretty tolerable preservation, still rises to the height of more than forty feet, and contains numerous small chambers and staircases leading to the summit, whence a splendid view of the sea to the north and a series of desert valleys to the south may be beheld. Inland to the westward is a small half-dried lake, and to the eastward the great salt marsh of Mareotis stretches in the direction of Alexandria.

Within the temple are two openings leading to a cistern; and this, as well as several other circumstances, leads me to suppose that it was sometimes used as a citadel. There were, evidently, at one period, buildings of more than one story supported against the internal face of the wall, as lines of square holes, cut to support rafters, testify. We noticed that the western or back wall was composed in part of pieces of columns sawn into proper lengths, with the interstices filled up by cement. A squared stone facing, however, both outside and in, had formerly concealed these incongruous materials, which doubtless belonged to some building of a much more ancient date. It is to be observed that no traces of inscriptions or sculpture now appear either in the temple or in the neighbourhood, a fact partly to be accounted for by the softness of the greater portion of

the stone, the face of which is often completely destroyed. Some blocks had been much less solid than others, having actually been eaten out of the wall by the atmosphere, leaving apertures like windows. I should add that M. de Laurin, Austrian Consul-General at Alexandria, possesses a small statue of Victory and a head of Augustus in marble, found by some excavators here.

The ancient city of Taposiris, or, as some call it, Plinthine,\* occupied the whole width of the valley south of the temple. It was evidently at one time a very extensive place. Traces of large buildings of solid stone-work, among which are probably the foundations of the baths attributed by Procopius to Justinian, walls, towers, an odeion, and the lock of a canal with a double dyke, by which water from the Nile was distributed through the gardens, are to be made out very clearly, although a mere cursory glance from the brow of the hill reveals nothing but a patch of desert covered with mounds and sand. About an hour's walk from the temple, beyond the limits of the city, is a ridge of hills containing some large catacombs and a very extensive and deep excavation in which the workmen of old had commenced rooms and galleries of tolerably regular architecture. I am inclined to think this to be the precipitous place mentioned by Strabo as being near Taposiris, and resorted to at all seasons of the year by pleasure-parties of every description. It is sufficiently solitary and deserted now. Vast masses of brushwood choke up what may have once been a garden; human visitants are no doubt rare; and when I began to descend the rugged path that leads to the bottom, there was a tremendous rush of wings, and a huge flight of doves burst up on all sides as from the enchanted well in 'Don Quixotte.' I was soon left alone to pursue my examination of this curious chasm, unless I may count as companions the innumerable lizards that perpetually glanced athwart the vast rocks that encircle it, or rustled amidst the grass and weeds.

When I was more advanced in the Desert, as the series of

\* Plinthine must have been close by, on the coast. Taposiris is evidently the origin of the name of Abusir; and is expressly mentioned as not being immediately on the borders of the sea.



ruined towns we there found presented itself, many reflections occurred to me on the nature of the cultivation by which in old times they must have been supported, at least in part. The traces of water-works presented near Abusir, with what we find in old writers concerning canals that branched off down these valleys into the very heart of the Libyan Desert, may in part serve as an explanation. It will be seen, however, that I came to the conclusion that the old cultivation was supported in a great measure by water derived from springs, wells, and cisterns, dried up and abandoned during the decay of civilization consequent on the Saracen conquest, or more probably on the decline of the original Muslim enthusiasm.

Our tent was pitched on the brow of the hill just beneath the northern gate of the temple, on a small clear space, surrounded by fragments of the wall, hurled down by the unsparing hand of time. The narrow valley that stretches parallel to the coast for about fifty miles from Alexandria, and a ridge of dazzlingly white hills composed of rock and sand, lay between us and the sea. The scene, though simple in elements, was sufficiently beautiful; and we could never weary of beholding at evening the unclouded sun stooping gently to the horizon, and then assuming all sorts of fantastic shapes—now a fire-balloon, now a dome of flame—ere it descended and left us to enjoy the sweet, though brief, twilight and the gentle rays of the moon. At these times it was that the great ruin, near which we were encamped, assumed its most imposing aspect, and when the long jagged line of its ruined wall crowning the steep acclivity awakened sensations almost approaching to the sublime. I am sorry to say, however, that these are not the things which have dwelt most strongly on my memory. The social evenings, mingled with serious conversation on the conduct of our coming excursion, which we there enjoyed, will always be remembered, by me at least, with chiefest pleasure.

During a former visit one of our attendants had been stung in the little finger by a scorpion: he bound the offended part round with twine, and next day was well. On the present occasion a similar accident happened, and a new kind of cure was equally effectual. The wound was in one of the toes; and a few gashes with a penknife beneath were thought to let out the venom. At any rate,



in both cases, the inconvenience suffered was but temporary. These scorpions are found wherever there are a great number of stones that have long been undisturbed. It is very rarely that their bite proves mortal in Egypt, though I have heard that it sometimes does so.

An animal, supposed to be a wolf or a hyæna, paid us a visit one evening. A little noise frightened him, and he sneaked off faster than he came. I mention the circumstance because this was the only occasion in which we saw anything like a wild beast during the whole of our journey through a country which poets, especially those of the eighteenth century, have combined to represent as infested with monsters of every description. Some old writers have talked of flying serpents, and a former Nazîr used to tell of one which he beheld winging its way from the Arab's Tower to the Temple of Augustus; but we were not equally fortunate. In part compensation the neighbourhood of Abusîr is peopled with immense numbers of hawks and kites; and many small owls came out in the evening gravely to survey the strangers from the edge of the ruin.

## CHAPTER II.

Departure from Abusír — High Spirits of the Party — Picture of our One-Eyed Sheikh — We reach a Tent on the Sea-shore — Value of Time in the Desert — The Character of the Sheikh begins to develop — Domestic Arrangements of a Bedawín Tent — Women and Children — Mess of Dates and Butter — The Well of Neffé — Filling Water-skins — Yúnus's young Wife begs us to bring him back in safety — Romantic Departure of the Kafila at Night — Pace of the Camel — And of the Donkey — Halt, and Sleep in the open Air — Morning View of the Desert — Accession to our Party — Yúnus gives a parting Benediction to his Son — Second Night March — Ruins of a fortified Camp — A Saracenic Castle — Bivouac — Well of Shemaiméh — Bad Water.

It was not until the morning of the 18th that all was ready for our departure. We had been compelled to send back to Alexandria for an additional supply of beans and water-skins; and, as will readily be supposed, our impatience was at its height. In vain we wandered about and tried to take interest in the ruins, in quail-shooting, in visiting the Nazír at his little whitewashed house, in looking at the small hamlet where the soldiers belonging to the station lived with their families. We rejoiced in none of these things, partly because we had seen them before, but chiefly because we were eager to leave all traces of civilization behind us and plunge into those vast and silent regions where only wandering hordes of Bedawíns are ever to be encountered. At length, as I have intimated, the wished-for day arrived, and we were on foot as usual before the sun, and down in the misty valley by the well to perform our ablutions—a luxury which we might not always be able to enjoy in the Desert. Four camels, with old Yúnus, soon made their appearance; and, after a great deal of bustling and shouting, all our traps, including the ponderous supply of beans and a huge bag of chopped straw, were properly distributed. Having requested to know Signor Sciarabati's commands for Síwah, we mounted our donkeys in full travelling costume; and, followed by Derwish and Saäd, our attend-

ant Egyptians, who allowed themselves the occasional use of two spare animals, which we took with us in case of accidents, began to move down the valley to the west. All were in high spirits as if starting on an ordinary pleasure excursion; and there was a free interchange of cheering remarks and merry gibes. Behind us, at a little distance, came the creeping camels, urged on by two young sons of the Sheikh, who himself bestrode a steady-footed horse with a Mamlúk saddle and shovel-stirrups. At his back was slung the never-forsaken long gun, and a monster pair of pistols adorned his belt. Altogether, with his toga-like blanket, and tarboosh encircled in honour of our departure with a bright Hejazi shawl, one corner of which depended from his shoulders, with his grey beard and single eye, he looked a very picturesque old object.

We followed the valley, which here is full of shrubs, for about an hour, and then struck off towards the shore across the white ridge. Having once committed ourselves to the tender mercies of the Bedawins, we could not expect to know the reason of all our movements; but it was not without surprise that we found ourselves ushered into a large tent close to the beach, where we were invited to occupy a kind of divan, composed of mats and carpets, that had been prepared for our reception. In any other country our guide would have taken the trouble to inform us that he wished us to be content with our day's work, that his own preparations were not quite complete, and that old Saleh, his destined companion, had not hitherto made his appearance. But Yúnus would have considered his dignity sadly compromised by so doing. He had undertaken to conduct us in safety to a certain place, and he expected all details to be left to him. The value of time he could not appreciate otherwise than by counting his skins of water in a desert without wells. As to our having a will of our own, a preference for motion or rest, that was contrary to any crotchet of his, or any independent ideas of comfort and propriety, the very thought seemed to excite in his mind a degree of comical astonishment and perplexity. A bale of goods, in his estimation, might as well have had its peculiar notions about the way in which it was stowed aboard ship. When, therefore, after sitting some time under his woollen roof, we began to show signs of restlessness, and ask a variety of what he



must have deemed impertinent questions, he seemed to get very embarrassed, and to experience feelings fluctuating between anger and contempt. So early on the journey, however, prudence dictated to him a mild course of proceeding, and he was content to put us off with small excuses and promises. In the course of the day, one of his sons, a short boy with a long gun slung over his shoulder, and mounted on a tall horse, was sent in search of Saleh. These Bedawins, by the by, as soon as they can walk, have a gun put into their hands : it is their first and only toy, and they charge and uncharge it with the same scrupulous care which they observe in their fathers.

In spite of our impatience, we did not spend an unpleasant day in the Sheikh's tent. It was a good opportunity of witnessing the details of desert life ; for after a little curiosity and peeping and whispering among the various members of the family, our existence seemed soon forgotten, and everything went on as before. There were three women in the tent, unveiled, and passably ugly, and dressed in some respects like the Fellahee women, but more heavily, and with their blue shirts confined by a cord or girdle at the waist ; and there were five young children, all of them nearly naked, and some rather goodlooking. The tent was a spacious one of an oblong shape, with the ends closed, but open at both sides, so that a deliciously cool breeze swept through it from the sea. It was divided, as it were, into two apartments by one of those long cradles, called *tachterwans*, with a framework cover to support some kind of awning, in which the weaker members of a Bedawin family frequently travel on a camel's back. For want of a better name I shall designate it in English as a camel-howdah. Several old guns and gun-barrels stood in it, and some bags of wool and piles of blankets completed the partition, which, combined with our politeness, was sufficient to protect the ladies from too curious a gaze. However, they cared little for us, working away at their hand-mills with which they were splitting beans, scolding the children, collecting the camels and giving them food, and performing various other domestic offices.

As it was necessary that we should eat under the roof of our guide, he offered and we accepted a bowl of dates mashed up with *samn  * (clarified butter), one of the most disgusting messes

it ever fell to my lot to taste, although, in the spirit of true Oriental compliment, some of us ate more than one handful. In short, we endeavoured to make ourselves as agreeable as possible, hoping to induce him to quicken his movements; but here we made a slight miscalculation. He accepted our civilities, smoked our pipes, and remained immoveable, coolly patching up an old wooden bowl and twisting ropes of palm-fibre for a dooloo or well-bucket of hide. At length, towards the afternoon, in token of displeasure, we abandoned the tent, which we had defiled by eating a lunch of cold ham, and repaired to the place where our traps had been deposited, near the well called Bir-en-Neffé, situated in a terrifically hot hollow about a hundred yards off. Here we remained until some hours after sunset sitting on our mat, and turning a deaf ear to the insinuations of the old Sheikh, who, whilst expressing his displeasure with Saleh and promising to take his own four camels and buy another on the road, tried hard to induce us to wait until morning. At length, seeing we were determined to proceed, he sulkily filled four skins of water, and loaded the camels with the assistance of his young boys and two women, one of whom had a baby all the while slung at her back. The other—perhaps a young wife—interrupted her work to come to us and beseech us, in the melancholy lengthened tones which Arab women can assume at pleasure, not to extend our journey into dangerous regions, but to bring back in safety her Yúnus, without whom there was no more joy for her in this world. Such a supplication, delivered in a sweet voice, in the midst of the confusion of breaking up our little bivouac, combined with the consciousness that we were really about to enter on a somewhat hazardous enterprise, and were taking away the stay and support of this desert family, was calculated rather to revive the ideas of romance with which I had at first surrounded the old Sheikh. The sinister glance of his remaining eye was forgotten; so were his incipient arrogance, his palpable attempts at deception, and the vulgar reality of everything about him; and as we moved away by moonlight from the Bir en-Neffé, amidst parting salutations, interrupted by the whistle and the “Zah, zah!” with which the camels were encouraged to clamber over the sand-hills back towards the great valley, I found myself indulging in reflections amidst which the thought of him did not



disagreeably intrude. The scene was by no means unromantic. An undulating surface of glittering sand and white stone, covered with black patches of vegetation, stretched on either hand. Behind could be seen the dim expanse of the sea—with the sound of its ceaseless breakers poured full upon us by a light breeze. In front a steep slope sank to the level of the narrow valley that, like a vast trench, extended its undeviating line at our feet. Beyond, casting a deep shadow, rose the long low range of rocky hills that continues in persevering uniformity from the quarries of El Delcale to the east, with scarcely a variation in height or character, to the neighbourhood of Sheikh Abd-er-rahman on the west. A moon in its first quarter and a profusion of stars lighted our rugged path, or no path, along which the steady-footed camels, with their bowsprit necks thrust forward, were slowly sailing, now choosing a way for themselves, now obeying the voice of their drivers. It was not long before we reached the flat surface of the valley, and, taking a due westerly direction, began to move along it.

I may mention here, once for all, that the pace of the camel is exceedingly slow, so that in a lengthy journey it must be calculated that the caravan moves at a rate of no more than two miles and a half an hour. Sometimes it falls much below this, especially where there is opportunity for browsing; and at others, when it is necessary to push forward over a waterless country, they reach three and a half and even four miles an hour. I shall mention any remarkable variations in our pace, requesting the reader for the present to imagine us proceeding at something less than two miles and a half an hour. Very monotonous and fatiguing work it was. We rode donkeys, equipped in the Egyptian style when a long journey is contemplated, namely, with halters; and it being necessary, from our ignorance of the road, to keep in sight of the camels, we had the greatest difficulty in effecting our purpose. The obstinate brutes, little knowing what a journey they were booked for, would go a-head, so that we were constantly obliged to stop, and perhaps light a pipe, until we again saw the rear of our creeping little *kafila* appearing amidst the bushes, or from behind a swell in the ground.

In about two hours and a half, when we were beginning to get used to this mode of travelling, a request was once more



made to us to stop. The Sheikh was determined, if possible, to have Saleh for a companion; but he merely said generally that we stood in absolute need of another camel and another man; that he must go into the Desert the next day to find both; and that, as there was water in the neighbourhood, it was best to halt where we were. So we spread our mat a little before midnight, and, wrapping ourselves resignedly in our cloaks, slept until dawn.

September 19th.—More shuffling on the part of our guide ushered in the day. It was with the greatest difficulty we could get him to redeem his promise, and start in search of the recruit and the camel. The well talked of overnight was, according to the report of his two boys, choked up with sand. Had we not better move on another hour? No, we would not: so at length, after some scowling, he mounted his horse, and, riding slowly up the stony ridge, halted for a short time to cast a searching glance over the wide expanse to the south, and then disappeared.

We were afterwards told that there were ruins in the neighbourhood, called Munchúrah, exactly opposite the dried-up well; but I suppose they were far in the interior, as I climbed the hill, and saw nothing but a boundless undulating desert, or rather wilderness, beyond. A sandy earth, dotted at intervals of three or four feet with several dried-up ligneous plants, that serve at this season for fuel, with here and there a small patch of green bushes, is the character of the country. In the valley the vegetation is more abundant; at some places the shrubs form perfect thickets: but, though there is a giant plant, resembling in the distance a small fir, I saw nothing that could be called a tree.

Early in the forenoon Yúnus returned with a man and two camels, which latter turned out subsequently really to belong to Saleh, who was engaged in transacting some business of his own, and, finding we would not wait, had sent his beasts and a temporary substitute. Of course we were not permitted to know this, our Sheikh affecting to be very indignant with his cousin, and vowing to depart without him that very evening. We therefore pitched our tent\* when the sun became oppressive, and spent the heat of the day in a dignified repose.

\* Ruins of Abusír still in sight, bearing E.N.E. by N., at a distance of about ten miles.

About noon the old Sheikh sat down near us, and seemed to attempt recovering his character by giving a long series of instructions and a parting benediction to his eldest son. There was, in spite of a slight savour of acting, something imposing in his manner; and, willing to be pleased, I was again looking at him with respect when, catching my eye, and thinking the moment a favourable one, he hastily mumbled the concluding words of his speech, and abruptly asked if I had not an old pair of shoes to give him! A negative answer, as a matter of course, ruffled his temper; and he was soon afterwards heard cursing his firstborn most heartily, threatening, among other things, to make a *kúrbeh* (water-skin) of his hide. From that moment I confess my poetical ideas did positively vanish, and I looked upon the old Sheikh as nothing but an Ishmaelite who would act and must be treated pretty nearly as an enemy.

At half-past four in the afternoon we were under way, with the two new camels, three of the old ones, and the fresh man. Yúnus sent back his sons and his horse, and took, much against his will, to foot-travelling, diversified occasionally by a ride on a camel. Immediately after sunset, just as the huge falcons and hawks, that had been wheeling through the valley in keen chace of the pigeons and smaller birds that abound, were sailing towards their night-haunts, the valley narrowed to a pass, the greater part of which we found occupied by the ruins of a large enclosure with stone walls, now overthrown to the ground, but which had probably been a fortified camp. Three hours from this a dilapidated Saracenic castle, called *Kasr el Amaïd*, rising near the beach amidst the white sand-hills and the thickets, tempted us to ride out of our way to glance at it. There was something so solitary and mysterious about it, as it reared its ruined form near the ceaselessly rolling wave, with the stars looking through the shattered windows or between the broken battlements, as through a Gothic building on an English beach—a haunted church, or a legendary castle—that I could scarce prevail on myself to proceed without our becoming further acquainted; but it was at length determined to reserve a complete examination to our return, when we should pass by day.

Having ridden seven hours, we stopped in a narrow part of the valley obstructed with hillocks. We had made up our minds



not to take the trouble of pitching the tent during our night-halts; so we had commonly nothing to do, on arriving tired and sleepy after a long ride, but to spread our mat, get at our carpet-bags for pillows, and lie down at once. Each person was provided, like Hassan the camel-driver, with a "cruse of water," qualified however with a little cognac; and those who were provident generally supplied themselves before starting in the daytime with a "scanty store" of provisions in the shape of biscuit and cheese; this served for supper. No unpacking was allowed, as the boys were as weary as ourselves, and had sufficient occupation in taking care of the donkeys. Tobacco-pouches soon came into requisition, and by keeping our helmets to the wind we managed to smoke in spite of it.

This night was very cold; and made us appreciate the full virtue of our stoical resolution. We were up early, and after a vain attempt at making coffee went over the white hills towards the sea to a well called Shemaiméh, cut in the rock, with a hollow or trough near it for animals to drink from. Here we had our first taste of genuine desert water—never shall I forget it. I would attempt to describe it, but it is indescribable. The reader must imagine what a mixture of rotten eggs, brine, and the excrement of birds with water would produce; and he will then have a faint idea of the filthy stuff I ventured to put inside my mouth. The circumstance that our donkeys, though thirsty, had to be coaxed to wet their mouths and swallow a little, means perhaps nothing, as these animals are extremely delicate about their food and drink; and very capricious too—one of them sometimes refusing to put his nose in the trough, insisting on having the bucket held to him.

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## CHAPTER III.

Cape Glaucum of Ptolemy — Saleh makes his Appearance — Disturbed State of the Country — Forays of the Western Arabs — Murder of two of the Waled Ali — Enfeebled Authority of the Pasha — Frightful Climate of Síwah — Deadly Fevers reported — Caravan from Derna going “to buy Corn in Egypt” — A cure for a Headache — Ruins of an Ancient City — Bivouac near the Well of Shegick — Marâbut — Desert Water — A solitary Butterfly — Storehouse protected by the Ghost of a Saint — Curious Collection of Implements — Port of Leucaspis — Imperfect Knowledge of the Libyan Coast — Decay of the Province of Marmarica — Meet an Alarmist — Frightful State of the Country — Terror of our Followers — Ancient Vineyards and Gardens — Fertility of the Coast Valleys in former Times — Agriculture of the Bedawíns — Artificial Creation of Alexandria — Wells and Cisterns in the Desert — Moonlight Deceptions — Increased Alarm of our Followers — Account of one of our “Libyan Nights.”

PURSUING our journey, we soon found the valley stopped up by a series of salt lakes, the banks of which were plentifully crusted with a white efflorescence intermingled with patches of purple. They were divided from the sea by the persevering line of sand-hills ribbed with rock, which here began to rise higher and project so as to form at some distance a-head of us a point covered with dazzling hillocks. It has two or three small islands lying off; and is not properly marked I think in the charts of the Mediterranean. I should say it is the Cape Glaucum of Ptolemy.

We had been driven from the valley by the salt-lakes, and compelled to ascend the southern ridge, where we had an extensive view. Near the second lake we passed some traces of ancient walls and a quarry; and having travelled four hours that morning, principally along the sides of stony hills covered with grey lichens, halted and pitched our tent at half-past ten. Here we were at length joined by old Saleh, who, without vouchsafing any explanation of his delay, came and sat outside our door, where he occupied himself for two hours in pulling a sort of phantom of a beard, which grew with the scantiness of desert

vegetation on his withered chin, and in croaking after a fashion of which he had given us a specimen at Abusír. According to his account we were entering a very unsafe and disturbed country. Every one was in arms, either with intention to rob or to repel robbery. The Bedawins of the west had become unusually audacious, and were constantly making forays on the more peaceful tribes who lived under the authority of "Mehemmed Basha" as they call the Viceroy. Only the day before, he said, two men who were tending camels had been set upon by a strong party and murdered; and he professed to have seen the dead bodies brought into the tents. Parties of this dangerous description were often to be met with, generally ranging in numbers from seven to twenty, but sometimes two or three hundred strong. Making due allowance for exaggeration, and supposing the actual outrage mentioned to be brought nearer to us both in time and place in order to alarm or discourage us, this was certainly an unpleasant prologue. We objected that such misdeeds could not be frequent, as the Pasha was feared, and never failed, in case his dominions were trespassed upon by strangers, to make with good effect application for punishment and compensation to their governments. The reply was, that in very glaring cases notice was taken, as in the recent robbery of three hundred camels at the Natron Lakes by a tribe on their way to Bengazi; but that numerous instances of complete impunity had given the robbers courage. In former times, when the Pasha was aiming at independence, and in his full glory, the Desert was almost as safe as the Valley of the Nile; but now his rule had relaxed in severity, and the old régime was returning. There appeared to be some reason in this, so we applied ourselves to the particular instance, and it was argued that, if the robbery and murder had been committed within a few days, all the country must by this time be up in arms, and the brigands, fearing the consequences, must have made a precipitate retreat, leaving the road comparatively safe. This was admitted to be a good argument for proceeding, so old Saleh, who really seemed desirous of backing out of his bargain, tried another tack; and, after hinting that we must move with loaded guns that night, began to enlarge in his accustomed strain on the climate of Síwah, which he represented as so unwholesome at this time of



year, that whoever was exposed to it inevitably caught the fever, which again was so pernicious that whoever caught it, died ! Pleasant prospect this, especially as he really seemed to believe what he said, to be in great alarm, and asked us if we were magicians enough to *write cures*—that is to say, amulets. The Fatalist by profession found no remedy in his doctrines against the instinctive fear of death !

We knew before that the date-season in the oâses was considered by no means healthy, and our previous information was only confirmed by the lamentations of the timid Bedawîn. A small kafilâ, of eight men and ten or twelve camels, on their way from Derna to Alexandria to buy grain, passed during the conversation, and added their testimony to the uncertain state of the country. We wished them far enough, for they put the finishing stroke to the alarm of our Egyptian attendants, one of whom seemed seriously to contemplate a retreat. A glass of soda-water, with a nip of brandy, insinuated under the name of medicine, brought him round, and served to give us a fresh insight into Sheikh Yûnus's character. He immediately got a headache, asked for a similar potion, exclaimed "Azeem !" ("Excellent !") and "Agaïb !" ("Wonderful !"), and condescendingly promised to drink a glass every day as a backshîsh.

About sunset we started and struck into the Desert, leaving the sea far on our right hand, the ridge of hills now subsiding into a plain covered with hillocks, in which the great valley that extends thus far from Alexandria is consequently lost. Our direction was still about W.N.W., so that, as we again came near the sea in a few hours' journey, we might have inferred, from this circumstance alone, that we were crossing the base of a cape or point. After three hours' ride we passed some ruins, or rather traces of old walls, just appearing above the surface of the ground. Many of these evidently belonged to houses, forts, &c. ; but others, which continued for the space of an hour and a half, were nothing but great square enclosures, which I suppose to have been ancient vineyards or gardens. This place is now called Moghût, and our guides referred its origin to Alexander the Great.

After proceeding some time by the favour of a beautiful moon, Yûnus hinted at a stoppage, there being a well in the neighbour-



hood which it was necessary to visit in the morning. We found our bivouac exceedingly pleasant at first. The atmosphere was wonderfully pure, and the moon and stars shone with remarkable brilliancy. Not a sound disturbed the air, except, perhaps, the low tremulous shriek of a night-bird, the chirping of a grass-hopper, or the occasional motions of our group of tired animals. This silence had a soothing effect, and we went to sleep with the impression that a thorny bush forms the best pillow in the world, a Levantine cocúla or a plaid cloak the best covering, the sky the best canopy, and Arabs, camels, and donkeys the best companions. Some of these delusions, however, were dispelled by the sharp cold of the morning and a heavy fall of dew.

September 21st.—The early dawn enabled us, as we stood shiveringly drinking our coffee, to distinguish in the distance, to the N.W., the glittering walls of a marâbut or Sheikh's tomb, on the crest of a rounded hill. This is a landmark which we afterwards found may be distinguished at a vast distance. It indicates the neighbourhood of the well of Shégick, near the coast, and the ruins of the fortress of Gobísa, inland. Two hours over ground covered with remains of ancient enclosures—vineyards or gardens—brought us to the foot of the hill on which the marâbut is situated. Here we pitched our tent, and the donkeys were taken to drink at the distant well. They were an hour and a half absent, but returned with a large demi-john of good water. This was extremely agreeable, as we had already begun to suffer from the badness of the beverage to which we had been reduced. The contents of our *kúrbehs* had become nearly as detestable as the stuff we had so despised at Shemaiméh. The shaking and exposure to the sun seemed to have brought out all its bad qualities, besides giving it a taste of leather, in itself very disgusting. We observed, indeed, throughout the journey, that water which was tolerably good when drawn from the well acquired often a peculiar taste, as if flavoured with rotten eggs, even if preserved in bottles. It all seemed liable to assume that character. Filtering through sand would correct almost any other defect, but had little virtue in this case.

We noticed this morning a single brown speckled butterfly fluttering before us from one scrubby plant to another. It was a welcome sight, reminding one of gentler and more fertile



scenes—of green meadows and pasture-lands, of hedgerows and fenced gardens; and, striking more forcibly still

“Th’ electric chain with which we ’re darkly bound,”

awakened some tender associations that came gushing into my mind, and filled it for a time with a not unpleasing sadness.

During our halt I walked to the marâbut, which I found to be a small square enclosure, with a whitewashed wall. In the neighbourhood was an incipient cemetery—a few Bedawín tombs, with sticks stuck up at the end, and surrounded, as usual, by an oval pile of loose stones about three feet high. The enclosure had a doorway in one corner, through which I somewhat sacrilegiously passed. Never having seen a similar place, my curiosity was fully gratified. A tomb of brick, stuccoed over like those seen in the streets of Egyptian towns, occupied the centre; whilst around, in most picturesque confusion, were spread a variety of articles committed to the care and surveillance of Sheikh Abd-er-rahman. There were *tachterwans*, or, as I have called them, camel-howdahs; the handmills used in Bedawín tents; several pair of the enormous Mamlúk shovel-stirrups, nearly eaten up with rust; two or three large wooden bowls used to prepare *pilau* or any other mess; small ploughs for turning up the shallow earth in the Desert valleys where the Arabs grow their scanty crops of barley; packsaddles; and various household utensils. The place, in fact, is a regular storehouse, where such things are left by people passing to and fro. If they return that way, they may resume their property; if not, it is allowed to decay, no one having the audacity to remove it, for fear of the defunct Sheikh, who would certainly punish any violation of his sanctuary with death. From all appearances I have no doubt that this ghostly guardian is quite as successful in taking care of what is intrusted to him as the living one, who, being himself perhaps in the odour of sanctity, pursues the same occupation in the neighbourhood of Abusír. The labours of the late Abd-er-rahman are, at any rate, more practically useful than those of the presiding Sheikh at Abú Mandúr, near Rosetta, who merely professes to employ himself as Conservator of the left bank of the Nile from the sea to Atfeh, and to throw back with a spiritual shovel whatever sand Eblis may



blow in from the Desert, in the vain attempt to choke up the river.

From the top of the hill I could obtain a pretty good view of the coast immediately to the north. We started yesterday from a point about two miles from the sea, and soon began leaving it at a gradually increasing distance. A general west-north-west direction, however, had again brought us near the coast. So that during a ride of seven hours we had crossed the base of the point which I now descried to the eastward from the *marâbut*, stretching out in a northerly direction and sheltering a small curved bay with a north-west exposure, probably a port in ancient times. If the point be the *Glaucum* of Ptolemy, as I have surmised, this must be the port of *Leucasis*, or *Leucaspis*. I could not on this occasion distinguish the low white islands which I afterwards saw when on returning I attentively examined the point from the east, though time would not allow me to visit it. The coast is here lined with higher hills than those in the direction of *Abusír*. They begin to rise at the termination of the salt-lakes; and the most lofty overlooks the small bay I have mentioned; whilst the extreme point appeared to be its northern spur gradually subsiding into the sea.

My impression is that the whole of the Libyan coast is very imperfectly laid down in the charts and maps hitherto published. A new survey ought forthwith to be made; and no power has more interest in undertaking it than England. Let us leave the examination of the bay of *Tineh* and the *Pelusian* mud-flats to enthusiasts or speculators—no English merchant-vessel has ever sighted those inhospitable regions; but thousands pass near the Libyan shores, and shipwrecks are constantly occurring, not so much attributable to the currents, of which everybody speaks, as to our ignorance of the coast, where I am persuaded many tolerable harbours might be found. These harbours existed and were frequented by a flourishing commerce in ancient times; and I cannot believe that they have all become useless. They were only deserted gradually, as the province of *Marmarica*—overrun by conquering armies and pressed upon by the wild tribes descending from the *Ogdames* and *Nasamones* of *Herodotus*—relapsed into the desert condition from which it had been



reclaimed by canals from Egypt and colonies from the more early civilized shores of the Mediterranean.

About four o'clock in the afternoon we started, crossed some low hills, and, proceeding still in the same direction as before, got into an ill-defined plain with rising ground at various distances on all sides. Near its commencement we saw a man with two camels to our left; and should have passed on without communicating had he not advanced to join our Bedawins. Sheikh Yúnus, who already began to admit his ignorance of the road from the coast to Siwah, tried to make a bargain with this man to join our party with one of his camels to carry two skins of water. He did not suffer himself to be tempted, however, for he was going to Alexandria; and he gave besides a most frightful account of the state of the country, saying that nothing could induce him to come and have his throat cut in our company. According to his story, there was especial reason for alarm at the present moment. The Western Arabs had grown unusually bold; had made several incursions; and now infested all the roads. Every person we met might be an enemy. Honest people were rather inclined to get out of the way than to thrust themselves into the jaws of danger. This kind of talk began first to suggest to our two frightened followers the idea of an escort; and even the Bedawins acknowledged that they should feel more secure with six additional guns. As yet, however, we seemed to be proceeding through a country almost completely deserted by its inhabitants. A solitary Bedawin, I remember, looked at us from the hills on the evening we left Munchúrah; eight wayfarers passed us at the salt-lakes; and after leaving the alarmist, when the night had fallen, we heard in the distance to our right the bleating of a considerable flock of sheep, and the shouts and monotonous chant of the men who were driving them in the direction of Alexandria.

Again, all over this plain we met large square spaces that had been enclosed by walls, of which the extensive ruins still remained. Were these spaces thus enclosed because the soil happened to be better than the rest of the Desert? Were they designed to assist some system of irrigation? Or were they merely erected as defences against wild beasts or human depreda-

tors? On one side of several of them were traces of ruins of a different character, as if these vineyards or gardens had been attached to small villas in which the wealthy inhabitants of Marmarica chose to reside at certain seasons of the year.

One thing seems pretty certain, namely, that at some period this country had a peculiar cultivation of its own, and supported numerous cities and a flourishing commerce. I doubt, however, whether, as certain writers have supposed, this portion of the Libyan Desert was reclaimed by the ancient kings of Egypt. In Alexander's time it is mentioned, by Aristobulus in Arrian, as having been "a district certainly deserted, but not waterless;" and I do not remember that this testimony is contradicted by any other classical writer. However, at a subsequent period, finding that water will fertilize any soil, men determined to reduce this unpromising tract: and it was at length covered with farms, meadows, vineyards, and gardens. It is now almost restored to its original unproductiveness, although at various points we saw patches which the Bedawins had selected wherein to sow dhourra, barley, &c. The ground was scratched with their little plough. At some places we saw remnants of the spring crop, consisting of thinly sprinkled stubble about eighteen inches high. This cultivation entirely depends on the winter rains; but in ancient times, in addition to the canals which carried Nile water and fertility into the heart of the Libyan Desert, recourse was had to wells, which, I believe, might even now be indefinitely multiplied. In the valley between Abusir and El Delcale, for example, there are numerous shadoofs, raising excellent water from wells, and supporting considerable patches of cultivation. On our return we found indeed the dhourra greatly advanced; we saw plots of onions, of tomatas, &c., shaded by date, fig, and banana trees. These scraps of vegetation, rarely more than a hundred yards in length, are tended by a few half-civilized Bedawin families, living in tents or little stone huts, and eking out in this way what they gain by cutting scrub-wood for fuel, catching quails and other birds when in season, and otherwise supplying the market of Alexandria. The wells vary in number with their industry, and seem to be opened afresh at the approach of winter.

As an instance of what might have been effected by the means



I have mentioned, I will adduce Alexandria, which is situated in the Libyan Desert, forty miles from any spot of natural fertility. The labour of man has at length converted it into a perfect oâsis. A vast body of fresh water is brought to it through deserts and salt marshes, and it is surrounded with exquisite gardens, vineyards, and green fields. Many expanses of rubbish still remain, but they are fast disappearing, and the new roads in the neighbourhood are rapidly assuming the aspect of green shady avenues. Of similar origin must have been the towns of Plinthine, Taposiris, Cynos-sema, Antiphræ, and numerous others, the traces of which now serve only as stumblingblocks to travellers in those regions.

At half-past eight we passed near Bid Gurruj, where a tomb on a pointed hill overlooks a large cistern like those at Alexandria, and most probably of ancient construction. It is dry in summer, but in winter holds good water. It lay to our right towards the sea. I must here call to mind that we saw all this part of the country in going by the light of the moon, which in these latitudes is extraordinarily deceptive. Sometimes low mounds in our neighbourhood appeared like distant lofty hills; and again ridges really at a great distance seemed close at hand. All we could learn therefore was, that after proceeding half an hour beyond Bid Gurruj we came to the end of the plain that we entered near the marâbut, and got among an intricate expanse of small hills covered with sand, and divided by narrow flat valleys. Soon afterwards we crossed a low rocky ridge, near which, we were told, was another winter well, called Ejmína, and in an hour and a half more reached a second ridge much more lofty and rugged, covered with loose stones, and difficult even for the camels. Just on the other side of this we determined to bivouac for the night and indulge in tea. We had here to physic one of our Assinegos, who had become quite ill through sheer fright, partly caused by the stories told by the strangers we had met, partly by the horrible exaggerations of old Saleh, who seemed to take a malicious pleasure in alarming one more timid than himself. This man was by nature half buffoon and half croaker; he amused us by his monkey tricks, and annoyed us by the unfeeling delight he took in working on the mind of this poor lad, and absolutely depriving us of his services. For his own part, he



seemed a little uncomfortable at the idea of losing his camels by the attack of overwhelming numbers ; and childishly terrified by the reports of the fever at Siwah. We afterwards had great difficulty in getting him to proceed.

I shall often think of the night I spent near the well of Tanúm. Two of the party went to sleep, whilst I and Mr. Lamport sat up in an unusually social temper, and, soothed by the fragrant pipe, and a small tumbler of hot grog, occasionally replenished, conversed, despite the alarmists, with great complacency on our prospects. It was on such occasions as these that we usually compared notes as to incidents that had occurred or observations that had been made in the course of the day, and thus managed to clear up many points, and fix the result in our memories. The present, however, was, I must confess, one of the most agreeable of our "Libyan Nights." We were yet new in the Desert, and the first tumult of our impressions had hardly subsided. Our senses were wide awake to catch every characteristic of the scene, and seemed, if I may use the expression, rather baulked at first by the fewness of the objects that presented themselves to their notice. Our familiar companions the moon and stars, with some brilliant meteors that gleamed near the horizon, and numbers of those heavenly rockets which, say the Arabs, are hurled by angels guarding the gates of heaven upon demons who approach too near ; a ridge of rocks to the south ; to the north a broad and shallow valley, dim with a light mist, that remained cold and dull even beneath the shining beams that were shed from that Oriental sky, and scarcely allowed the shrubs and bushes to appear athwart it ; beyond all this the sombre sea—these, with the exception of the ungainly form of a camel, as, despite its fettered legs, it went away slowly from the bivouac to browse ; our little group of donkeys, the scattered luggage, the sleeping Bedawíns and domestics, were all the objects that met the eye ; whilst there was nought to appease "the famine of our ears," as some poet expresses it, save only the shrill shriek or measured chirp of two Desert birds, and the monotonous chink of thousands of grasshoppers. But, if disappointment was the first feeling engendered, a sense of the sublime—a perception of the simplicity of nature's operations—a feeling of intense solitude—of separation from the busy nuclei round

which men congregate—and ultimately of cheerful self-reliance, succeeded. I felt my imagination kindle, and that steady, enduring enthusiasm begin to take possession of my mind, which is the necessary companion of all who encounter fatigue, and even danger, actuated by the mere thirst of knowing “how wonderfully and strangely” God’s world is constructed—what kind of people inhabit its remoter parts—and what the wilderness and the waterless desert have to say about the commerce and civilization of past ages.

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## CHAPTER IV.

Disobedience of Yúnus — Sultry Ride to El-Emrúm — Sufferings from Want of Water — The Camels are indulged in a Drink. — Tricks and Deceits of our Guides — Definition of the Word “near” and the “Desert Hour” — Arabs lack the Ideas of Time, Space, and Truth — Some of our Beans confided to a man “who drank at the Well of El-Emrúm” — Well and Castle of Gemaima — Some travelling Bedawíns join our Party — True position of Gemaima Point — Observations on the Foot of the Camel — Stony Ground — Meet a Kafilá bivouacked in a Thicket — The Reubens and the Benjamins of our Days — The Bedawín Camel — Vineyards of Antiphræ — Ancient Cistern — Halt at El-Gerab — Another Kafilá — Bedawín Importunities — Temperature — Rough Road — The Lesser Catabathmus — Cave — Difficult Ascent — Vision of Wells and Water-Melons — Surprise an Encampment — Wreckers — Danger of being plundered.

HAVING watched until the moon went down, three hours after midnight, we slept for a short time, and wakened to the regular business of the day. Whilst our traps were being loaded, old Yúnus came up and asked us whether he should not throw away the remainder of the water which had been brought from the Bir en-Neffé. We should reach Gemaima, he said, after a short ride. The answer he received was, “Keep the water;” but, by one of the acts of disobedience he occasionally indulged in, he immediately turned it all out upon the sand; and then, with characteristic inconsistency, wanted to stop half an hour after we started to get a fresh supply at the well of Tanúm, which, however, on examination turned out to be dry.

The valley in which we now found ourselves was exactly similar in character to that between Abusír and the salt-lakes. Its direction was at first W.N.W., and then changed to N.N.W., skirting a small curve or bay, both points of which were visible. The eastern extremity is marked by a pointed hill, occurring after a piece of low shore, where the white line of hillocks subsides. From the sea all this coast must have a very dismal uniform appearance, as the hills in the interior are pretty nearly



of an equal height. Here commences, however, a rather loftier desert ridge, through which we went, crossing valleys that lay in a N.N.E. direction, until, rising over a rough rocky ridge, we again sighted the Mediterranean, and descended into another burning seabord valley. From the summit a large patch of white sand-hills, that looked like heavy smoke beneath the fervid rays of the sun, which were reflected in a strange manner, was indicated to us as Gemaima: it occupied the extreme end of the valley; but we determined not to attempt reaching it. We were now indeed extremely exhausted from the heat of the sun and want of water, though we had been only four hours in motion, and were glad enough to reach, in a hollow of the white rocky barrier between the valley and the sea, a square well, cut deep down, and containing an abundant supply. The first bucketful taken from the surface was extremely agreeable to the palate; but as soon as the well was disturbed it gradually acquired more and more of that indescribable taste which will ever prevent us from forgetting the wells of Shemaiméh. The donkeys, though they had not drunk for twenty-four hours, seemed little inclined to quench their thirst; but the camels, poor creatures, having abstained since we left Abusír, and being children of the desert, crowded round the shallow trough cut in the rock, and, thrusting down their long necks and snake-like heads, drank eagerly; whilst old Saleh, indulging in a queer chant, rendered more odd by the loss of a few teeth and the presence of a quid inside his lower lip, and broken by a series of conventional grunts, most industriously worked the *dooloo*, and supplied them till they were satiated. The quantity they drank was enormous; though I cannot confirm the account contained in that 'Authentic Narrative,' so interesting and even awful to children, of Captain Riley's sufferings in Africa, where we are told that one camel imbibed, after twenty days' abstinence, the enormous quantity of sixty gallons. However, I think the skin bucket, containing perhaps a gallon or a little more, must have been filled eight or ten times, on an average, for each animal, and their stomachs evidently swelled in bulk.

I shall here mention that all this time we had no very definite idea of the point at which we were to turn off from the coast, and strike into the interior of the Desert. This was a matter we left

to the Bedawíns, who themselves did not appear to have quite made up their minds. For the last day or two they had talked of turning off at Gemaima, and would probably have done so had they met a proper person to act as guide. In that case they would, no doubt, have followed the road by which we returned. Failing in meeting the guide, they now pretended they had always meant to pursue the coast-road for some distance more, and promised us a kind of paradise called Mudar, in which, among other things, delicious water-melons were to be enjoyed. As, however, these water-melons had before been attributed to a place *grayeb* (near) Gemaima, we did not allow our thoughts to dwell too much upon them, though we began to be perfectly aware of the elasticity of this said word *grayeb*, which in the Desert means any distance, from one hour's ride to three or four days' travel, just according to circumstances. I may here mention that, at the outset of the journey, Saleh used to be very positive about distances, telling us exactly to half an hour how long we should be in performing them; but at last he was driven to confess that the "Desert hour" was very different from the Alexandrian one, that there was no definite number of them in the day, and that they had short hours and long hours as it suited them.

It has been observed with some severity that Arabs, to whatever degree civilized, have no idea of time, space, or truth; and I cannot much object to the observation. Even in Egypt, among persons in business, they seldom divide their days into hours, contenting themselves with vague approximations to sunrise, noon, and sunset; they have no term in common use expressive of any definite amount of distance; and there is no general appreciation of a man's word. I do not mean that they are an utterly faithless people; but they are not impressed with the moral obligation to truth. "Liar" is a playful appellative scarcely reproachful; and "I have told a lie" a confession that may be made without a blush!

Whilst we were enjoying our "keyf"—a word descriptive of the most perfect state of indolent wellbeing—Sheikh Yúnus went in search of one of the men who "drink at the well of El-Em-rúm," in order to confide to him a certain portion of the beans we had brought for our donkeys. This was to serve the double



purpose of lightening the camels to enable them to carry more water, and of securing a provision against our return. Having succeeded in his object, the Sheikh reappeared with some women who shouldered the beans and carried them over the hill. Not being yet acquainted with the punctuality of these transactions in the Desert, I confess I had strong doubts of ever seeing the bags again; but from what I afterwards observed of the depositary—among other things, the fact that he was completely unarmed—I suspect him to have been a kind of saint.

Half an hour before sunset we started, proceeding still along the valley. The ridge of hills which bounds it on the south is much more lofty than any we had hitherto seen, being probably four or five hundred feet high or more. Its sides are rugged and stony, yet with bushes here and there. An hour brought us to a large expanse of sandhills, white as driven snow, and dotted with copses quite sloping up the valley. In the midst of this we were told is a well of excellent water, called Bîr Gemaima, whilst a gorge in the hills opening immediately above leads to the ruins of the corresponding castle in the interior, which I had an opportunity of visiting on our way back. On the present occasion it was getting dark, and we were in a hurry to proceed.

The white sand had turned aside the path, which now went along the northern slope of the ridge, covered here with comparatively luxuriant vegetation, even in many places with perfect thickets. The ground was torn up in a most extraordinary fashion by the torrents that escape in winter from the numerous rocky gorges that serrate the edge of the range; and our *kafila* found some difficulty in winding along. We had been joined at El-Emrûm by four men, a woman, and one camel; so that we made rather a respectable figure, as to numbers at least. During the night the woman generally rode the camel, which had perhaps been brought for her use, and at length, stalking away ahead, drew her party off; and we separated for a time after a civil "Peace be with you!"

An hour from Gemaima we passed another well, called Et-Terbîyat, from which a man brought us a bucket of the best water we had hitherto tasted. This occurs at the point where the range of hills, turning round to the northward, crosses the



valley, and, running to a considerable distance out into the sea, forms a point, which we saw to the west when we first entered the valley before reaching El-Emrúm. It is not very lofty, but has steep sides and a bluff termination. I see on the maps a projection called Gemaima Point, but not in this place. Norrie lays it down at least thirty miles too much to the east.

A steep rocky ascent brought us on the top of the range, which we here found to form an extensive table-land, the first we had come to. It was flat and covered with loose stones, very uncomfortable for our animals, at least for the donkeys, the spongy foot of the camel being equally well fitted for this kind of travelling as for moving over sand, although I believe naturalists tell us that a special provision has been made for the latter case only. All I can say is, that, from what I have seen and heard, the ground which the "ships of the desert" have usually to traverse is very far from consisting of yielding sand. There are expanses of such a character in Africa, and perhaps in Arabia; but there is at least as much stony desert as sandy. In the present instance the ground was thickly dotted with numerous arenaceous plants, so much of the colour of the camels, that, when these animals went astray, it was difficult even with the aid of the moon to discover them at any distance. Here and there were patches of bushes of various extent and density. Some of them were armed with formidable thorns, which occasioned great inconvenience to us as we forced our way through them. In a considerable thicket of this kind we found a large drove of camels grazing; and fifteen Bedawíns, in their white burnooses, squatting in a circle on the ground, enjoying pipes and gossip. They had come from some place thirteen days to the west, and were going "down to buy corn in Egypt," like the sons of Jacob of old, and were, probably, nearly all of one family. We frequently afterwards met similar kafilas of unladen camels; and their drivers were almost always young men, the Reubens and the Benjamins of our days. In the old times the difference was that they went with asses; now camels alone seem used for this purpose.

The number of these animals that come annually to Alexandria on the same errand must be very great. All the Bedawín tribes on the coast, as far as Derna, send regularly once a-year for grain; and the roads in the neighbourhood of the

Shúnah are often dangerously crowded with large droves of half-wild camels, which go rushing furiously along, astonished at the noise and new objects around, and regularly clear the path. The Bedawín camel is much smaller than that used in Egypt, owing probably to the life of privation it leads. Accustomed to the enormous height and gigantic limbs of the town-pampered beasts, when I first saw the genuine "ships of the desert" I took them for mere colts. It is true that they are of prodigious strength compared with their size.

We had left El-Emrúm at about half-past five in the afternoon, and travelled a little more than five hours at rather a rapid pace. Just before halting for the night we passed the traces of a city called Assambat, which in some respects answers the description of ancient Antiphræ. The enclosed pieces of land to be found on all sides were very probably the vineyards that produced the wretched wine, in great part composed of salt-water, for which the place was celebrated among the wits and comic poets of antiquity.

Half an hour after we started next morning (the 23rd) we came to a large patch of gigantic wild sage, now in seed, and a copse, at the mouth of a narrow gorge which afforded us a sight of the sea. In this gorge is said to be a well called Gosambal. About two hours more over the same table-land, which is three or four hundred feet above the level of the sea, and covered at intervals with hills, brought us to Sheikh Mahmúd, a marâbut, on a small eminence with several tombs around. Beneath it, near the road, is a half artificial, half natural cistern in the rock, with a small square mouth, but widening as it descends. It is said to contain water in the winter season, and I have no doubt dates from ancient days.

In an hour and a half more we approached the edge of the table-land, and halted in sight of the sea. In the neighbourhood was a well called El-Gerâb, at which our donkeys went to drink. The report was that the water was very sweet, which made us regret we did not get a fresh supply. Our *kúrbehs* contained nothing but a filthy infusion, almost impossible to swallow. Necessity, it is true, had been the mother of a desert filter, which was partially successful.

The halt at Bir el-Gerâb will always be considered by our



party as rather a memorable one. It was on this occasion that we shut the door when the steed was stolen. With due consideration for our healths we had provided a certain quantity of brandy, carefully decanted into a number of large tins, which had been rather unceremoniously pitched into a bag by "uncle Yúnus," as the boys with grim civility called him. We here found that the solder could not stand the heat, and had gently given way, allowing about two quarts of the precious liquid to trickle forth and bedew the sands of the Desert. A great deal of activity was accordingly displayed in putting what remained into some bottles which we had emptied of beer, and many excellent resolutions to be moderate were expressed.

A small *kafila* of unloaded camels passed us here on its way to Alexandria to buy corn. Some women that accompanied it seemed disposed to be familiar, and one of them asked for bit-*ters* to put on her nipple to assist in weaning her child. It is another characteristic of the Arabs to beg for everything they see, or that they think you may possess, to take it without thanks, and rarely to offer a return. Not perhaps that they are absolutely ungrateful, but they are absorbed by the pleasure of possessing what they desire, and are generally too poor to make an acknowledgment. We never scarcely met a Bedawín in the Desert—to say nothing of the acquisitiveness of our friend Yúnus—without having a request preferred, sometimes, it is true, in a tone that might have meant command. On one occasion, I remember, we were importuned for powder. There had just been something like an alarm; danger seemed thickening around us, and our supply was by no means large; so we replied that we were wayfarers, and required what we had for our own defence. "If it please God, then," said a grim-looking desperado, "you will die upon the road!"

In spite of our little misfortunes we enjoyed our rest at this place exceedingly. As I have said, the tent was pitched near the edge of the table-land, from which was visible the beautiful blue sea unchequered by a single sail, and a long glittering white point to the westward running out some five or six miles. The air was rather cooler than we had been accustomed to, as there was a slight north breeze, and the thermometer did not rise in the tent above 82°. It is true that the contrast now between

night and day was greater than it was at Abusír, where we never had it lower than  $72^{\circ}$  at sunrise, or than  $79^{\circ}$  at sunset, whilst it only once rose to  $93^{\circ}$  at noon, and was generally between  $85^{\circ}$  and  $88^{\circ}$ . Since that time the temperature of the morning had sunk as low as  $65^{\circ}$  and  $68^{\circ}$ , whilst at mid-day it was sometimes up to  $91^{\circ}$ . I must observe that these figures give little or no idea of the terrific heat to which we were subjected during some of our rides, and in particular places. We seldom exposed the thermometer to the sun, but it once rose at Abusír to  $128^{\circ}$ , and I am persuaded that at various points even along the coast the heat was still greater.

At about half-past four we moved in an oblique direction towards the sea, descended into one of the usual coast valleys near a well called Grawí, and immediately afterwards began crossing a series of small rugged ridges, forming the base of what is called in some charts Praul Point. The sun set as we ascended the loftiest of these: but we obtained a glimpse of Gatta Bay, and the black rock that rises above the water at its eastern extremity. As night deepened, the road became difficult and dangerous; the ascents and descents were steep, and covered with loose stones, whilst the valleys were either of the same character or obstructed by prickly thickets. Nothing was easier than for either man or beast to miss footing; and to miss footing was a sure introduction to bruises and fractures. We were reminded of this by an increased number of the white bones of camels that are scattered here and there over the whole of this great caravan road, if road it can be called. These bones, glittering in the moonlight, if they did not act exactly as a *memento mori*, certainly impressed us with the idea that the camel that carried our water, or the now diminished store of our more potent creature comforts, might possibly come down.

At length we reached in safety what appeared to be a plain or valley divided from the sea by a low line of eminences over which we heard the ceaseless rolling of the waves. Here we encountered a most extensive collection of low thorns and prickly bushes. It was indeed seriously feared that we should come off second best in the combat with this countless host of foes; but some by dismounting, others by very scientific navigation, managed to evade the dangers threatened by the dastardly claws



which were stretched forth in the darkness of the night to wound us. Whilst making our way along, we saw some forms moving ahead, two camels and two men, the latter bobbing down every now and then to look along the ground and ascertain whether we were friends or enemies. This was a Desert dodge which we also had learnt to practise.

A narrow pass, or rather cutting, introduced us to another plain, in which we bivouacked after five hours' ride under the protection of some bushes. When morning broke we found that the remainder of the plain was occupied with the ruins of a great city, above which, at a distance of about five miles, rose a steep range of hills with a level summit—the Lesser Catabathmus of Strabo—glittering in the rays of the morning sun, and seeming vastly more lofty than it really was. The eminences towards the sea, near our bivouac, Forty tells me, were covered with pottery; and as we proceeded, mounds of rubbish, something like those in the neighbourhood of Alexandria, made their appearance. The foundation of massive walls, of round towers, of fortified gates, &c., evinced that this had been a place of no small importance in its time. They continued until we reached the bottom of the bay, opposite a line of breakers with two black rocks at either end, lying, say three miles off the shore, and pretty correctly placed in Norrie's chart.

I rode with Lamport to visit a great cave, of which we could see various entrances in the precipitous face of the ridge ahead, but somewhat to the left of our road. After having got entangled, however, in the rocky ravine that led to it, we found that we should lose the kafila if we persevered; so, abandoning our intention, we climbed up part of the face of the ridge, and descried our camels and the rest of the party at a great distance, turning off towards a steep gorge. It is no difficult matter, however, to overtake camels, and we soon came up with them.

A quarter of an hour more spent in struggling with the difficulties of the ground, stumbling over loose stones, scrambling over rocks—all the while dragging our donkeys after us—whilst the camels now and then stopped, and looked wistfully about, as if in complaint that they should be urged up so steep an ascent, brought us to the crest of the range, from which we looked back over the broad bay sparkling in the morning sun, and smooth as

may be, with the exception of the undying breakers on the out-lying rocks ; and over the ruin-strewn plain or valley we had traversed, bounded by a low ridge of hills to the south, beyond which a succession of other wide valleys, in which the ridge forming Praul Point, a black horizon, gradually subsides, stretched towards the south and south-east. The Catabathmus, which forms with its northern extremity the Ras Kenaïs of the present day, runs inland with a wall-like face as far as the eye can reach.

As I have mentioned, we had made five hours in the course of last night. This morning we had a much more severe ride to perform over a stony table-land, continually ascending, and gradually becoming covered with hills, with here and there a patch of lofty barley-stubble, grown by the Bedawîns for their horses. The sun became exceedingly powerful as the day advanced ; and we more than once proposed to stop and seek the shelter of our little tent. We were hurried on, however, by the promises and encouragements of our guides, who now declared the same well *grayeb* (near), which had been so by their account for three days, and enlarged on the luscious water-melons, better than those of Brulos, which had been flying like phantoms before us for the same space of time. But as noon approached, and Yûnus seemed uncertain of his direction, finding it necessary to ascend a steep hill to survey the ground, we began to doubt in wells and disbelieve in water-melons. We were tired and thirsty, and the donkeys were perfectly knocked up. However, as our exhausted *kûrbehs* contained only about a couple of quarts of filthy liquid, which I dare not call water, we made up our minds to push on, dragging the weary animals by their halters, and at length reached the edge of the ridge, and obtained a view of a great bay. A steep frowning promontory formed its western limit ; at the bottom was a large patch of white sand ; beneath our feet a plain, about a mile broad, stretched to the sea. Descending cautiously the rocky slope, we at length descried on the near side of the white sand the tall pole of a shadoof, which evinced the presence of cultivation, and cheered the close of a sultry stage of more than seven hours by the hopes of some refreshment.

At half-past one we halted near a little Arab cemetery, occupying the summit of a swell that screened us from the observation



of the inhabitants of the little dip or valley called Mudar. Leaving them to unload the camels, we pushed on to the first shadoof, which we found deprived of its rope. It now became evident that we had taken the little encampment by surprise; men and boys were running to and fro in the fields, some driving off donkeys, camels, sheep, and goats; others hastening to snatch their guns, whilst others advanced towards us. No doubt, the sudden appearance of a party of Europeans marching direct into their valley must have given rise to strange surmises in their minds. Perhaps they at first took us to be the forerunners of some detachment of the Pasha's troops; but they soon recovered from their alarm, and discovered both the fewness of our numbers and our unmilitary aspect. The first that came near cried in a gruff voice, "What do you want?" "Water," we replied. "Give us money," was the answer; upon which, seeing the necessity of acting with firmness, we informed them distinctly that we would not *buy water*, but that anything else we wanted we were ready to pay for. By this time we were surrounded by a dozen or so of ruffianly-looking fellows, who, perceiving that we had not come fully armed, talked loudly and insolently, and seemed half disposed to fall upon us and strip us on the spot. They now evidently took us for persons escaped from some vessel that had run ashore: and being, like most of the Arabs on this coast, direct heirs of the Nasamones, that is to say, professional wreckers, looked upon us as lawful prizes. However, one of them at length thought it advisable to ask us whether we came by sea or land, from Alexandria or from any other direction. We told them that we were travelling with camels from Egypt under the guidance of two Bedawins who must be known to them. The names of Yúnus and Saleh produced a good effect, and, when we added that we had a firmân from the Pasha, all idea of hostility seemed to be at an end. We were still looked upon, however, with suspicion, and no attempt at civility was made. We returned to our encamping ground without procuring water, and were compelled to drink the filthy stuff that remained in the skins, and which in hopes of better things we had avoided all the morning. Meanwhile, a great deal of kissing and hand-shaking and parleying went on between these people and our guides; and it was tacitly understood that a halt of some considerable length was to take place.

## CHAPTER V.

Long Halt — Necessity of a new Guide — Our Bedawíns turn Shoemakers and Cobblers — Stuffing Pack-saddles — Testing Water-skins — Details on the Food of the Bedawíns — Character of the Bedawíns — Observations on their Manners — On the Camel — State of Alarm in which I found the Waled Ali — Forays from the West — Commerce in the Desert — Costume and physical Organization of the Bedawíns — Horses — Idleness — Anecdotes — The Settlement of Mudar — View of the Coast from Alexandria to Mudar, its Wells, Productions, &c. — Kassaba — The ancient Parætonium — Expedition of Alexander.

OUR party was by no means unwilling to enjoy a prolonged stay at Mudar; for although at the outset of the journey we had moved leisurely enough, during the last few days we had worked rather hard. Since leaving Sheikh Abd-er-rahman we had been in motion thirty-two hours out of seventy; which, considering that we had all been long subject to the enervating climate of Alexandria, was no small feat. I have already alluded to the state of the thermometer. It was often exceedingly hot, so that one hour in the day was more fatiguing than two or three at night. The ostensible objects of the delay, however, were our poor beasts, which began to find some difference between plying from Pompey's Pillar to Cleopatra's Needle, and trudging along the Libyan Desert with an insufficient supply of bad water.

Having now reached the place where we were finally to leave the sea, and shape our course across the trackless wilderness for the little spot of fertility towards which our desires carried us, that roguish individual Sheikh Yúnus freely confessed that he did not know the road, at least by night, having only traversed it once, twenty-seven years before, with the expedition of Hassan Bey. It was accordingly determined to hire a guide, recommended by Yúnus, named Wahsa, who was also looked upon as of some importance as an additional *gun*. He did not make his appearance at first; so that, had we been inclined to start, we should have been compelled to wait his pleasure.



As I have said, the best possible intelligence was soon established between our guides and the Mudaris, whilst we were let alone, or merely stared at as curiosities. The time was passed in considerable idleness—our labours being confined to one brief stroll, and to urging on the dilatory Bedawíns to make the proper preparations. These gentlemen passed the greater part of the halt in mending their shoes, if the complication of old fragments of leather in which they shuffled along deserves that name. This was an occupation that gave them a good deal of trouble, and during our journey had to be renewed at least once a-day. Whilst we were traversing stony tracks, indeed, the party was generally minus one, who had stayed behind to cobble his *babouks*. It is worth noticing that nearly all the Bedawíns wear these slippers, which, being loose and without heels, may partly account for their dragging and ungainly walk, so different from the free and bounding motions one would be inclined to attribute to the sons of the Desert. They may be thought necessary to protect their feet from the stones; but I suspect they are worn more for ostentation than for use. Our Egyptians almost always went barefooted.

Stuffing packsaddles also gave our people some employment; but they evinced an extraordinary aversion from the most important piece of business, namely, mending and testing the water-skins. In this respect they seemed obstinately resolved to trust to chance—partly from their natural indolence, partly because they knew that the sound skins would carry water sufficient to prevent the human members of the party from absolutely perishing, and partly because old Yúnus was evidently bent on knocking up our poor donkeys. Throughout the whole journey he exhibited a most inveterate dislike to dispense water to these unoffending creatures, and never did so without some explosion of ill-temper and spite. Whether he was annoyed at our having adopted this means of conveyance instead of camels, or whether he thought it beneath his dignity to carry water for asses, does not appear. Certain it is that he was always for reducing these poor beasts, accustomed to the luxury of two drinks a-day, to the short allowance of Desert-donkeys, namely, a bellyful once in forty-eight hours.

I must not forget to record that, as soon as we were settled, an inquiry was made about the famous water-melons, which turned out to be unripe and uneatable. The other productions of the place were "filfil," what we call "pepper-pods," and excellent onions, of which last we procured a quantity at a price a little exceeding the Alexandrian. It has been stated that the Bedawín abhors vegetables; but this is a mistake. He can rarely procure them, but, when he does, relishes them exceedingly. The inhabitant of the Desert is very much in the position of a mariner. His provisions must not be liable to spoil, and must go in a small compass. He is not by any means a carnivorous animal; but lives chiefly, so far as my experience goes, on milk, cheese, bread, and dates. The milk may be either that of the camel, the sheep, or the goat; the cheese is generally soft, white, and very salt, brought from Egypt; the bread seems to be most commonly of wheat, ground into coarse flour by the women with their hand-mills, and is unleavened. Sometimes they condescend to *dhourra*, or maize. Whenever possible they dip their bread in oil, and almost always moisten it with water. The dates are eaten under a variety of forms; occasionally in tarts with a thin, tough underpaste; but chiefly either mashed into a hard mass, with or without the stones, and frequently prepared with butter; or dry, as they are exported to Europe. Rice is sometimes seen in a Bedawín tent; but it requires too much cookery to be a staple article of food. If they have an opportunity, however, awful is the quantity they will demolish! The same observation, indeed, will apply to any food they can get without trouble or expense. As to meat, which they rarely indulge in, they absolutely gorge like boa-constrictors when it does come within their reach. But their flocks and herds are too valuable to be slaughtered, except on especial occasions; and, being an eminently pastoral people, they find little resource in the chase. At Mudar some boys brought quails, which they had snared, to our tent-door for sale; they will pounce upon a field-hen like a cat on a sparrow; and they sometimes entrap gazelles. It is very rare, however, for them to use their guns; powder is too precious an article. On one occasion I broke the wing of a great falcon; an old Bedawín begged him of me, cut his throat with the Muslim



formalities, devoured him, and pronounced him excellent. I never heard of their taking the trouble to fish.

The Bedawin is by no means an uninteresting study; but I do not think he has ever been done complete justice to. Some writers have idealized him; whilst the generality represent him as constantly engaged in depredation, robbery, and murder. For my part, if I am ever invoked to "fly to the Desert," I shall disregard the voice of the charmer, but not precisely for fear of finding too "rude" a tent or of having my throat cut. Some of the finest minds of modern times, dissatisfied with the results of our elaborate civilization, have yearned towards the life of glorious freedom which the pastoral nations are supposed to enjoy; and their fascinating declamation has induced me more than once to cast a longing glance in the direction of the Desert. But it is a curious anomaly to find intellect passionately regretting a life in which all the conditions necessary for its development are wanting. The wild Arab may often be a man of great energy and keenness; but a life of privation invariably narrows the mind. Follow him through the occupations of the day, and you will find him incessantly engaged in trifling and degrading duties. I hold it almost impossible for a man to be perpetually dodging at the flank of a camel, grunting, and whistling, and chanting, and giving vent to all sorts of guttural unmeaning sounds, without lowering himself towards the brute he tends. The horse is a noble animal; it suggests ideas of beauty and may inspire attachment; but to explain any affection for a camel we must resort to the philosophy of the man who kissed his cow. I have accordingly seen no traces of the existence of such a feeling. On the contrary, I think the camel is just attended to sufficiently to supply its absolute wants, and no more. It is systematically starved, to accustom it to further starvation. It is often overloaded, and ill-treated by stripes and otherwise; and during a halt is tied up with anything but regard to its comfort. In fine, the intercourse between the Bedawin and his constant companion is by no means calculated to develop any kindly feelings. We hear talk of the resignation of the camel; but no one can look on its features without thinking that, if it were not physically incapacitated for war, it would soon leave off bearing burdens. When not convulsed with rage, it almost always wears an expres-

sion of pain or anxiety. It is extremely rare that one of these animals allows itself to be either loaded or unloaded without uttering cries of anger. They seem made for moving on perpetually in suffering and toil; indispensable to man on account of their vast strength and powers of endurance; and repelling sympathy by their hideous form.

The Bedawin then finds no redeeming advantage for his mind in his communion with this unhappy creature. It is true that, when fairly mounted on its back in the midst of a broad plain, he goes on, on, as steadily as a ship with a fair wind—he may seem to have leisure for meditation; but approach him, and you will find that he is humming, “for want of thought,” some unharmful air, or watching the horizon, either in hope of discovering a landmark, or in fear of desecrating a fellow-creature.

This allusion to the distrust felt by the inhabitants of the Desert, one of another, reminds me to defend the Arab against the charge of living upon plunder so freely preferred against him. I wish his accusers would remember their political economy. They would soon be led to confess that, for a nation occupying a vast extent of unproductive country, robbery must be an abnormal condition. If they depend in the slightest degree upon the earth for support, they must cling to it, watch it, study it, court its favour. A new pasturage or a new well-spring—not a new quarry to fly at—must be the object of their search. Herds and flocks, besides, are not convenient companions on a predatory excursion; and if left behind, would, in the state of society these writers suppose, be infallibly pounced upon. The fact is, that the Bedawins are divided into large tribes, which again are subdivided into small clans, if I may so call them. The latter vary in size with the copiousness of the wells they frequent, and are connected by ties of blood as well as the irrevocable bond of bread and salt. The former are almost equivalent to nations, as, for example, the Waled Ali and the Harâbi. They are often at war, and of course look to booty as well as fighting: but if any outrage be committed by one member of a tribe upon another, or by one clan against another—as must sometimes be the case—it is looked upon as much in the light of a crime as a breach of the criminal laws of a civilized country. It may be that there is no means of redress but by force. If Abimelech's servants take away



Abraham's well,\* appeal must be made to the spear if remonstrance fail; and then a feud ensues, which is naturally the source of much disturbance, but which remains an exceptional case.

As to the state of alarm in which the Waled Ali were found by us, it arose not from the habitual disorganization of their own society, but from their being at that time subject to hostile inroads from a fiercer and more independent tribe on the west. Some Chedorlaomer was making his foray. The frequency of these national quarrels, and the knowledge also that want or caprice may drive any men who have arms in their hands to acts of violence, naturally create a little uneasiness if a large body appears in the distance; but we almost always found that our safety was not left to the accident of superior force, but that Nature, as was to be expected, had provided for the permanent existence of this pastoral people, by knitting them together, somewhat loosely it is true, in the bonds of fellowship. It will be understood, however, that any sympathy that may have been felt was excited by our guides. By the majority we Kafirs should have been looked upon as lawful prize.

I have now only to allude to an idea that seems entertained by some that the fertile countries of the East are regularly made a spoil of by the children of the Desert. They have sometimes, it is true, ravaged districts of Egypt, for example. Most of the villages were formerly roughly fortified, and even the inhabitants of the towns relied more on their walls and gates than on their numbers. To this day the Bedawins excite a traditional fear; and it is believed that, whenever the country may happen to be politically unsettled, they will take advantage of the circumstance, and "come down like the wolf on the fold." But, in such an exceptional event, they would be only obeying the impulse deeply implanted in all barbarians, to take advantage of the dissensions of civilized nations, and exchange their life of misery and privation for one of pleasure and plenty. This is the way in which the affairs of the world have been from time immemorial managed: but that the conquerors or marauders who have at long intervals issued from the forest, the steppe, or the desert, to

\* "I have digged this well" (Genesis xxi. 30) is the first recorded enunciation of the true theory of property.

scourge or to renew the vitality of the world, were wont to gain any regular subsistence in that way is an evident absurdity.

It may be said that the Bedawíns rob the caravans; but whoever knows the timidity of commerce will argue, from the fact of its being constantly carried on in the Desert, that it enjoys an average security. It is true the merchants generally move in considerable numbers, and have often an escort; but the largest caravan could be easily crushed if the Arabs were such keen freebooters as they are represented. In reality, travellers of every description, though not exempt from casualties, are in ordinary times tolerably safe in the Desert. They are naturally expected to put themselves under the protection of the tribes through whose territory they pass, and to pay a small sum, which in effect is only equivalent to our transit-dues. Many of the quarrels that take place originate in some dishonest refusal on the part of a caravan to satisfy the demands made on them.

One word on the appearance and character of the Bedawín. He wears generally a coarse shirt confined by a belt, with a pair of drawers underneath; but his most important article of clothing is the huge blanket, either white or striped with brown and black, which he disposes in a variety of picturesque folds round his body; sometimes allowing it to fall to his heels like a Roman toga, at others tucking it up above his knees; sometimes covering his head as with a hood, at others throwing it back. By night, when in repose, it serves for a bed and covering; by day, for a tent. Sometimes, but chiefly in the West, the burnoose is worn in addition, or instead. I never saw a Bedawín with a regular turban; but now and then he dons the variegated Hejazi shawl. More commonly they content themselves with the tarboosh, and more commonly still with the white skull-cap. Nearly all of them wear, either attached to their head-dress or hanging round their necks, some kind of amulet sewed in a piece of leather. Of course whoever can afford it carries a gun with a long barrel, now generally of European manufacture, fastened to an Arab stock, often by means of complicated twists of wire. A fixed bayonet is not at all unusual; whilst the spear appears to be nearly abandoned, at least in the Libyan Desert. Large ornamental pistols, of doubtful efficiency, with leathern pouches for



shot and powder, and a murderous-looking dirk, give a finishing touch to the costume.

The Bedawíns with whom I have come in contact are not much of an equestrian people. They are too poor to keep many horses, which with them are mere luxuries, but seem very proud if they do possess any. Once or twice we met a couple pacing gravely over the Desert, evidently thinking a great deal of their own importance. Camels are a much more common mode of conveyance; but the established system is to walk. Riding at all is a mark of distinction. Yúnus might often be seen sawing away at the top of the water-skins or the bean-bags; but Saleh was rarely allowed by his great cousin thus to play the aristocrat.

The Arabs of the Desert are generally a well-made race, with complexions of various degrees of darkness. One tribe on the Libyan coast are exceedingly fair, quite different from their neighbours. I have been told that they attribute to themselves a Teutonic origin, and once actually claimed Austrian protection on the ground of their being the descendants of the crew of a German vessel wrecked on the coast, in confirmation of which they produced a piece of an old manifest, carefully treasured up. In general the Bedawíns have long faces, with rather prominent cheek-bones, small keen eyes, high noses, and pointed chins, with little beard. Their countenances are often expressive of good-humour, dashed with a clownish cunning. The elders and chiefs of the tribes affect a haughty bearing, liable to degenerate into arrogance; and the whole race, more or less, is beset with the sin of pride, which seems the fast companion of indolent poverty: for the Bedawín, though certainly poor, and constrained to occupy himself, is not, properly speaking, industrious; he avoids as much as possible to labour with his hands, especially in any menial capacity; and our great Sheikh used absolutely sometimes to snort with indignation when any extra piece of work fell to his lot. This feeling is not usually accompanied with what we call independence, and often allies itself with meanness. Both Yúnus and Saleh used to come creeping in the darkness of the night to pilfer any little things they wanted, not only from us, but from our poor donkey-boys.

Before finishing this miscellaneous talk about the Bedawíns I must mention the contrast that exists between their manner in

the Desert and in great cities. When they enter Alexandria they are like Yorkshiremen in London, frightened and cowed; just like a dog, say the Iskenderanehs, who has got into a strange quarter among strange dogs. Every cock can crow on his own dunghill; and the timid Egyptian finds it is now his turn to bully. Our boys, who were in a state of tremor during the whole journey, no sooner got within the gates than they gratuitously insulted the first of the hated race they met.

Two wags on opposite sides of a bazar will rub their palms together as if twining silk-yarn, crying out every now and then, "Shid, shid!" (pull, pull). The Bedawin approaches with his gun on shoulder: all the people exclaim "Wati, wati!" (stoop, stoop); he does so, looking up for the imaginary thread, and creeping along; "Lower, lower!"—he almost crawls along the earth, until the laughter of the Alexandrian wits reveals the truth, and, muttering "You are making sport of me, are you?" he slinks away. When they venture into a shop they are always quizzed and imposed upon.

Let us now say a few words about Mudar itself. Formerly it was a place of much greater importance than it now is. Up to 1819 it formed the headquarters of the Waled Ali, whose chiefs were in that year compelled to remove to the Baharah, in order to be more within reach of the authority of the Pasha. We saw about twelve tents and as many shadoofs, with some small houses of rough stones. In addition to the productions I have already mentioned, dhourra is grown by the Mudaris as well as barley. The chief riches of the inhabitants, however, consist in camels, asses, sheep, goats, and a few oxen. The importance of the place is in part derived from its being used as a resting-place for caravans on their way from Siwah. This was the paradise of old Saleh, who would willingly have terminated his journey here, and began again to croak fearfully, in which employment he was assisted by all the dismal spirits in Mudar—the great majority. According to them we were going to enter on a desert infested with robbers, in which our throats were sure to be cut—a consummation which many, by their gibing looks, seemed to consider very desirable. Derwish and Saad were of a different opinion, and anxiously watched the effect produced upon us by these terrific stories, seeming much surprised that we



did not at once resolve to retrace our steps. As if further to increase their terror, our guides advised us to load our guns with ball that evening, even the encampment at Mudar itself having no good reputation. We performed the operation in public, though somewhat doubtful of its necessity.

A brief review of the country we have hitherto traversed will not be here out of place. In the scanty accounts which have fallen under my notice it is briefly dismissed as a level plain; writers generally seem to intimate that it is an expanse of sand; and our enterprising countryman Browne, who in this case must have written from memory, says expressly that "the coast is plain," and that, except in the neighbourhood of Alexandria, "the soil is generally smooth and sandy." What an erroneous impression these words are calculated to produce may be learned from the foregoing pages. The truth is, nearly the whole country is covered with rocky hills, gradually increasing in elevation, until those we crossed before arriving at Mudar reached the height, I believe, of a thousand feet. Smooth plains do certainly intervene, and many flat valleys, but these are not by any means denuded of vegetation. They are sometimes stony, but are generally covered with a sandy soil, and there is no place destitute of some traces of verdure. I made no list of the vegetable productions of these regions, but know that the commonest species are salt-worts, samphires, &c. At some points the ice-plant is to be seen, and what appeared to me a kind of wormwood, with sea-lavender, and fifty other different plants of the same class. Here and there was a little brown grass, which after the winter rains, no doubt, becomes green and covers the ground. Between Abusir and the salt-lakes we saw some Spanish broom, and in many places met with luxuriant thickets of lively green bushes. They have often good stout branches, sufficiently large to serve for the pegs with which the Bedawins fasten burdens on their camels; they denote a comparatively fertile soil, and appear to be cleared away sometimes to make room for a crop of barley. Thorns and prickly shrubs are plentiful at many points. Extensive patches of wild sage, about four or five times as large as that in our kitchen-gardens, occur here and there.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature on this coast is the line of low white hills that stretches along the whole distance, except

where it is broken through by the spurs of the inland ridges that usually run parallel with it, forming a long narrow valley. In some places it is dotted with bushes, but at others is perfectly barren. At a distance the appearance is as of mere heaps of sand, but a closer inspection shows that this only covers the surface or fills the hollows of white rocks, in which almost all the wells we met with are cut—as at Abusír, Neffé, Munchúrah, Shemaiméh, Shégick, Tanúm, El-Emrúm, Gemaima, El-Ge-râb, and Grawí. In two cases the sand had blown in and choked the wells, whilst, with one exception, all the watering-places we saw, either in going or returning, that were excavated in a different kind of rock, were properly cisterns, dry in summer, and filled only by the rains of winter. Of this character were Sheikh Mahmúd, El-Amín, and the ancient reservoirs near the ruined fortress of Gemaima, some miles south of the perennial spring; and also by the accounts of our guides Bid Gurruj and Ejmína. The exception was the well of Ghúkah, which is sunk very deep in the plain on the eastern side of the Catabathmus, about eight miles inland. Probably the white stone of which the coast barrier is composed is porous and allows the water of the sea to filter through, or rather sucks it up; but it is a curious circumstance that even far inland we found a piece of this same kind of rock accompanying the few wells we met with or passed near,—Shenéneh, Selém, Haldeh. At Gemaima the well was in the midst of a patch of white sand, ribbed with rock, and occupying the centre of the valley; and at Mudar, where were at least a dozen wells, one of which contained very sweet water, the shadoofs and the meadows and fields depending on them were all situated in a piece of sunken ground on the east side of a very large extent of the same formation.

We did not meet any encampment between Abusír and Mudar; but I have no doubt that a few were concealed in the recesses of the hills; and at El-Emrúm our people knew where to find the shepherd to whom we intrusted our beans. It is customary in barbarous countries to keep as much off a high road as possible. Several kafilas passed us, both in coming and going, on their way to or from Alexandria; and once or twice we had the company of a few travellers whose destination we did not know. I have mentioned a small party that joined us with a camel the



evening we left El-Emrúm. We parted from them on the road; but when we halted for the night, possibly not liking the neighbourhood of the Mogrebbyns, or Western Arabs, who were encamped at Assambat, they came and requested permission to sleep near us.

Not a single four-footed animal except a gazelle and a hare was seen by us, either in going or returning, unless we count one or two small rats, a tortoise, a chameleon, and legions of lizards. Birds were in plenty—crows, quails, red-legged partridges, field-hens, water-wagtails, hoopoes, larks, sparrows, and wrens, besides some of which we did not know the names. Numerous pigeons appeared among these varied feathered citizens of the air in the valley that stretches from the salt lakes to Abusír; where they were chased by keen little hawks and great soaring falcons and kites. White gulls now and then scudded the surface of the waves; and on our way back we saw numerous flocks of geese flying in their quaint array far up in the air, and screaming at the approach of a shower, or settling on the plain, where sportsman's gun, I imagine, seldom disturbs them. A few brown butterflies, immense numbers of grey lady-birds, some splendid death's-head moths, either attracted notice by their associations or their beauty; whilst horse-flies, mosquitoes, common flies, and—must I mention them?—tykes, shaken off by the camels, frequently tormented us.

I now regret that circumstances did not permit me to trace this coast a little farther, and visit the ruins which occur at Kassaba, and at the place which geographers call Bareton, of which latter we heard nothing at Mudar. At Kassaba we were told there are ruins: and I think there are two Kassabas, one near the sea and one inland; for when at Selém, thirty miles on our way from the coast, on my mentioning the name, one of our guides pointed N.W., and asked if we wished to see the place, as if it was near at hand.

Bareton is supposed to be identical in position with the ancient Parætonium, where Alexander, after his interview with the ambassadors from Cyrene, turned off in the direction of the oâsis, leaving behind, I imagine, the three hundred splendid chariots he had received as presents. All ancient authors concur in representing him to have immediately entered on an expanse of *moving*

*sand*, without hill, tree, or permanent tumulus as a road-mark. The character of our route was very different; but when at the well of Selém, above mentioned, we did see in the distance to the west a vast plain, over which columns or perpendicular clouds of sand were moving, driven by the wind. It is possible, therefore, that at the outset Alexander's guides took him through a desert like that described by ancient authors, and that they may have lost their direction, and when they reached the hilly country have entered the wrong pass, and wandered about in the extraordinary labyrinth that we found, until the providential interposition of two crows delivered them from their disagreeable dilemma.\*

Parætonium is famous on another account. When Antony, after the defeat of Actium, fled with Cleopatra to Libya, he landed at this port; from whence he sent his "lass unparalleled" to Egypt, whilst he retired to a melancholy desert with only two followers.

\* The critical Arrian weighs and rejects the testimony of Ptolemy, the son of Lagus, who attributes the salvation of Alexander to two "hissing serpents;" and adheres to the more rational account of Aristobulus, who patronizes the two "black crows."

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## CHAPTER VI.

We leave the Coast, and strike into the Heart of the Libyan Desert — Bedawín mode of saying Prayers on a Journey — Ascent of a tremendous Mountain at Night — Reach a lofty Table-land — Morning — Mirage Illusions — Troops of Gazelles — The glittering Koom of Sheneneh — The Well of Selém — Vast ancient Cistern — Visited by Bedawín Damsels — A tame Gazelle — Continue our Journey — Pursued by a Party of Robbers — Dangers of a hostile Collision — They are induced to abstain from an Attack, finding us prepared — They follow us — We march the greater part of the Night, and succeed in throwing them off our Track — Cross the Empty Valley and the Wady Ed-Delma — Reach the Well of Haldeh — Discover the Ruins of a Fortress — The Sheikh of the Well — Reports of the Manser, or Band of Fifty mounted Robbers.

WE stayed about twenty-eight hours at Mudar, and, having thus refreshed ourselves, started at five o'clock on the afternoon of the 25th of September; and issuing from the narrow slip of plain land between the hills we had descended the day before and the beach, entered a broad valley, formed by a backward sweep of the high ground, which to the east and west advances far into the sea, forming two bluff promontories, and enclosing what I believe in the charts is called Port Mahada. The great patch of white sand, from which the water of the Mudar wells seems to distil, stretches a great deal to the west, occupying indeed the whole bottom of the port or bay. The part of the range of hills which we were leaving behind us was far less steep than that to our left, and directly in front, which indeed appeared at a little distance to be perfectly unbroken and precipitous. The line of its summit was level like a wall; and we began to puzzle ourselves with conjectures how we were ever to get to the top. Our impatience was not soon gratified; for we were compelled to zigzag slowly across the valley, which was cut up by a most extraordinary network of ravines and watercourses, now approaching the sea, now receding, then again facing towards it, then wheeling about, but preserving a general W.S.W. direction.

All this time our Bedawíns and the new guide—as entering on



a journey of more than ordinary difficulty and danger—were occupied in saying their prayers piecemeal with unusual assiduity. There is something curious in the mode of praying adopted by these people whilst travelling in deserts where time is of consequence. Instead of stopping the *kafila*, and spreading the carpet, and sticking the spear in the sand, and fettering the camel—instead of forming a picture for Horace Vernet to paint—our uncouth companions went about the affair in a much more business-like way. Walking a little forward, they knelt down and complied with the form of mock ablution with sand—laying their hands flat on the ground, passing them along their arms, over their face, round their necks in a fixed order, and then going through a few evolutions. By this time the camels were moving ahead, or were straying or loitering, and required direction or encouragement. So the conclusion of the ceremony was adjourned, and the necessary duties were attended to. Then the prostrations and kneelings were resumed at a more advanced spot; and so on, three or four times, until their consciences were satisfied and the sun went down.

The interval was brief between the coming on of darkness and the rising of the moon, which had just passed her full, and, shining through a wonderfully clear atmosphere, enabled us to avoid, whilst she magnified to appearance, the dangers of our road. Two hours of toil brought us at length to the foot of the range of hills at a point at which they were to all appearance inaccessible. Here we again turned towards the sea, and, having passed the mouth of a gloomy gorge, began to climb a rugged incline, covered at first with huge loose stones that gave way beneath our feet nearly at every step. As we proceeded the ascent became steeper and steeper, and our progress more and more slow. Stoppages were frequent. The camels, heavily laden, seemed unwilling to move; and paused every now and then to turn their long necks and look wistfully around, as if seeking a better path. But better path there was none. On either side, as now appeared, a deep and rugged ravine descended, sometimes in rapid slopes, sometimes in sheer precipices; and it was up a kind of spur thrown out between these that we were to escalate this frightful mountain. For some time our progress, though slow, was sure. The camels, encouraged by the



shouting, and coaxing, and whistling of old Saleh, gradually worked their way up until they came to a kind of slippery staircase of rock that led to the very brow of the range. Up this they at first refused to go, moaning and complaining at the hard task set them, and turning a deaf ear to entreaties and stubborn flanks to the stick. So, without any further experience, we had ample reason to deny that

“ *Mute*

The camel labours with the heaviest load.”

Meanwhile we sat down to rest from our wearisome walk, and to contemplate the dark valley beneath, surrounded by a semi-circle of frowning hills and the opaque expanse of the sea. A few points only, touched by the moonlight, relieved the sombre monotony of the scene. All around was dark, rugged, and inhospitable. No light or other sign of human habitations cheered us. The little settlement of Mudar, nestling in its own snug hollow, alone intervened between us and Abusir, whilst above our heads were the confines of a vast plain that stretched we knew not how far, for aught we knew a hundred and fifty miles without water or fixed inhabitants. Something we had heard, it is true, of a spring that had of late years bubbled up in the midst of the waste, and it was on this new-born well, that might have been stifled by the sands in its infancy, that we depended for crossing the Desert without suffering the horrors of thirst. The supply we carried with us was scarcely sufficient for three days' economical consumption, and we had to look forward to five days' travel at least before reaching that little van-guard of the oâsis called Garah. But this slight uncertainty, this dash of peril, rather heightened the pleasure with which we entered on the journey; and, instead of wishing to linger in sight of the sea, we were anxious to leave it far behind, and be once for all in the midst of the Libyan Desert.

The physical obstacles, therefore, that we encountered at the outset were rather trying to our impatient tempers, and we gladly hailed the moment when we saw the tall ungainly form of the first camel, swinging its huge burden to and fro in its exertions, begin the slippery ascent. One after another, the steady brutes, not however without complaint, ventured on the dangerous ground, which had evidently been of late fatal to some of their pre-

decessors, for several white skeletons gleamed in the moonlight on either hand. Had the leader fallen, all would inevitably have been rolled down the side of the hill, to the imminent danger of our little band, some of whom the struggling creatures would most probably have overwhelmed. Fortunately, however, the ascent was accomplished without accident, and our little *kafila*, after winding along the edge of a steep precipice that descended into the ravine on our right, entered at length on a flat stony plain. The guide now turned our head, if I may so express myself, to the W.S.W., and, directing his course by the stars, began to steer across this trackless expanse for the promised well. On accordingly we went for several hours, stumbling and staggering, afraid to mount, lest our beasts should miss their footing and fall, and yet scarcely able to pick our way amidst the loose and pointed fragments of rock that encumbered the ground. Both shoes and feet suffered severely that night; and though a clearer space occasionally intervened, we were glad to stop a little before midnight and bivouac. A sound sleep, in spite of the cold and damp, prepared us for next morning's work, which we began surrounded by the illusions of mirage, that is to say, by imaginary lakes and islands breaking the otherwise level horizon, which only by degrees revealed itself in all its naked monotony as the sun rose higher in the heavens.

I had often heard and read descriptions of the Desert as a "sea of sand," but we now found ourselves in what might almost be called a "sea of stones," with, it is true, here and there at wide intervals a patch of bushes, and the contorted form of the ligneous plant called *shía* dotting the ground. This plant exhales a strong odour something resembling rue, and is cultivated in pots at Alexandria on that account. In the Desert its more tender extremities serve as food for the gazelles, small troops of which were now and then seen browsing out of gun-shot. As we approached, they raised their heads and appeared to listen and watch, but the result of their examination was never, it seemed, encouraging, for off they invariably went, cocking up their tails, at first gently trotting, but by degrees lengthening their steps, then bounding, scudding, flashing along, as it were, over the vast level, now huddling together, now spreading into a long irregular line, seeming at times to outstrip the sight, but coming again in view,



flitting away swiftly like uncertain shadows, until at length they faded into nothing; as a prolonged echo, after quivering through the air, subsides into a faint murmur, and dies away in the distance. On one occasion a mother and its fawn lingered to nibble a green shrub, and our Bedawins began to manœuvre to get a supply of fresh meat, one crouching down, and another advancing obliquely; but the cautious creature took the alarm and made away with her young charge in double quick time. I may here remark that the agreeable musk-like smell of the excrements of these animals is doubtless derived from the aromatic plants on which they feed.

As day advanced our attention was attracted to a brilliant speck on the horizon, glittering like the summit of a snow-clad mountain, or a peak of silver. It turned out to be a *koom*, or hillock of white sand, with a well in the neighbourhood, called Shenéneh. We left it some distance to our right, and made direct for another white spot, said to mark another well, and visible at a distance of two hours, half way up a well-defined slope in the Desert immediately ahead. This was the first variation in level that had occurred since we ascended the table-land, and was therefore gladly hailed as promising a somewhat less monotonous road.

It was near midday before we reached what had appeared a mere milky spot, which turned out to be a cluster of mounds of white stone and sand. We saw a human form from a distance on the top of one of these, but when we approached it had disappeared, and no trace of it or the well at first presented themselves. A sound from beneath the earth, however, directing us, we discovered a little channel cut in the flat surface of the rock, and at the bottom a hole large enough to allow passage for a man of ordinary size. It was evidently made for the use of the inhabitants of the Desert, and not destined to admit the respectable rotundity of civilisation. Some of our party, therefore, declined to explore, and trusted to the report of the more active.

We descended, guided by the voices below, into a dark passage which led to a spacious subterranean chamber cut out of the solid rock, and about thirty yards square. The roof was pretty even, and the walls were perfectly smooth, and covered with those rough marks and figures which, when first noticed by tra-

vellers on all the rocks and monuments of this part of the world, were thought to be the alphabet of an unknown language. They are now, I am told, known to be the distinctive marks of the various tribes of Arabs who may have sojourned a while in these regions. The floor of this chamber was covered with mounds of clayey soil, evidently allowed to gather by neglect, so as nearly to choke up the springs. Of these there were two, at the bottom of deep holes: one in a dark corner, the other in the centre, exactly underneath a square aperture in the rock made for the double purpose of admitting light, and of letting down buckets when the rains of winter have filled the whole cistern. Two boys, who seemed to be there watching for the water as it oozed up, gave us to drink from their skin bucket. The taste was muddy, but it was cool as if it had been iced. The cave itself, though at first agreeable after the burning atmosphere above, we soon found to be too chilly to stay in. It is almost unnecessary to add that this place must date at least as far back as the time of the Romans, and was probably one of the stations as now on the caravan-road to the oâsis. If properly cleared out it might yield a large supply of good water, whereas when we passed there was barely sufficient for four of our donkeys. The others made a hole in what we had brought from Mudar, whilst the camels, of course, abstained.

On ascending from this cave we found that the party had been joined by a number of Bedawîn women and children, from a neighbouring encampment. No men, however, made their appearance, which fact afterwards received a probable explanation. One damsel was rather pretty, and very obliging. Seeing that there was some difficulty in setting up our tent in the hard ground, which seemed an agglomeration of particles of stone, she seized the mallet, and, with great dexterity, soon got through the work, and drove the pegs at which our two Arabs had boggled, and then went her way without waiting for *backsheesh*. The act was one of simple kindness, *sans arrière pensée*, unless we choose to suppose that the wench took a pride in showing her superiority in the arts of desert life. It appeared that this party had come for the purpose of assuaging their thirst, but, above all, of enjoying the coolness of the cave or cistern; for they all descended amidst great shouting and laughter, and stayed some time below.



When they came up, we were making our meal; and, whilst looking with contempt on most of our good things, they cast covetous eyes on the precious biscuit, fragments of which that fell to the ground were snatched up and eagerly devoured. Our gallantry might have induced us to make them a present of some, but stern reason forbade.

The Arethusa of the well of Selém—she, namely, that drove the pegs—had a tame gazelle, which, though professing to be very fond of, she asked us to buy. We declined doing so, alleging our inability to carry it; but she said it would follow us like a dog, and be not so easily tired. Probably she expected it would soon return to her side. At a subsequent period we met the same gazelle and its owner in another part of the Desert, near the sea, and inquired its price. We were told ninety piasters, nearly a pound sterling. These animals, indeed, are difficult to be procured, and sell for a large sum in Alexandria, whither this one was bound. I noticed that its mistress, when tired, mounted a camel, and carried it in her lap. Perhaps it will not be out of place here to mention that a very young gazelle, that unfortunately had its leg broken, was once given to me by Lamport, and that I have succeeded in rearing it in my courtyard in Alexandria. The Bedawíns who took it bandaged the injured limb so well that, though for a long time lamed, it scarcely now retains even a mark to reveal the accident it encountered.

The well of Selém, which supplies water to a tribe of seventeen guns, is distant twelve hours' journey, or about thirty miles, from Mudar, as nearly as we could make out, in a W.S.W. direction by compass. There is at first neither track nor bold landmark on this vast expanse; but by night our guide shaped his course by the stars, whilst in the morning he had the assistance of the glittering Koom of Shenéneh. The country, when once we reached the table-land, had no remarkable feature, except its extreme flatness, and the circumstance that it is strewn over, and in many places encumbered, with loose pieces of sandstone resting on a clayey soil mixed with sand. The vegetation is similar in character to that on the coast, except that it is more scanty and stunted, and that the *shía* is in greater abundance.

We were in the saddle again at half-past three; and, rising over the ridge, got into a country covered with low hills.

Whilst quietly jogging along over them, we suddenly became aware that something out of the way was the matter by the shouts and gestures of our Bedawins. Looking in the direction they indicated, we saw a party of eight men, seven of whom were armed with guns, advancing at a short run over the hills to our left, and a little in our rear, from the direction, in fact, of the encampment to which the women and children I have mentioned belonged. They were instantly pronounced to be robbers; and their mode of approach was certainly most suspicious. The very fact of their lying close whilst we were so many hours in their neighbourhood without paying a visit, and then suddenly showing themselves in this manner, was judged, apparently with reason, to be a sufficient proof of their evil intentions. At any rate, especially when we saw them getting their weapons ready, there was ample justification for the word which immediately passed round to load with ball; after which the camels, which had been slightly scattered at the first alarm, were again collected and put in motion, whilst we followed, prepared to face about before the pursuers overtook us, and summon them to halt and reveal their intentions. These preparations did not escape their notice, and they visibly slackened their pace, so that it was some time before they came sufficiently near to answer the hail of old Yúnus, who had been meanwhile making great show of his weapons, fresh priming and examining the lock of his gun, and seeing that his pistols were in fighting order. Saleh also pulled his meagre beard with considerable energy, begged a pinch of Frank powder for his single but large pistol, and loosened his poniard in its sheath. As for Wahsa, our new guide, who had a camel at stake, he also made warlike demonstrations; whilst our poor Arabs looked very peaceable and woeful. They evidently expected to have their throats cut in a few minutes, and wore visages corresponding.

Matters, however, were not quite so bad as all that. Whether we showed too good a countenance, or whether our Bedawins had libelled those "who drank at the well of Selém," I cannot determine. Certain it is that the so-called hostile party halted at speaking distance; a parley ensued, and, after some time, we were favoured with the information that this armed detachment had come out to offer for sale a single *ihram* or



blanket, price seventeen piasters. We were glad to accept this pacific interpretation of their movements, and Yúnus made the purchase. A capital bargain it was too. The piece had evidently been woven in the tents, of Desert wool, and was striped tastefully with black. We should have been very glad to procure a similar one all round to protect us against the cold of the night.

This little adventure being over, we pursued our journey, not however without many broad hints of approaching assassination from our still frightened Arab lads, who inferred, from the ambiguous direction taken by the Selémities at parting, that, finding us at present well prepared, it was their intention to fall upon us at night. Their idea under the circumstances did not appear unreasonable, as we saw these doubtful characters at intervals until nightfall keeping nearly in a line with us, though at a gradually increasing distance.

At a quarter past four we descended from the ridge of hills we had been crossing in a S.W. direction from Selém, into a remarkably flat valley that lay athwart our road, forming a trench, as it were, called Wady Fâragh, or the Empty Valley. Its sides resemble the steep banks of a river, with a level line of summit, and here and there in its centre rise hills with precipitous sides, exactly the same height as the surrounding land, and looking like islands left dry by the receding waters. This valley evidently extends a great distance S.E. and N.W. We crossed it again on our return more to the east; and on neither occasion could we detect any change in its character.

We had now entered upon a tract of country somewhat different from that which we had hitherto traversed—a series, namely, of small, level, stony plains, ending, as in the Wady Fâragh, in steep descents, and divided by smooth valleys interspersed with isolated hills, or islands as I have called them. By moonlight especially, these hills, with their scarped sides and regular forms, reminded one strongly of a vast system of fortifications, like those of Alexandria; and even by day there seemed no comparison so apt for many of the crumbling eminences amidst which we passed as bastions and earthworks. Some of the sharpness of their forms, however, was taken off by the detritus accumulated at their base, which suggested the idea that the soil of the valley was entirely formed of contri-

butions washed down by the rains. Much of the substance of the hills seemed to consist of hardened mud, and it is to be supposed that large masses of this have yielded to the influence of time, and been gradually spread over the valleys, raising their level and leaving the more solid sandstone in its present extraordinarily denuded state. The soil thus formed has, in many instances, been turned to account by the Bedawíns. Some time after sunset we halted to wait for the moon in a valley called Wady Ed-Delma, amidst the stubble of a field that had been sown with barley the previous winter; and both camels and donkeys found some occupation for their teeth.

It will be difficult to convey an idea of the pleasure with which I look back to these little halts, affording as they did a most welcome interruption to the monotony of a ride of several hours at *kafila* pace. On this occasion we found ourselves, though beneath a brilliant canopy of stars, in almost total darkness, at the bottom of a shallow basin, of which we could scarcely distinguish the dim outline; and, sitting down here and there upon the ground, proceeded to enjoy the luxury of a pipe, whilst anxiously watching the eastern quarter of the heavens for the coming luminary that was to light our path through the labyrinth of hills and passes in which we were engaged. Perhaps the slight sentiment of the probable neighbourhood of danger, in the shape of prowling Bedawíns, contributed to heighten the enjoyment of our halt, which was not, however, of long duration, for, soon after the moon had risen, and enabled us dimly to distinguish objects near at hand, we were again in motion, journeying nearly in a south direction up a valley flanked as usual by apparent fortifications, which led to another stony table-land. We were now near the proposed place of stoppage, and, having made a sharp descent, came upon a flock of sheep and goats. After a few words with the shepherds, we proceeded about a quarter of a mile in search of the well of Haldeh. We only found, however, the traps of some Bedawíns, covered with a blanket, and abandoned to the honesty of passers-by. Here we spread our mat, and lay down to sleep, with our fire-arms, as in duty bound, within reach in case of a surprise.

Early dawn found us in a broad shallow valley, with openings on several sides. A few tents appeared to our right, and directly



in front the customary white patch that announced the presence of a well. On reaching this we were surprised to find the place strewn with ruins, evidently belonging to some structure, once of importance. The only European traveller who had preceded us on this road, our countryman Browne, says nothing about them, and must have passed them at night. In his time, probably, the spring that now bubbles up and supplies the great cistern did not exist. Indeed we learned from the Bedawíns that Haldeh had only recently become a fixed station, as formerly it depended on the rains of winter; whereas now one of the thin veins of water that trickle beneath the surface even of the Desert had broken into it. Very likely the feeble current had only been checked for a time by an overwhelming weight of sand, and, accidentally bursting forth, had been assisted by the removal of the obstruction, and coaxed into regularly supplying a few dozen *kúrbehs* a-day, even in summer. Three hundred people, with their flocks, are said regularly to drink from this well, not to speak of the kafilas that may resort thither on their way to or from the coast.

The ruins were manifestly those of a fort built in ancient times to protect the waters, and to a certain extent command the road to the oäsis. I did not examine the cistern, as there is no regular descent, as at Selém; but it is evidently very spacious. Over the mouth, which is cut in the rock, there was formerly a great round tower, built of massive stones, and standing at the north-west angle of a considerable solidly constructed square building, from the corners and sides of which there radiated to some distance irregular walls, thrown out evidently for the purpose of preventing an enemy from bringing too great a front to bear upon the garrison. There were no traces of a moat: the precautions taken being sufficient against the Desert tribes, to overawe whom the fortress was intended. The whole structure is overthrown almost to the ground; many of the fine large squared stones are honeycombed by the atmosphere, and others have been used to form the Bedawín tombs which crown one of the two white mounds that rise near the well.

I believe that there existed in ancient times, both Greek and Roman, a regular series of strong places, extending from the confines of Egypt to the oäsis, and possibly beyond, wherever

water could be procured, in order to protect and assist the caravans. At what period they were erected I know not. Those along the coast may seem to have been superfluous whilst the country was an inhabited province filled with towns; but it was probable that there was always some danger from the wandering tribes that hung upon the flanks of the narrow strip of cultivated land: at any rate, that there was a line of wells protected by forts appears indubitable. Our guides had a sort of theory that every permanent station on the coast had a corresponding castle with a cistern some miles inland, as Munchúrah, Kasr el-Amaïd, Shemaiméh, Gobísa, and Gemaima. Kassaba is a common name to give to the ruins at such places, because they generally consist of four bare walls.

The water in the well of Haldeh has a cold stony taste and a milky look. It does not rise immediately under the mouth of the cistern, so that it is necessary for one man to scramble down in order to fill the bucket, which another hauls up. This bucket was simply a piece of sheepskin, with the edges roughly sewed to a kind of hoop. It belonged to a sheikh, who has the superintendence of the well, and whose person and flocks are protected by the sanctity of his character. He was a stout, well-made, dark-skinned fellow, with a simple, good-humoured expression of countenance, and worked cheerfully to water our camels and donkeys. He entertained us, as did every one we met in this road, with the exploits of the *Manser*, which means a band of sand-troopers, if I may use the expression, engaged in a foray. A party of fifty horsemen from the West were, he told us, to be met with on our road, and would most probably relieve us of some portion at least of our luggage. They had last been heard of in the neighbourhood of Garah, and were said to have been guilty of considerable familiarity with the flocks and herds of the Waled Ali. He admitted, however, that the country was up in arms against them, and that by this time they might have beaten a retreat. For himself he felt no fear, belonging as he did to the class of Marâbuts, and being venerated by both sides. How often do civilized invaders respect the temples and altars of their foes?

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## CHAPTER VII.

March through an unwatered Wilderness in the track of Alexander the Great — The Devil's Water — Travelling by the Light of a Lantern — Lose our Way — Dangerous Predicament — Halt without finding the Path — Search for it in the Morning — "The two Crows" — At length succeed in gaining the Track — Way-side Pillars — "The Camel's Mouth" — Snakes — Grey Lady-Birds — Butterflies — Highest Point of the Range of Hills — The Valley of Diamonds — Talc — Vast Beds of Oyster Shells — Illustration of Strabo — The "Pass of the Crow" — Names of Places in the Desert — Brilliancy of the Stars — Magnificent Moonlight Scene — Romantic Gorge — Descent to the Plain.

WE had now before us, we were told, a very arduous march of several days, during which we should meet neither well nor encampment, and be entirely dependent for subsistence on the water we carried in our kúrbehs. It was necessary, therefore, to take a good supply; to be very economical; and to push on with increased energy. The slightest delay might be productive of suffering; whilst any considerable impediment thrown in the way of our uninterrupted progress would certainly lead to very disastrous consequences. It was to insure the kafila against accidents of this sort that the new guide had been procured at Mudar: for were we once to deviate from the road, we might wander about in search of it until our water and provisions were exhausted. Wahsa had been, according to his own account, twenty—that is to say, a great many times—to Siwah; and we committed ourselves unhesitatingly to his guidance.

Having well filled the skins with the cold white water—that looked as if mixed with lime—we left Haldeh and its ruins after an hour's halt. The Europeans of the party, buoyed up by their excitement, were high in spirits and pressed cheerfully on; but Derweesh and Saäd followed with hanging heads, and gloomy, dissatisfied countenances, looking like sheep going to the slaughter, whilst even the Bedawins seemed not at all confident of their safety. The alarm of robbers, which had been raised the even-

ing before—the unsatisfactory accounts of the Sheikh of the Well—the difficulties and dangers of the road itself—combined to fill them with anxiety. However, on we went at a rapid pace, nearly southward, up a long valley, or furrow, in the Desert, with many openings to the left filled with Moyet-Eblis, or The Devil's Water, which is the name given by the Arabs to mirage illusions. Heaps of stones at very short intervals marked the road, which it would otherwise have been impossible to keep, so utterly devoid of character were the low hills, or rather undulations, among which we soon found ourselves. Having continued ascending and descending until near noon, we were right glad to encamp in a little copse and seek the shelter of our little tent, where the thermometer stood at 96°.

It is difficult to convey an idea of the pleasure which these midday halts afforded us, especially in a tract of country consisting of a monotonous expanse without the grandeur of a level plain—exhibiting always a limited, undefined horizon—and covered for the most part with loose stones. Here and there a small patch of stunted shrubs springs up from a spot to which the winter rains have washed down a little soil; but although the camels browsed willingly on the tender green extremities, our donkeys went snuffing about in vain for something to suit their palates. On the coast, they greedily devoured the grey lichens, I remember, that covered the ground at some places; but here this resource failed them: and, as not a single blade of grass ever showed itself, they were always obliged to wait for their periodical supply of beans and chopped straw. This was given them by the boys in nosebags immediately on our arrival at a camping ground; whilst we four set to work merrily to put up the tent. No true traveller expects to have all this done for him. Half the enjoyment would have been destroyed if other hands had laboured whilst we sat lazily by. When the tent was up with the door to the north, each procured his carpet-bag and his cloak to form a temporary divan—a tin of preserved meat was opened—the biscuit-bag was visited—a few raw onions, bought at Mudar, were added as a relish—a single bottle of porter, to be diluted with water into four good tumblers, was got ready—the tin-plates were cleaned; and the frugal meal commenced. Lucullus never relished his innumerable dishes as we did this humble fare. Though we had no picturesque pros-



pect before us, every accessory of the scene was romantic. The very fact of our having created for ourselves, for a moment, a home in the midst of the Desert, gave a zest to all our comforts. No living creature was near that did not belong to us. Our beasts of burden were dispersed here and there. The Bedawins sat in a group apart; our donkey boys enjoyed the shade of the tent on the outside. It was as if we had landed on a little uninhabited island in the midst of the ocean, and had covered it for the first time with life.—But the signal for departure is given. The hours have flown rapidly by.—Down with the tent—out again into the blazing sun—gather the camels—pile up their burdens—and away!

We again started, this time late in the afternoon, and having rounded a hill on the left and crossed the bed of a winter's lake—a broad level expanse of hard-baked white mud—proceeded in a general southerly direction until dark. The road is here marked by little heaps of stones placed at tolerably regular distances; so that Wahsa thought he could advance without danger by the help of a lantern. He might as well have attempted to steer across the Atlantic with the same assistance. Presently there was an uncertainty in our movements: sometimes we went to the right, sometimes to the left; then came a pause; and another hurried move; a halt; and then a confession that we had lost the track, and had, perhaps, entered the wrong valley. This was not at all a pleasant announcement. True we could not be very distant from the right path; but each step might take us farther away, and every hour lost now, promised an hour of privation to come. We sat down accordingly; and watched with some anxiety the motions of the lantern as it flitted here and there over the country. At length the Bedawins returned, and, without saying a word, collected the camels and began driving them on in a westerly direction. We were soon climbing a steep declivity, at the top of which we once more came to a stand-still, and found that the proper course had at length been determined on, namely, to wait for the rising of the moon. Our reflections during this halt could not be very satisfactory. There we were crowded together on a little, barren, waterless spot, in the midst of darkness, with nothing but silent hills repeating one another in an endless succession of resemblances around, ignorant in

what direction to move, with every chance of choosing the wrong one, far removed both from the coast, and from the little speck of verdure towards which we were steering. What if we could not regain the road; and, attempting still to proceed, were to get entangled in an inextricable labyrinth? Alexander the Great, it is true, when he lost his way in the same region, was rescued by miraculous interposition. Was there any likelihood that we should be equally favoured? As to making a disgraceful retreat, guided by the compass toward the sea, it was abhorrent to our thoughts, involving as it would have done the total failure of the expedition. So we sat silently down, and manag<sup>ing</sup>, under cover of our cloaks, to light pipes or cigars in spite of the strong north-east wind that went roaring by over hill and dale, waited with patience for the result.

At length the moon rose above the black, undulating horizon, and cast its pale deceitful light upon us. The word was now given to drive on the camels; but it was evident no new discovery had been made. The Bedawins spread themselves on either side hailing each other, or rather barking now and then in imitation of the jackal to communicate their whereabouts. It was difficult to prevent a feeling of awe from stealing into the mind. These strange sounds struggling with the furious blast—dim forms flitting here and there—the solemn motions of the group of camels—the beams of the moon revealing no distant object—a world of unsubstantial shadows—the known and possible danger—all united to act powerfully on the imagination. The conduct of the Bedawins was by no means reassuring. Our inquiries as to the result of their endeavours were met by brief, evasive answers, or sulky silence. They evidently attached more importance to the accident that had happened than we at first did, probably from having some traditions in their minds, more fresh and palpable than our classical ones, of—how kafilas that have strayed as we had done, have perished of starvation in the howling wilderness. After wandering about for some time, we were once again compelled to give up the search and halt on a bleak stony ridge for the night. Here we huddled together on our mats, endeavouring to keep off the cutting wind by a line of zembils and carpet-bags; and suffering intensely from the cold. Fatigue, however, caused us to sleep, and we



woke in the morning drenched by a heavy fall of dew, and shivering like aspen leaves.

Wahsa now went back in search of the road, whilst Saleh and Yúnus, after leading us some distance ahead, each took a separate direction. We remained on a slope, at the foot of which the skeletons of several camels told that the place had been a disastrous one to former travellers. I noticed here the excessive clearness of the atmosphere, showing the forms of our Bedawíns as they gained the summits of distant hills, and making them appear almost close at hand. The sound of their footsteps too, as they came running back to announce the fruitlessness of their search, and compare notes, resounded afar over the Desert.

Whilst in this state of suspense we saw two crows wheeling in the air for some time, and then taking a south-west direction. Had we been in an age of superstition, we should have considered this a sufficient indication, and have followed these kind guides, the descendants possibly of the birds which, on a similar occasion, and very near, says tradition, the point at which we had arrived, extricated Alexander the Great from the horrors of the pathless wilderness. Had we obeyed the augury we should not have gone wrong; but we did not yield to the suggestions of our imaginations, and waited for the return of Wahsa, who had certainly taken the best method of repairing his mistake. The stupid obstinacy of our Bedawíns, however, had nearly made matters worse. Instead of remaining where they were, or choosing some conspicuous spot for a halt, they drove their camels down into a little patch of vegetation to browse, and, as I have said, each went his way, giving us full leisure to reflect on the utter sterility of this country, in which neither tent nor well is to be found, and which is probably never trodden by the foot of man, except on the line marked out for the caravans, in the course of ages.

At our suggestion a gun was at length fired for Wahsa's information, but the sound did not reach him. As time wore on, I became impatient, not to say uneasy, and, ascending an eminence, at length discovered a human form moving rapidly to and fro at an immense distance; so I constituted myself into a landmark, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing the guide make straight in my direction. On arriving, he seemed exhausted with

fatigue, blessed my eyes ("Salâm ala eynak!"), and abused old Saleh, who he said ought to have guessed that, unless some one of the party showed himself, he should never have been able to rejoin us.

He now took us in the direction the crows had indicated, and it was not long before we fell into a well-defined track along a broad shallow valley. From this point onwards we were rarely out of sight of a double row of piles of stones, raised by the industry of successive caravans. Without their assistance indeed it would be impossible to keep the road, amidst the labyrinth of hills through or rather over which it passes, making no account scarcely of natural difficulties, up and down the steepest slopes in a direct line as nearly as possible as the bird flies. Some of these marks consist of five or six large flat stones, placed on one another so as to form a rickety column; others are great heaps, in some instances six or seven feet high. I believe that in most of the deserts which are traversed by caravans, and where materials are to be found, this benevolent practice of marking the road for future travellers exists. It is a tradition, however, mentioned in the *Kitâb el Gemân* of Shehab-ed-dîn, that the Berber race were always unwilling to adopt it; and I believe that the people of Siwah—an offshoot from this stock—have never contributed to render the road to their oasis obvious and easy. The Arabs, on the contrary, are very particular in performing this sacred duty.

All this region is covered with low flat hills, rising like islands out of a level plain, and scattered in front of long ranges, with occasional breaks, allowing one to see on either hand other expanses of country, with isolated hills of the same monotonous character, rarely differing in height, and, like those between Selâm and Haldeh, bearing a great resemblance to fortifications. At about half-past ten we issued into a plain, at the entrance of which the termination of the right-hand range, although not remarkable in appearance, bears the name of Húsham el Gäoud, or "The Camel's Mouth." Beyond this we halted, among some of the stunted shrubs, that afforded a welcome opportunity for our camels to browse, and the existence or absence of which in this generally barren wilderness often determined us to abridge or prolong our morning's ride. During the halt we were re-



mind that our course lay now southward, for the thermometer rose to 100° in the tent. The air, however, was occasionally stirred by cool puffs of wind that lasted about five minutes, and somewhat revived us. Our poor donkeys were the worst off, and came hobbling, in spite of their fettered legs, to get under the scanty shade of our tent, in the cords of which they perpetually entangled themselves, to the great peril of its stability. They were now necessarily on short allowance of bad water, and were visibly knocking up.

All the bushes in this part of the Desert were covered with a white snail. I noticed several dozens on a plant not more than a foot high. The earth is thickly strewn with their shells, which have the peculiarity of a peak over the opening, divided from the rest of the shell by a ridge raised about the eighth of an inch. It is said that some of the inferior Bedawins, who are generally unburdened with the scruples of the civilized Muslim, eat these snails. The Egyptians make fun of them on this account, and quote similar facts to prove that they are an accursed race. They tell a story to the effect that two hungry Bedawins once found a cow that had died of disease, and, having been long without tasting flesh, made a hearty meal on the best parts. The period of digestion became the period of doubt and repentance, and, going to a holy Marâbut, they laid the case before him, expecting to get their consciences eased. "My sons," said the saint, "you have committed a great sin——" They would not allow him to proceed further, but exclaimed, "If it be a sin, we have eaten; and if it be not a sin, we have eaten. *Duffer fee eynak!* (An ass's hoof in your eye!)" and went their way in high dudgeon.

At this encampment we were covered with an immense number of grey lady-birds; and on the way from Haldeh a few brown butterflies had fluttered across our path. A grey snake also, of the species common at Garah and Siwah, and reported to be extremely venomous, wriggled along the sand in the neighbourhood of a little extempore tent, which the Bedawins had rigged, with their guns for poles, their blankets for coverings, and our bags of beans and other traps to keep down the corners. This reptile I believe emerged from our provision basket, into which I was about to put my hand.

In the afternoon of this day I believe we reached the highest point of the great range of hills and series of table-lands along which we had been travelling from Mudar. For a time we could catch a wider glimpse than before of the surrounding country; but the line of stone-heaps we had hitherto faithfully followed soon led us into a valley surrounded with precipices of calcareous formation. The sides generally descended sheer down, and along the base were scattered fragments that had gradually given way from above. On either side opened glens and passes, obstructed by mounds and hills, which sometimes wore the appearance of tents, at others of houses, at others of ruined forts. The cliffs were generally of a reddish hue, but intersected with long white bands. As we advanced, with the sun ahead, this valley assumed an extraordinary appearance. All the ground began sparkling, as if strewed with a profusion of precious stones; and I easily understood how such a sight might have suggested to an imaginative Arab the gorgeous idea of that Valley of Diamonds where Sinbad once found himself pining to death amidst inestimable treasures. Here, as there, not a vestige of vegetation presented itself; but the ground was covered with innumerable fragments of talc, as well as pieces of oyster and other shells that glittered and twinkled, and blazed with a silver light over a vast expanse as they caught the sloping beams of the sun.

I may as well mention here that a little further on, at a place we passed during the night, and noticed only on our return, the road had been cut or worn through an immense bed of gigantic oyster shells, which seemed to form three fourths at least of the substance of the lofty banks on either side. These fossils are to be met with in greater or less quantities all the way to Siwah, where many of the rocks are nothing but huge agglomerations of shells. I was the more particularly interested in noticing the fact, because Strabo quotes a passage from the geographer Eratosthenes, in which it is stated that near the temple of Jupiter Ammon and along the road to it, vast quantities of oyster and other shells are found, from which the inference is drawn that the Mediterranean Sea formerly extended so far inland.

All the points of the hills overlooking the road were marked by the little columns of flat stones I have mentioned: and by



their assistance we managed to keep the direction along the centre of the series of basins of which the valley is formed. We now learned that we were descending toward the plain by what is called the Nugb el Ghrâb, or The Pass of the Crow, a name which may possibly have some connexion with the story of the journey of Alexander, and his miraculous extrication from difficulties. The names of places in the Desert are not often changed; and if we wish to give a reasonable explanation of a poetical legend we may, without difficulty, suppose that when the illustrious traveller lost his way it was because he missed this Pass, which appears to be the only one by which a descent can be effected to the plain. When at length his guides hit upon the right valley, and mentioned it as The Pass of the Crow, we can easily imagine how the tradition took its rise. Peter Pindar has explained the whole philosophy of the thing.

A little after sunset we came to a steep declivity, down which it was necessary to force the camels into a lower part of the Pass. At the bottom we halted three or four hours to wait for the moon, in a position sufficiently romantic and uncomfortable. A north-east wind, cold and cutting, came whistling over the tops of the hills and seemed to be sucked down into the hollow, where we sat on the chilly stones wrapped in our cloaks, or lay prostrate to snatch a brief spell of sleep. On all sides perpendicular masses of rock reared themselves, black and frowning, looking like a vast ruined wall encircling us; whilst overhead the Milky Way spanned the heavens, and all the constellations shone with a brilliancy known only in the East, and, I may add, in the Desert. At about ten the moon lifted up its slightly depressed orb over the vast pile of rocks, and we were soon again in motion, right glad to escape from so bleak a spot. A few hundred yards a-head, after passing a narrow defile, an extraordinary scene burst upon us. Whilst the irregular line of rocks continued close on our left, we suddenly beheld to the right a great chasm; and beyond, glittering in the moonlight, and clothed by it, no doubt, with yet stranger forms and more gigantic proportions than nature had afforded, a huge pile of white rocks, looking like the fortifications of some vast fabulous city, such as Martin would choose to paint, or Beckford to describe.

There were yawning gateways flanked by bastions of tremendous altitude; there were towers and pyramids, and crescents and domes, and dizzy pinnacles, and majestic castellated heights, all invested with unearthly grandeur by the magic beams of the moon, yet exhibiting—in wide breaches and indescribable ruin—evident proofs that, during a long course of ages, they had been battered and undermined by the hurricane, the rain-shower, the thunderbolt, the winter-torrent, and all the mighty artillery of time. Piled one upon another, and repeated over and over again, these strangely contorted rocks stretched away as far as the eye could reach, sinking, however, as they receded, and leading the mind, though not the eye, down to the distant plain below. In vain did our eager glances endeavour to ascertain the limit of the descent to which we had so abruptly come. The horizon was dissolved in a misty light; but stars twinkling low down, as if beneath our feet, showed that we were about to abandon, once for all, the great range along the summit of which we had toiled during so many nights and days.

A gorge, black as Erebus, lay directly across our path; and we had to make a detour to the left in order to reach the place where it is practicable for camels. Here there was a pause; for again the generally patient beasts hesitated, and moaned and backed, and drew up their long necks and huddled together; as well, indeed, they might. The declivity was steep, and filled with heavy shadows. Precipices hemmed it in on every side; and here and there we could distinguish a huge fragment of rock standing, like a petrified giant, in the way, and catching perchance on its bare scalp some stray beams of sickly light. But down we did go; the camels, when once the impetus was given, carried forward by the weight of their burdens, yet keeping their footing with admirable sagacity; we, almost in the same manner, each leading by the halter his long-eared monture. In truth it was a picturesque scene:—partly lighted by the slanting rays of the moon, partly buried in broad masses of shade, and only requiring a few Bedawin heads appearing from behind the jagged rocks, and the flash of a gun or two, to make it worthy of the pencil of Salvator Rosa. According to our guides, some probability existed of such an illumination



taking place; and our imaginations were thus supplied with materials to work on as in the solemn hush of that romantic night we scrambled, slid, staggered, almost rolled down.

A series of sloping plains and rapid descents, with an occasional rise, led to the bottom of the pass; where we bivouacked for the night. To our left the range of hills had receded out of sight; whilst that to our right, which here and there exhibited the most fantastic shapes, sometimes of fortresses, sometimes of pyramids surmounted by sphinxes' heads, stretched away in rugged grandeur to the south-west. In every other direction opened a plain, above which the dim forms of detached hills showed themselves at intervals.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

Rationale of Bivouacking — The Hill of the Cannons — A Tree in the Desert — Approach of a Caravan — Alarm — Interview with Western Bedawíns — Danger of Spoliation — The Date — Caravans — The Gates of the Milky Mountains — Architectural Appearance — Tremendous Heat — Arduous Morning's Work — Approach the Happy Valley — The "Islands of the Blessed."

It must not be supposed from my silence hitherto that camping and bivouacking were very easily managed matters. Every halt during the whole journey was preceded by a discussion amongst ourselves, and a negotiation with old Yúnus, to whose discretion we were obliged sometimes to submit, knowing that in the desert the interest of the camels must not be wholly overlooked, and that it is important for their sakes to choose a resting-place near some of the unfrequent patches of vegetation with which the beneficent hand of nature has sprinkled the road. However, we were often compelled to exert our authority to bring up the *kafila*, which seemed at times to be endowed with something like perpetual motion; and then we had to encounter grumblings, mutterings, vellëities of rebellion, and predictions that, by tarrying in these arid places, considering our scanty supply of water, we should all perish of thirst. But the best of the joke was, that on other occasions we had to hurry the old gentleman on; for he would loiter and loiter, and seemed inclined to halt almost as soon as he had started; and then we were punished with ironical mutterings that we should reach Siwah that very night, and so forth. Yúnus was hard to please, being, in fact, determined not to be pleased. Arrogant, self-willed, opinionated, he seemed to have made up his mind either to be absolute master or to cause us to suffer all the inconveniences which an unwilling servant can inflict. On the present occasion we were compelled to be extremely peremptory in order to obtain a little sleep, although it was more than an hour after midnight.



Before sunrise we were on foot, and should soon have been ready to start had not a small insurrection on the part of the grumpy Yúnus taken place. The circumstance is too characteristic to be passed over. Though not, as the reader may guess, inclined to luxury, we had brought with us a small supply of coffee, with which we occasionally indulged ourselves before starting, though often content with a piece of biscuit and a pipe. To Yúnus, as the head man, we always offered a cup at first, which he obstinately refused to accept. The reason was, that we always drank it without sugar, as all Orientals do, and expected him to do the same. But he seemed to have got it into his head that no Europeans drink *bitter coffee*, as the Arab expression has it, and that we *secretly* put a lump into each of our cups, omitting his. This he regarded as a dire offence; and he actually deprived himself of a great enjoyment, rudely refusing it indeed, to testify his displeasure. Whenever we seemed disposed to treat ourselves he always threw obstacles in the way. On the present occasion his ill-temper over-mastered him, and he upset the water just as it was about to boil. This was rank rebellion, and it was necessary to give him a good setting down. He saw he had gone too far, and swore "Wallah el Azim!" he had only emptied the coffee-pot because Derweesh had filled it from a bad skin! We accepted the apology, and allowed him to reboil the water. There was a conflict of evil passions in his breast, as he crouched over the fire; and he scowled abominably at us, throwing out muttered threats to our frightened boys, who believed him capable of leading us into an ambuscade, and entreated us by their glances even now to turn back and regain their beloved land of Egypt.

This incident over, we moved along the base of the line of white and red cliffs to our right, and crossed the mouth of several glens, all cursed, like the rest of the range, with sterility; while the plain to our left was thickly strewed with hills wearing at a little distance all sorts of strange shapes—as pyramids, gate-entrances, bridges, and tents. One of them, which we reached about an hour after starting, is called Garah el Madáfah, "The Hill of the Cannons," from having on its summit two large masses of rock shaped exactly like pieces of artillery with their carriages. This hill is estimated by the Bedawins to be half-way between Haldeh and Garah. Most of the eminences in this

tract of country seemed formed of loose piles of crumbling materials, but have generally on their summits huge solid masses of rock.

It is difficult to acquire an idea of the exact formation of a country by traversing it once in a direct line at a rapid pace, sometimes by night and sometimes by day; but from what I could gather, I should say that there is a general rise all the way from the sea to a point some hours to the north of the entrance of the Nugh el Ghrâb. It did not appear to me that the bottoms of any of the valleys we traversed were lower than the level of the great table-land that stretches from above Mudar to the well of Selém. At this well, as the reader will have noticed, began a series of flat-topped ridges, intersected by flat-bottomed valleys, at first parallel, but afterwards running irregularly in all directions. The general level seemed gradually to increase in height, whilst the hills, which were at length all detached like islands, become lower and lower. On reaching the Nugh el Ghrâb, the character of the scenery changed—as might naturally have been expected at a place where, in a few hours, we were to descend from a height which we had been several days in gaining. The pass opens nearly to the south; and leads down the rugged sides of a range of hills or mountains, that extends north-east and south-west into an immense valley or basin, which no geologist has ever explored, but which would, doubtless, yield up some curious secrets if properly interrogated. From what I subsequently observed, I am led to believe that the great calcareous range we had traversed, bends round on either hand, and completely embraces the plain covered with detached hills we were about to steer across. This, however, is conjecture.

We proceeded, gradually leaving the ridge, and engaging ourselves amid the islands scattered over the plain. These likewise, at length, became fewer and fewer; and at last we saw only the tops of some distant and lofty ones near the horizon. We were now traversing uneven and stony ground with little hollows here and there, and small ups and downs. Scarcely anything like verdure presented itself. Sometimes there was a small patch of stunted bushes; and now and then four or five camels might be seen thrusting down their small snake-like heads to one green shrub. In the course of the day, however, I remember



we came to a shallow basin, ten or twelve feet below the general level of the plain, under one of the bluff sides of which we saw a solitary tree of elegant shape. Presently afterwards a few clumps of a similar kind made their appearance and refreshed our eyes, unaccustomed to the sight of arborescent vegetation. We had not, indeed, seen anything in the shape of a tree since leaving Alexandria; and therefore even when we found that what we saw were only huge thorns, we could not take our eyes off the green of their leaves. Our animals too seemed all joyous at the sight, and we could with difficulty restrain them from crowding under the thin shade cast upon the burning ground and improvising a halt. The name given to this species of thorn by the Arabs, was Dalagh. Its gnarled trunk was covered with gum: the branches were numerous, tortuous, entangled, and abundantly armed with a long white spike. They were covered with bunches of small yellow flowers.

We halted at half-past ten. The heat was so great this day, that the thermometer about noon rose to  $100^{\circ}$  in the shade; and this too with a strong wind blowing in gusts that nearly carried away our tent. Soon after the stoppage we descried some objects in motion a-head, which created the usual interest and excitement. Pipes were laid aside and guns taken up. For aught we knew the *Manser* might be coming down upon us. It soon appeared, however, that a large caravan was approaching. Still there might be cause for alarm. To what tribe did these strangers belong? If hostile to the Waled Ali a collision might take place. Presently we beheld a number of armed men advancing a-head of their camels. Our tent, no doubt, had attracted their attention, and roused their curiosity, perhaps excited their alarm. They came on cautiously as towards an enemy, with their muskets half presented. One of them at length detached himself and drew near us, keeping a little out of the direct line, possibly to allow his companions an opportunity of firing in case of necessity. He was a strapping giant, above six feet high, with a fine open countenance, high Roman nose, and reddish complexion. I could not help admiring the appearance of this young lion as he crept along, slightly bending, with his gun thrown forward, gazing at us with eyes, in which distrust and curiosity were amusingly blended. As he approached, Yúnus, who had more of the

tiger in his composition than the lion, went with the same precautions to meet him ; and we heard them both, with the infernal suspicion, perhaps necessary in the Desert, bring their weapons to full cock ere they came to close quarters. A moment afterwards, however, hand-shaking and embracing succeeded ; and the whole party coming up, our little encampment was soon filled with a set of ruffianly-looking young fellows with skull-caps, that had been white, pulled nearly over their eyes, with brown blankets wrapped closely round them, and tucked up in marching trim, and shoes of various colours, in various degrees of dilapidation : many had daggers and pistols in their belts, from which were suspended shot and powder purses, with an amulet or two, and all were armed with long guns, some with the addition of bayonets.

Now began a prodigious number of mutual inquiries, all in cut and dried phrases, after one another's health, each of the new comers thinking it necessary to ask at least ten times of each of our companions how he did. The most satisfactory answers were invariably given, but the anxiety and solicitude of these kind people were not easily soothed. They seemed really afraid that some peculiar source of sorrow might be suppressed through mere delicacy. Exquisite display of the finest feelings of the human breast ! I wish I had not detected certain covetous glances at various articles of property ; and that this affectionate meeting had terminated in any other manner than a general cry for drink, and a rush at our water-skins. They were but ill supplied for their journey. Improvidence or poverty, or both, had presided over their arrangements. I could only see about five small *kúrbeks* distributed among the thirty or forty camels that crowded past laden with heavy bags of dates. However, the thirsty souls were not unreasonable ; they were made to understand that we could not satisfy the wants of the whole party ; and we only spared two or three draughts of water to those that seemed the heads of this band of youths, among whom he who had advanced to reconnoitre was the chief. We received in return for our limited civility a small pile of fresh dates of excellent quality ; and the information that there was no fever reported at Siwah. The party, which came from some point on the coast to the West, had only been as far as Garah



where they had obtained their winter's provision of dates. They were goodnatured but rough customers: I should not have liked to have encountered them beyond the range of Yúnus's bland eye.

In the afternoon, not long after we had struck our tent, we met another date-caravan, and went through the same process of recognition. They were accompanied by a kind of saint who communicated his blessing to our Muslim followers. At sunset we stopped and had a nap. At about an hour before midnight, however, we were again in motion, and proceeded at a rate far beyond the camel's usual pace for more than three hours, passing the hard white mud bed of a dry lake and ascending a series of steps or successive small plains one above the other. The whole party walked, driving the donkeys on ahead, without any fear of their wandering; for by this time they had become quite accustomed to the camels and did not like to be out of their company. On the other hand the camels, which at first seemed quite uneasy at seeing these little animals trotting round them, and were thrown into disorder whenever they crossed their path, had also been tamed, so that there was no difficulty in pushing rapidly along by the dim light of the moon. It was calculated that during this march we made much more than four miles an hour.

We spread our mats at a quarter past two, but climbed once more into the saddle at half past five. We now discovered that we were on the flanks of what are called the Gour-el-laban, or the Milky Mountains, and approaching a kind of gateway that yawned near its summit. To the left was a vast detached rock, as usual in this part of the country presenting the appearance of a citadel with huge round towers and ramparts rising in artistic confusion one above another. In front opened a narrow pass, whilst to the right, as it were a stupendous bastion was thrown out from a great range of hills, or rather mass of rocks bearing in the low morning sun a most extraordinary resemblance to an imperial city with domes and towers and palaces more vast and imposing than the Alhambra or the Vatican. Of course most of these appearances were optical illusions; but all the rocks in this country wear a remarkably architectural appearance. I am unwilling, not having been able to make correct observations, to give an estimate of their height; but for fear of conveying an exaggerated idea I will roughly guess them as at least five or six

hundred feet from their immediate bases, which rest upon the summit of a great ill-defined range of hills very considerably higher. The Gour-el-laban when seen from the top of the White Pass on the opposite side of Garah at a distance of about thirty miles, form a bold feature in the horizon and seem comparatively near, so that the pass and the rocks on either hand can be distinctly traced.

Well, having passed through the gates of the Milky Mountains, on we went, cheered by the announcement that Garah, the vanguard of the Oāsis, lay at our feet, down a great valley surrounded by frowning rocks, and said to abound in robbers, our fingers on the triggers of our guns, our eyes on every pass as it opened, and at length safely emerged into a grey gravelly plain, the hills all of calcareous formation, receding again to the right, and detached rocks showing themselves above the horizon, like vessels at sea, to the left. As yet we could see nothing to cheer our eyes, except one or two clumps of thorn trees; but these we had beheld the day before amidst the most sterile tracts. The hills curved round a little in front and then stretched away lost in a sort of misty light. Sometimes we thought we could distinguish the dim feathery summits of palm-trees nestling at the foot of the range down at the edge of the sloping plain; but if so it was athwart a silvery veil of mirage that glittered in front and extended in little fragmentary patches on every side. The morning was excessively hot, and inured though we were to the rays of the sun, the ride of nearly seven hours after a broken night appeared unusually wearisome. Our poor donkeys had been three days on a miserably scanty supply of water, and were beginning to refuse their food. We endeavoured to ease them as much as possible by toiling along on foot, dragging them after us, but even then some of them with difficulty advanced. Exhausted with thirst, we stopped the camel that carried the now empty skins, and managed to squeeze forth about a quart of warm, turbid, and red liquid which we tried to persuade ourselves was better than nothing. A dozen long ears were instantly pricked up, and Saleh, who carried the can, was regularly chased by the weary brutes.—But their lot is to suffer. There was too little for them and for us. Besides, were there not refreshing springs and delightful shady resting-places ahead? Push on, push on, the Happy Valley is close at hand.



At length we reached it, rising suddenly over some rounded hillocks, and finding ourselves on the edge of a steep cliff that descended like a wall at our feet. We here had a good view of the desert island, to the shores of which we had so suddenly come. It is a level plain bounded apparently by precipices of various height falling sheer from the raised ground on every side. Several majestic palm woods stretch their heavy masses of sober foliage across; whilst numerous smaller groups or clusters of four or five trunks, or clumps in untrimmed savage luxuriance, are scattered over the whole surface. Sand-streaks here and there intervene, with a few salt pools, surrounded by a white efflorescence like driven snow, and small patches of verdure, and little glades. Three or four huge rocks rear their giant forms in a line nearly from west to east like the fragments of a great wall that might formerly have divided the Oäsis in twain. On one of these to our right appeared the village of Garah, rising above the palm-trees, and bearing a striking resemblance at first sight to an old ruined castle of feudal times. The far off rocky amphitheatre that lifts high its craggy summits glittering in the sunshine, to look down upon this tranquil valley, and the intensely blue sky overhead, united to give beauty to the scene, and excite in our breasts, by the vivid contrast of barrenness and fertility, life and death exerting their sway beneath the infinite emblem of immortal serenity, mingled emotions of wonder and delight.

I should not envy the feelings of one who, after traversing the frightful solitudes of the Libyan Desert, chequered only by a mockery of vegetation, could express a cold disappointment at beholding the Oäsis of Garah. What more can be desired? There are trees and there are human habitations bursting on your sight in the heart of the wilderness; and though you cannot see you can feel the presence of pleasant fountains of water. If you are a painter, endeavour to represent the softly pencilled outline of this simple yet admirable prospect—those frowning distant piles of craggy peaks, the irregular wall of white cliffs which nature has reared around the Oäsis itself, those little nooks that retreat on either hand, the stately columnar trees which in every variety of group crowd at your feet, the bold masses of rock thrown here and there among them, the decrepit

village on the hill, and above all the ineffably pure atmosphere that reveals or bestows the sharp brilliant clearness which every form, every line, every mass presents; and if you fail in conveying a true idea of this enchanting scene, confess that your skill as well as your imagination is at fault, and do not blame those who, perhaps equally unable to fix these beauties upon canvas, made amends by painting all the Oâses in one short simple phrase:—"The Islands of the Blessed!"



## CHAPTER IX.

First Interview with the Natives — Their Physical Conformation — Costume — No Smokers — Sheikh Abd-el-Sayîd — Visit to the Village of Garah — Decomposition of the Rock — Its defensible Character — Curious Mode of building — Unwholesomeness — We appear in the Character of Healers of the Sick — Gratitude of the People — Comfortable Evening — Windy Night — Second Visit to the Village — Burying Place — Sheikh's Tomb — Aïn Mochaloof — Tradition of Christian Times — Superstition — Charms — Incantations — Industry of the Oâsis — Mat and Basket making — Cultivation of the Palm Tree — Remains of an ancient Fountain — "Aïn Fâris" — Other Ruins — Character of the People of Garah — The wandering Blacksmith — Weapons — Wolves — Tribute to the Pasha — Disproportion between the Sexes — Women brought from Egypt — Number of Palm-Trees — Trade, &c.

WE had hastened forward, each eager to catch the first view of the long-wished for valley. The camels and our attendants, however, soon came up, and gathered on the brink of the precipice. It now became a question how we were to descend. A gorge at some distance to the right seemed to afford every facility we could desire, but it would have taken us, weary as we were, an hour perhaps to reach it over the rough, broken ground that intervened. So, casting about, we at length discovered what a besieging party might have called a practicable breach. Down this we scrambled, animals and all; and soon were trampling through a little grove. The delight experienced on such occasions is indescribable; but if I might be allowed to reverse the common order of comparison, I would say it resembled the feeling of a reader who, after wading through a whole volume of dreary misanthropic sentiments, comes suddenly upon a passage full of tenderness and beauty. Our eyes, that had grown dizzy with gazing on sand and rock, rock and sand, from the rising up until the going down of the sun, now fed passionately on the verdure that drooped into natural arcades on every side; and we slowly wended our way in the silence of unutterable satisfaction to the halting ground.

This was under the eastern side of the village, at the foot of

the hill, on a little plain surrounded by precipices and groves. We did not see any sign of inhabitants; and sought at once the shelter of a palm-clump. By this is meant an impenetrable cluster of short trunks, with long pensive branches shooting out close to the ground; they generally have the aspect of a round mass of foliage, fifteen or sixteen feet high, and twenty or thirty broad; but over some of them two or three feathery heads wave aloft in the air, supported on their gracefully inclined stems. By cutting away some of the lowest boughs we succeeded in forming a most agreeable sheltered nook; and spreading our cloaks on the sand, lay down to enjoy the unaccustomed luxury of an impervious shade. We should have been perhaps more comfortable in one of the groves we had traversed, but the Bedawins had preferred the neighbourhood of the village. However, there was no cause to complain. Our bower was as delightful as if it had been formed of asphodel; whilst on all sides the scorching rays of the sun beat down upon the parched ground, over which the victorious palm vegetation rose here and there. Numerous ligneous plants, and the rich green "aghou" (*hedysarum alhagi*), covered the little inequalities, and served to bind the otherwise inconstant soil.

The first living being we saw was a half-negro-looking boy, who came suddenly upon us, and walking boldly up, saluted each of us with "Maäk Salâm!" ("With thee be peace!") Whilst giving the salutation he extended his right hand to every member of the party in succession, and then laid it respectfully on his breast. By degrees several other lads and a man made their appearance, and went through the same formalities; which done, they squatted down in a row, and examined our appearance with as much curiosity as we did theirs. In manners they were grave and decent. White or brown shirts, with long loose sleeves, and *takiahs*, or thin linen skull-caps, usually worn under the tarboosh, formed their costume. It was impossible not at once to recognise a mixed race. I suppose we subsequently became acquainted with nearly every inhabitant of Garah; and all seemed to have the same undetermined physiognomy. Some were almost perfect blacks; others had the retreating forehead, the depressed nose, and projecting lower jaw of the negro, with a pale sallow complexion; others, again, presented an insignificant



collection of features, small flat foreheads, little irregular noses, high cheek bones, diminutive eyes, and thin lips. All were nearly destitute of any sign of a beard. Our visitors exchanged a few words with one another in a disagreeable squeaking jargon, which we afterwards found to be a dialect of the Berber language; but all understood Arabic, and when we politely offered them pipes, as politely explained that they did not smoke. We found the same sobriety in this respect among all the people of this family. It partly arises from the strictness of their belief, partly from poverty. Some privately indulge in snuff.

Presently, a little dark-complexioned man, wearing a turban, and in all respects better dressed than the others, presented himself, followed by two boys, one bearing a basket of fine dates, the other a red earthen brock of slightly brackish water, stopped up by a handful of palm-fibres, to keep the contents cool. This was Abd-el-Sayid, the sheikh of the village, who seemed equally civil and obliging in his manners with those over whom his paternal authority extended. A conversation ensued, in which we endeavoured to gain information about the place, and to explain the reason of our visit in a satisfactory manner. The latter object, however, was difficult to compass, as the worthy man's ideas were rather limited. We found it indeed necessary to abstain from very forcibly insisting that we had no views of business or revenue in going to Siwah. He could not conceive why any but people connected with the government should undertake such a journey; and we afterwards found that all the curiosity we expressed about ruins and catacombs was understood to mean that we were in search of treasure.

We naturally passed the day in rest. Towards evening, however, I went with Longshaw to visit the village. It had been anticipated that some difficulty would be made about admitting us; and there was certainly a little hesitation in the sheikh's manner when, on the announcement of our intentions, he gave directions to a man to conduct us. But hospitality prevailed over suspicion; and we approached this curious stronghold. It is situated, as I have said, on one of a line of large detached rocks that stretches across the valley. The appearance of these rocks and of numerous others scattered here and there in the Oäsis suggests the idea that a portion of this tract was formerly

on a level with the table-land around, and that in a long series of ages a great part has been decomposed and dispersed. On the right hand of the path which leads in the direction of Siwah this process is evidently going on with great rapidity. There are signs of the operation of some agent which eats into the rock, principally towards its base, detaching large portions, leaving them isolated, and then perforating them in various directions, forming natural caverns and arches, and at length bringing them down into a confused mass of ruins. In several instances there were large masses shaped like pears, twenty or thirty feet broad at top, and only three or four at bottom. Catacombs had been cut in various places by the old inhabitants; and these are in many instances opened and half-eaten away.

I believe the valley of Garah is not entirely surrounded by precipices, although it had that appearance from every point we visited. There must be an opening to the eastward into the great desert, whither the detritus of the decomposing rocks is most probably carried by the wind. The isolated masses I have mentioned will soon disappear in great part. The village hill itself is eaten into on every side; and large masses have given way long since it was selected as a building site. Houses in whole or in part have gone down in ruins, leaving fragments of palm-rafters still projecting. This is more especially observable on the south side, where the winding pathway that leads to the gate ascends.

The gateway is of stone; but the gate itself is formed of several rough-hewn pieces of the palm-tree tied together, and swinging on hinges of camel-hide. It is somewhat difficult of approach, well commanded, and might easily be defended against an irresolute enemy. Within, the path is steeper than without, and is covered by a wall on the right, and the catacombed rock on the left. It leads through a low, narrow entrance into the principal street or passage, which is nothing but a dark tortuous crevice, partly formed by the living rock, partly by the walls of the lower tier of houses, whilst the floors of the upper ones, consisting of palm-rafters laid close together, constitute the roof. In most places, as we crept onwards, we could feel a kind of divan, or seat of stone or mud, running along on either hand. There are only two openings by which the light of day penetrates into



this curious pile, one at an angle to the west, and containing a deep well of brackish water, inferior to that in the well outside, another in the centre, called the market-place. In the streets none but the people themselves could find the way except by the aid of a lantern. The whole village is exceedingly dirty, and the atmosphere perfectly stifling. We were indeed by no means surprised to hear that the inhabitants never exceeded forty persons, although, from the number of houses, there appeared to be room for a much greater population. As at Siwah, it is the custom, when the son of a family takes a wife, for the father to build him a dwelling on the roof of his own, and so on until there are several stories, not communicating internally, but from without, by means of flights of mud steps or ladders. This is the reason why Garah originally became a heap of little habitations covering nearly the whole surface of the rock, and now for the most part consists of unsightly ruins. Of late, of course, no fresh additions have been made, there being so many empty houses. The upper ones are nearly all roofless. No attempt at repair is visible; but the unwholesome wretches kennel in the decrepit pile, amidst rubbish and all kinds of filth. The air is heavy, clammy, and unpleasantly hot. How indeed can the refreshing breezes that fan the rest of the valley penetrate through loopholes scarcely larger than the bung-hole of a cask, or through those dismal crooked ways, which seem twisted on purpose to exclude it? The market-place by day is a perfect furnace, receiving the scorching rays of the sun, and without the least attempt at ventilation. It is impossible that such a place can be healthy; and we must not, therefore, wonder if the inhabitants are few and sickly-looking. Their poultry live with them in their houses, their goats scramble over the roofs as over the neighbouring rocks, and of course do not contribute to increase the salubrity of the air. What other impurities might have been seen aloft I know not; but the whole live stock of the Oäsis is evidently confined within the walls at night; and I remember that, as we were starting, an ass, imprisoned in the highest of the round, tower-like huts, at the eastern extremity of the village, thrust forth its head, like that in Lucian, from a window, and brayed a long farewell to its Egyptian kindred!

Fever is of course prevalent in this den. A poor fellow was

brought to us as we sat smoking on a clean mat spread for us in the centre of the market-place. Half the population crowded round to explain his ailment; which was, however, pretty clear in itself. He had been five years subject to intermittent attacks; and we were expected to lay our hands upon him and heal him. We had not the stoicism to announce that he was far beyond our unscientific aid; and a harmless prescription, that might afford some temporary relief, procured us the good will of the whole village. I shall often think again, not without emotion, of my jocund friend, Longshaw, descending like Hope amidst this moiety of a little nation—all united by the ties of blood—and with one wave of his pill-box lighting up their countenances with joy and gratitude. Nor will the circumstance ever by me be forgotten, that next day we could scarcely defend ourselves from a medical fee, in the shape of what to all appearance was the last fowl in the village, which the poor people wanted to force upon our acceptance.

On our return to the tent, we found that Lamport and Forty, instead of satisfying a selfish curiosity, had superintended the preparations for our first supper in the Oäsis; and were ready to give us a hospitable reception. Two stewed fowls, and a large wooden-dish of thin cakes of dhourra flour cooked in oil, were the contributions made by Sheikh Abd-el-Sayid to the repast, to which were joined from our stores several handfuls of broken biscuit, and the ever-grateful tea-pot that on this occasion dispensed its blessings with an unlimited liberality only to be accounted for by an inexhaustible supply of hot water. The fragrant pipe succeeded; and the evening would have passed in perfect repose, had not a violent storm of wind arisen, and more than once swept the tent from over our heads. It was only during a prolonged halt, as at Garah and Mudar, that we indulged ourselves in this shelter at night; but, inured as we were to sleeping under the canopy of heaven—too lofty and comprehensive a covering, by the way, to excite all the comfortable sympathies of one's own bed-curtains—we still determined not tamely to yield to the attacks of Boreas, and at length succeeded in giving sufficient stability to the tent, which however wavered and flapped, and bent and moaned over our heads all night beneath the furious blast. A whole legion of mosquitoes besides,



were driven in for shelter, and assaulting our legs, unprotected by boots and straps, and less weather-proof than our hands and faces, soon covered them with blood. Sleep, however, we did, in spite of all annoyances—a sound hearty sleep, which only weary travellers experience;—and were up again early in the morning ready to make the best of the little time we had for becoming acquainted with the Oäsis.

I first made a sketch of the village from the summit of a rock to the north-east; and then went with the rest of the party on a second visit to the interior. This was a much more ceremonious affair than the other; and there was even some talk of admitting us into the Sheikh's house. The good man, although we made no request to that effect, seemed to think we desired to satisfy our curiosity, and promised spontaneously to treat us to coffee on his own private divan. This would have been equivalent to introducing us into the harím in Egypt; and prejudice triumphed over hospitality. When the critical moment arrived the good man had disappeared. We sat expectant some time on a clean mat chatting with the people, and changing a dollar for one of them, as an especial mark of politeness. Meanwhile there was great bustling about and whispering, and show of mystery. At length one of the poorest men came and offered as an alternative to ask us into his sister's house. There was an evident expression of fear in his face lest we should accept; so we relieved his mind by saying it was necessary we should return to the tent. Knowing as we did the strength of the prejudice these poor people had striven to overcome, it was impossible to feel in the least offended.

Forty and I now got a guide to take us to a place which the natives counted among the curiosities likely to interest a stranger. On our way, close under the village, we noticed a little burying-place with about twenty graves. A couple of Sheikh's tombs, little round whitewashed houses, were the only religious edifices conspicuous in the Oäsis; although we did hear a man calling to prayers from the roof of one of the houses, which may probably therefore be a kind of mosque.

A walk of about half a mile along the foot of the precipices which bound the valley, brought us to a little glen, or rather nook, enlivened by a few trees and shrubs, with some tufts of

grass. At the extremity we observed a deep trough or basin, containing about two feet of exceedingly clear water, supplied from a large upright crevice in the rock, into which I entered. It had all the appearance of being artificial; and turning short round, seemed to lead into the very bowels of the mountain. The water, sweet and cool, was trickling in large clear drops from the slimy sides, and seems never to fill the basin to overflowing. But, said our guide, in former times a full stream gushed forth, and ran with a rapid current down towards the centre of the valley, where it formed lakes and vastly increased the fertility of the place. Some earthquake had either choked the way or diverted the water. This account found the more credit with us, as we could trace the semblance of a dried-up stream proceeding from the crevice down the glen and across the plain, until it was lost among the palm-trees. No doubt the cessation of this supply has produced a great effect on the prosperity of Garah; and it is the more to be regretted, as the water which we tasted was exquisite, whereas all the wells have either a salt or a bitter taste. The people of the place throw back as usual the origin of this at least semi-artificial fountain to the time of the Christians; but have no idea how long ago it ceased to dispense its bounties. Probably the accident happened at a comparatively recent period; and may be repaired by another convulsion of nature.

Whilst returning from Aïn Muchalúf we had a mysterious communication from our guide. It seems that a few days previously his harím had been entered, and the *habara*, or black silk wrapper, of his daughter secretly purloined therefrom; so to us he applied for advice and assistance under the circumstances. What could we do but recommend him to appeal to the patriarchal authority of the Sheikh? This, however, would not serve his purpose. He imagined us to be possessed of certain supernatural powers, by which we could not only heal the sick, but penetrate the mysteries of iniquity. Magic and medicine are indissolubly connected in these people's minds. In round terms, therefore, he begged us to *write a paper* and discover the thief. I was not so much surprised at the man's superstition as I might have been had I come direct from England. I have seen ladies of European extraction in Alexandria, when their minds were



perplexed about their love affairs, send for a magician, who, on payment of one piastre, made certain mystic marks on a piece of paper, and foretold exactly when their lovers would visit them; and though day after day the prediction proved false, yet the delusion was not destroyed, and the same mummary was repeated with the same success. We could not, therefore, be very much provoked by the poor fellow's mistake, though we were somewhat so by the obstinacy with which he persisted in his demand after we had assured him of our incompetency to comply with it.

It is worth observing that in the East, as elsewhere, the exercise of the magical art is considered anything but respectable, and that to call a man a magician is a serious affront. Heretics and unbelievers are supposed to be the greatest adepts on account of their familiar communion with the evil one. Some Muslims, however, follow the lucrative and idle trade; but they are always, I believe, Moggrebbis, men from the West, that is, from Fez and Morocco. Even in the *Alf Leileh-wa-Leileh*, as related at least by the storytellers of the coffee-houses, all the magicians introduced come from the West; and both in Alexandria and Cairo there are many individuals of this race who gain their livings by divinations, incantations, writing love-charms, &c. However, I have never heard of anything remarkable, even as a coincidence, being performed by them; and am disposed to think, from all I have seen, that they are the most vulgar impostors imaginable. Some tourists speak of them in a mysterious sort of way as if they really possessed supernatural powers, or at least extraordinary ingenuity; but there is a tendency, even in the most virtuous of this class of writers, to accept with easy good faith the interested exaggerations of their dragomans, and the waggish confidences of idle European residents. In my intercourse with the natives of Egypt I have found that the belief in magic is almost universally spread; but so is the belief in miracles worked by saints dead or alive. It is not, therefore, necessary to suppose that the popular opinion often receives any corroboration from accident or the operations of an occult science. Hundreds of women with the curse of sterility upon them pay ineffectual visits to the tombs of fruit-giving Sheikhs, but the number of votaries never diminishes. In like manner hundreds of treasure-seekers, or victims of robbery, apply to the Moggrebbis for information, without success; but

the delusion still continues, and trade thrives. Some of the more prudent of these wise men of the West undertake only to prophesy of the distant future. I once had my fortune told in one of the bazaars for the small sum of ten paras, about one halfpenny, by a little old man in a grey felt cap. He first asked me my mother's name, then my age, then the month in which I was born, and proceeded to make a kind of mumbled calculation, in which the three facts I had put him in possession of constantly recurred. The result was that I was, firstly, to be very rich; secondly, to marry a handsome woman; and, thirdly, to be the father of a large family of children. To ensure the fulfilment of the second part of the prophecy I made the acquisition of a love-charm, written on a long slip of paper in black and red ink, for ten paras more.

Having consoled our honest guide as well as possible for his disappointment, we returned to the tent. I had, however, in the meanwhile planned another expedition to explore what I thought must be some ancient remains, situate in a distant grove of palm-trees. The same man agreed to accompany me, and after a short rest I started, passing round the south side of the village and taking a westerly direction. On the path we met a number of donkeys—all most diminutive—laden with dates, palm-branches, and provender. The men or boys who accompanied them looked at me with curiosity, but without rudeness, and asked no questions respecting me, although, as I afterwards learned, they had been out all night at the extremity of the valley, and had not heard of the arrival of strangers. We passed through a tract covered with rushes, which afford great scope to the industry of the inhabitants. They make excellent round and square mats, and *zembils*, or baskets. The latter, which are in great request for carrying the dates, are no doubt a source of some profit.

On all sides also grew the “aghoul,” or *Hedysarum Alhagi* of Linnæus—of a bright-green colour, chequering the white sand. It is of immense utility in the Oâsis; donkeys and camels feed on it both fresh and dry; and they seem to collect an immense stock for consumption during the hot weather. Both here and at Sîwah we constantly met droves of dwarf donkeys staggering under huge heaps of it. They generally cut it, collect it in square bundles, and leave it to dry like hay in the sun. It serves also the purpose of manure for the palm-trees, being



placed, towards the end of October, in little trenches round the roots, after which a stream of water is turned upon it. I have never noticed in any other country this care bestowed on the cultivation of the palm.

In about three quarters of an hour we came to the skirts of a large date grove, and my guide halting told me we had reached the term of our walk. At first I could distinguish nothing but a large piece of open and uneven ground; but he soon drew my attention to the remains of a vast wall that had formerly enclosed an oval space one hundred paces in its extreme length. The action of the air had almost completely decomposed the upper surface of the stones, but I soon found that the wall had been constructed with large square blocks. There was an opening at either extremity, but nothing seemed to reveal the character of the building. My guide said it was the remnant of an ancient fortified village that had been built on the same plan with theirs, and I cannot guess what else it could have been. Near at hand were some trenches eight feet long by two broad, lined with brickwork in tolerably good preservation. They were now nearly filled with rubbish, but as I was told had often been cleared out in search of treasure. My guide watched my face anxiously as I examined them; and in the childish voice peculiar to his race, told me of the labours that had been undertaken on the chance of finding one of those pots of gold which haunt the imaginations of all Orientals. In a few minutes more he gave me an illustration of the magical power of gold, the bare hope of finding which triumphs over an indolence not to be conquered by any rational incitement to industry. Close by, under the shade of a beautiful clump of palms, was what appeared at first sight a mere pool of pellucid water. The name of Aïn Fāris attracted my notice; and on attentive examination I saw that it must have been an ancient fountain, as about a foot below the surface was the mouth of a broad circular well lined with excellent solid masonry in perfect preservation. In front of this was a square cistern, some sixty or seventy feet each way, the walls of which, having been more exposed to the action of the atmosphere, were honeycombed and ruined. Two or three conduits that had in ancient times been cased with stone still drew off the water. A beautiful clump

of palm-shrubs, with three or four lofty trunks, drooped over the fountain, whilst the margin of the cistern was fringed with luxuriant vegetation. A long vista between the groves led the eye to the castellated village of Garah, which may be descried from almost any point of this little Oäsis. A man with a donkey-load of dates came up whilst I was viewing the scene, and entered into conversation with my guide. He seemed quite puzzled to know what brought me there; and I have little doubt he suspected I was a magician from the West on the look-out for treasure. He was one of a party of two or three that had been out for some time on the borders of the desert gathering an inferior kind of date which grows quite wild, and is used as food for donkeys and camels.

I asked what was the measurement of the well, and was told that some Síwahis had once cleared it to the depth of four fathoms, and a large heap of black soil, mixed with fragments of pottery, was indicated to attest the truth of the assertion. On that occasion the water gushed forth much more plentifully, but laziness and the Garah people are dear friends, and no attempt was made to keep the source clear. "We are poor wretches," was my guide's humble confession, "and have not the heart to undertake anything new." He gave the same answer when I asked why there were here no pomegranates, no bananas, no grapes, as at Síwah. They had not the courage to attempt a garden, and were content to pass their lives in growing dates and weaving baskets to export them in.

I returned by very nearly the same path I took in going, my guide, who seemed to understand that I was in quest of information, becoming by degrees more and more communicative. He first showed me near the foundation before mentioned a hollow in a rock, where there were some traces of fire. This, he said, was the station generally adopted by a kind of travelling blacksmith, who, once a year, makes a tour among the Bedawín tribes. His business was to mend guns, make knives, &c., and he stays a few days at Garah, principally employed in fabricating a peculiar kind of saw-knife for cutting dates or "aghoul," which is the constant companion of these people. The form of the blade is that of a small segment of a circle, with the straight side serrated; the wooden handle is about a cubit in length.



I asked what means of defence in the shape of fire-arms the inhabitants of Garah possessed, and was told only two guns which belonged to nobody in particular, being generally entrusted to the most expert. They sometimes use them to shoot crows, which are considered a delicacy ; but they never waste powder on the numerous wolves and jackals which come down from the mountains at night to feed on the fallen dates. These predatory animals are allowed to return unmolested to their haunts unless they happen to fall into the traps sometimes laid for them. I suppose that in case of an attack of Bedawins directed against their village they would use these guns ; but not to resist robberies of the produce of their trees, to which they quietly submit, preferring to apply for redress to the Sheikh-el-Arab, from whom they generally succeed in getting some kind of compensation. We saw moreover one or two spears in the hands of the Garah folks ; and their date-knives are no doubt on a pinch converted into weapons. Altogether they are a simple, humble, and hospitable people ; very obliging and very unenterprising, and have narrowed the circle of their wants to accord with the limited range of their industry. Those with whom I spoke freely acknowledged that much might be done in the way of improvement, especially by the introduction of new trees and by clearing out the wells ; but why should they trouble themselves ? They had enough for their absolute support, and felt no desire for more. The fact is their isolated position in the midst of the desert seems to have completely discouraged them and broken their spirit, especially as it deprives them of the advantages of civilized society and active communion with the world without protecting them from oppression. Three hundred dollars are yearly exacted from these miserable creatures by the Pasha's government. It is said that there are only generally forty souls in the village. According to my guide's account, however, the numbers must have been greater at the particular moment at which we arrived ; as there were twenty-two children in the village, of which fifteen were male. This disproportion between the sexes always exists at Garah ; so that a great many men are compelled to lead a life of single-blessedness. Sometimes a *fellaha* girl is imported from the valley of the Nile, as was the custom of some of the desert tribes of old—" His mother took

him a wife out of the land of Egypt" (Gen. xxi. 21). Occasionally they procure a female slave from Siwah. The people of the latter place are too proud to give their daughters in marriage to a Garah man, who is looked upon as an inferior being. I was amused with the simplicity with which my companion stated the existence of this opinion, and with the tacit acknowledgment he made that it was not so very erroneous after all.

Property in the valley of Garah consists almost entirely of date-trees. Of these there are fourteen hundred, unequally divided amongst the heads of families, some of whom possess above two hundred, whilst one or two are masters only of twenty-five. There are nine wells; four tolerably copious ones to the west of the village, and five much choked with sand to the east. Besides the above-mentioned trees, which are regularly counted and cultivated, numerous wild clumps rise here and there, bearing an inferior fruit, used as food for camels and asses. I could not make out that, with the exception of the rushes already noticed and the "aghoul," these poor people receive anything else from their soil. Formerly they had large water-melons; but indolence has induced them to abandon the use of this agreeable fruit. In exchange for their baskets and their dates—the crop of which is good only on every alternate year—they procure a little wheat from the Bedawins, who bring it from Alexandria or Cairo, and also *samn  *, "clarified butter." Their other wants are supplied by the caravans which pass periodically between Siwah and the land of Egypt, stopping at Garah on their way. Upon the whole, the contemplation of their state produced a mixed feeling of pain and pleasure, caused by the observation of many amiable qualities associated with profound and unresisted misery. Had they been like savage nations unconscious of their plight, we might have congratulated them on their indifference; but they seemed perfectly aware of their condition, and spoke to us with the whining resignation of a people that has seen better days, but does not choose to exert itself to behold them again.

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## CHAPTER X.

Affectionate Farewell of the People of Garah — A Siwahí joins our Party — Ascent from the Valley — Beautiful Sunset — Dismal Gorges — Lofty Table-land — Temperature  $102^{\circ}$  in the Shade — Nugb-el-Mejbbery — Legend of Brigand Bedawíns — The Gates of the Oäsis — A Caravan of Oäsians — Interview — Enter the Valley — Beautiful View — Our first Reception — Reach a Spring — Another Caravan — Halt near a Hamlet — Presents sent to us — We find we are not welcome — Their Ethnological Ideas.

ON the afternoon of the 1st of October we were again ready to start. Our little caravan collected round the well; and the villagers, some of them bearing light spears, came out to behold our departure and bid us farewell. The skins of water were slung across the unwilling camels—to bring which near the well a great deal of manœuvring was necessary—and we began to move. Then came a general explosion of polite sentiments—"Maâk salaam!" (with you be peace!) was the unanimously expressed wish of the whole population, as they one and all touched our hands and then laid theirs to their breasts. There was nothing of that cry for "backshish" which disgusts one in an Egyptian village; but the sheikh waited with decent patience for our present, and received it with becoming and not undignified gratitude. I must mention that we now found our party increased by a Siwahí who happened to be at Garah, and seized on this opportunity of returning safely to his native place. We were not displeased with his companionship, as it seemed probable he might assist in spreading a good feeling towards us among his countrymen on our arrival. He was armed with a gun and a date-knife; with which latter he distinguished himself by chopping up a snake that imprudently showed itself in the path.

We slowly made our way across the valley, which was covered with sand-heaps and low brushwood mingled with palm-trees and clumps. Before reaching the pass that leads up to the general

level of the desert we plucked some delicious blue dates from a tree loaded with fruit to refresh us ere we entered on the arduous part of our journey. The ascent was difficult; but, when once achieved, brought us to a pretty level grey gravelly plain, across which we went at an accelerated pace until after nightfall. The sunset this evening was particularly beautiful. During about a quarter of an hour we rode under a canopy of rosy clouds that stretched from horizon to horizon, and seemed to increase gradually in splendour until, suddenly fading, "all was grey." During our journey over the desert we seldom noticed that the beginning and close of day displayed any peculiar brilliance of colour. I remember once, however, observing, when the sun was just dipping beneath the horizon, that four or five columns of beams, if I may so express myself, rose against a saffron ground, widening by degrees and exhibiting all the variegated tints of the rainbow. In about an hour more we came to the foot of the range of hills which, as I have said, overlooks the valley of Garah, and began to ascend a series of horrible gorges by starlight. The darkness was so great that we could distinguish nothing but huge black masses of rock on either hand; amidst which for some time we threaded our way with considerable labour and at imminent risk. It was scarcely possible for a desert-ride to be more romantic or impressive; for, in addition to the actual perils of the steep and uncertain path, were those pictured to us by the panic-struck Bedawins, who now maintained more stoutly than ever that in these apparently uninhabited solitudes there were roaming wild and desperate men who, at any moment, might be expected to pounce upon us from behind some overhanging rock. However, we proceeded until a quarter past eight, when, after a five hours' ride, we picked out a tolerably smooth place among the stones, and lay down until three hours after midnight. The moon then lighted our way until dawn, by which time we had ascended another pass and reached a broad plain or table-land. As the first streaks of light appeared above the horizon we could just distinguish far below the immense tract of country we had traversed; but before the sun came to our aid we could see nothing in our rear save the near horizon following closely on our footsteps, and ahead and on all sides nothing but one scarcely deviating surface. We continued until we had made



rather more than six hours, and then rested until the heat of the day had subsided. The thermometer at this elevated spot reached 102° in our tent. On account of the hardness of the ground, we found at first so much difficulty in driving the pegs, that we had a great mind to give up the job. But the prospect of a few hours' release from the torrent of light and heat poured down upon that arid plain made us persevere; and at length we had the pleasure of creeping under the friendly canvas and breathing a comparatively cool atmosphere. These were usually the most cheerful moments of the day; and I confess that, in common with the whole party, I never recur with greater delight to any incidents of our journey than to our mid-day halts, during which, after a frugal dinner—naturally the first care—we smoked our pipes, wrote our journals, repaired any disasters that might have occurred in the previous twenty-four hours to our costume, and made our provision for the succeeding ride, sometimes concluding with a nap, sometimes with a tough discussion. When the hour came—usually about the *asser*, between three and four o'clock—each man packed up his carpet-bag, the tent was taken down, and off we were again in a very short time after the word of command was given.

From three o'clock to sunset we proceeded across the same table-land; but at length perceived several chasms opening on either side and in front of us. One of these proved to be the descent towards the lower country. We had at length traversed the ridge that separates Garah from Siwah; and as soon as we had disengaged ourselves from its outworks and the spurs it throws forward, we were promised a view of the Gates of the Oâsis. The pass we now entered was called Nugb-el-Mejbbery, and had a tradition connected with it. Some time ago, it is said, a party of fifty brigand Bedawíns determined to waylay a caravan on its way from the coast. In order to take it more completely by surprise, they piled up fifty small heaps of stones right across the valley, and lay down waiting for their prey behind them. The caravan approached at first unsuspectingly, but either the bandits fired too soon, or were descried from the top of the rocks; for the ambuscade failed, a desperate conflict ensued, and the honest men got the upper hand. The piles of stones still exist, and the Nugb even now bears an ill reputation;

so that, when we halted at the coming on of total darkness, our guides grumbled exceedingly because we insisted on treating ourselves to a cup of tea. They feared that our little fire might draw down upon us the attentions of heaven knows how many cut-throats. However, such was not the case. The valley remained as silent and peaceable as when we entered it. Not a single gun gave forth its enlivening flash. The stars rising in lustrous splendour over the path we had quitted seemed the only objects in motion; and we were suffered to sip our Congo and smoke our gebeli in quiet. A sound sleep prepared us for the exertions of the succeeding day, and an hour and a half after midnight the signal was given to march. A small plain and another descent occupied us until near sunrise, when the fresh breeze that blew upon our cheeks seemed to bear the fragrance of vegetation with it. We were soon, indeed, among the copses of Om Eaymé, consisting of huge clumps of bushes growing out of piles of sand, and extending it appeared for several miles to our left. Here we stopped and made a cup of coffee, our guides, indefatigable in raising false alarms, declaring it dangerous to proceed except by the light of day. This time we suspected them of a desire to browse their camels. The sun, however, soon showed itself over the great range of hills in our rear, and then came the order to march, and then a rapid ride over a little billowy ridge, and then our first sight of the mountain which frowns over the entrance of the Oäsis.

To our right the customary limestone hills, with all their variety of form, swept round in a semicircle, thrusting out in front of us a long point, at the extremity of which, rising like the body of a great cathedral, was the long-expected Om-el-Yús. Appearing from behind this on the horizon, above the edge of the plain, and stretching far away towards the left, like a distant snowy range, was the dazzlingly white sandy desert, which has rolled its swelling waves to the confines of the Oäsis, but paused there, leaving that fertile spot of earth between it and the foot of the great hilly, or rather mountainous, tract which from thence extends to the sea.

Though accustomed to the illusions of the desert, we had no idea, on first beholding the gigantic form of Om-el-Yús, of the distance that yet remained for us to traverse; on we went, hour



after hour, determined not again to halt except within the limits of the Oäsis. We had perhaps never before experienced so great a degree of heat, and certainly this day's work promised to be the most fatiguing we had as yet gone through. Whilst toiling along over the plain that seemed to lengthen as we advanced, a number of objects appeared in the distance emerging from the mirage. After some hesitation they were pronounced by our Bedawins to be a caravan. There was the usual uncertainty and anxiety expressed, it being no extraordinary thing for members of adverse tribes to meet on the road to a common market like Siwah and come to blows, the strong endeavouring to plunder the weak. Our approach, however, seemed also to alarm the strangers; they too paused, but at length slowly drew near and dispatched four unarmed men to meet us. Our Siwahí companion, on this, gave up his gun and went forward. Amicable relations were soon established. There were seventy or eighty camels, and some thirty people of the Oäsis on their way to Alexandria with dates. Those that came up saluted us politely, and sent us some of their fruit. Had we been more distant from our destination we might have sought some further communication with them, but as it was we were too anxious to arrive.

We at last rounded the corner of the huge rock, that rose sheer from the level plain, and turning to the west, gained an extensive view down the long-wished for valley, which seemed to descend in a regular gentle slope from where we stood, bounded on the north by the lofty red and white limestone range, on the south by the shining undulations of the desert. On the edge of the latter, at some distance ahead, stood a solitary mountain, with five conspicuous peaks, near which we soon distinguished three small conical hills, rising in a line at equal intervals above a grove of palm trees. Farther to the west, as we afterwards found, but appearing at first on the same plane, several huge detached square rocks broke the horizon.

The rough ground on which we now entered bore a great resemblance to a ploughed field; but was soon discovered to consist almost entirely of hard earth mixed with salt. To our left stretched an immense reedy expanse, terminating in a salt lake, beaming brightly in the sun, and with banks covered by a dazzling white efflorescence. This lake stretched a great way

ahead, and seemed to divide a small patch of cultivation at the entrance of the Oäsis from the central tract, which we could see beyond, crowded with palm-groves. We had not been long within the valley ere we beheld a tall black running across the fields to greet us. He pressed our hands, and in a simple and affectionate manner welcomed us to his country. Farther on, two or three other dark skins met us with a drove of diminutive donkeys, and instantly offered to be of any assistance in their power. Our poor asses seemed highly delighted at the society of their kindred, and after a journey of between three and four hundred miles attempted with astonishing vigour to gambol with their new friends. Wiser than they, however, we knew that a bellyful of water would do them more good than an exchange of mute civilities. Our supply was not quite exhausted when we reached the Oäsis; but just then the camel that carried it took it into its head to bolt, which it accordingly did with awkward agility, until it succeeded in casting loose the skins, and spilling their scanty contents on the ground. We accordingly proceeded under the guidance of one of these obliging blacks to a spring not far from the edge of the salt lake. Here, in the midst of a pool filled with reeds and rushes, bubbled up some tolerably sweet water, of which we and our animals drank an ample supply.

Old Yunus now gave us another sample of his disobedience, by refusing to bring the camels to the neighbourhood of the spring, alleging as a reason the swarms of mosquitoes that buzzed about it. We overtook him at no great distance, and halted under the shade of a palm clump at half-past one, having been for twelve hours nearly uninterruptedly in motion. The latter part of the day had been exceedingly warm, as the calmness of the atmosphere was only disturbed by occasional hot blasts of wind from the south-west after we entered the valley.

As we reclined under the scanty protection of the palm-clump another caravan of Siwahis passed in the distance. Three or four of the men came to join our party, and one, who appeared to be the only smoker, enjoyed a pipe for a few minutes. Up to this time there was nothing to forewarn us of the reception we were to meet with. All these people were civil and respectful; and when we reflected on their manner and on our excellent treatment at Garah, we somewhat precipitately bestowed on this



beautiful place the title of "The Happy Valley." We gazed around with infinite pleasure on the scenes which opened on every side. Rugged hills in one direction, undulating deserts in another; here green and fertile plains; there salt lakes, sparkling like fields of half-thawed snow. All these things seemed floating in pictorial minuteness before us—so clear was the atmosphere, so vivid the light that fell in shining streams on every object around. The beauty of southern scenery, its peculiar characteristic, consists chiefly in the sharpness of its outlines. Perhaps the misty, indefinite background of an European landscape—the mingling of earth with sky, the blending of distant colours, the haze that envelops far off mountains, the clouds that lower on the horizon or roll athwart the heavens, present more materials for a painter; but I doubt whether the eye can receive keener pleasure than from the sight of a country like that in which we were arrived, where nothing seemed to exist that could intercept the fierce embraces of the sun.

An hour's ride in the evening through salt marshes, fields, and groves brought us to another spring, near which we determined to pass the night. It was on the westerly border of a great palm-grove, round the north of which we had come, making a long circuit to avoid the salt-marshes. When we halted it was already twilight, and we could see nothing around us but a small hamlet, a little plain, dense woods on every hand, and to the south, boldly pencilled against the sky, the village of Gharmy on its lofty rock. For my part I was glad enough of a stoppage, as I began to feel burning thirst and other symptoms of approaching illness. We pitched our tent on a little hillock, and were soon snug enough, in spite of the wind that arose on the coming on of darkness. During all the time we were at Siwah, and at its little dependency Garah, we noticed that no sooner had night set in than there was a rush of cool air from some direction, generally from a northerly one, into the valley.

The people continued tolerably civil, and the inhabitants of a neighbouring village brought us some enormous onions, delicious yellow dates, and a few pomegranates, with a small kind of cake, as a present. Whilst we sipped our tea, and congratulated one another on our safe arrival, they sat outside, partly conversing with us, partly among themselves, and evidently much puzzled

by our arrival. Few of them had ever seen a Frank before, whilst some said they remembered two or three having been there about the time of Hassan Bey Shamashburghi in 1819. These must have been the Baron Minutoli, Linant Bey, M. Drovetti, and Colonel Boutin, who all visited the Oäsis on the occasion of its conquest by the above-mentioned general, trusting to the security which was likely to follow a recent invasion. Since that time no European had ever visited this secluded spot.

Our speculations on these subjects were interrupted by the clatter of horses' and donkeys' hoofs, and we were soon surrounded by a crowd of Sheikhs and great people from Siwah-el-Kebir itself. Greybeards and white burnouses came crowding pell-mell through the darkness, and a pyramid of inquisitive faces was soon piled up at the doorway of our tent, in the full glare of the lantern. If they thought us as queer-looking as they themselves certainly were, I excuse them for the looks of piggish astonishment which they interchanged as they squatted down for some time, jabbering together like monkeys in their outlandish jargon. It was somewhat doubtful whether the visit was intended for Sheikh Yunus or for ourselves. The former was honoured with the first attentions of these important personages, who catechised him closely on his motives in bringing us thither, and seemed not at all satisfied with his explanations. It soon appeared very plainly that we were by no means welcome. They cast upon us the eye of suspicion, and wrapped themselves up in the mantle of distrust. Without being uncharitable, we may suppose they wished us anywhere but in their territory; and if I may judge by their faces, it was not for lack of silent invocations that our eyes were not trodden out, and that our beards remained undefiled. However, though manifestly perplexed and uneasy, they seemed inclined at first to make the best of a bad bargain; and one of them, who seemed to be exercising an admitted rigour or to discharge a special duty, drew near and questioned us with constrained politeness, but pretty closely, and delivered our answers to the ill-looking mob outside. They were evidently quite surprised at the familiarity with which we spoke of the positions of various spots in the Oäsis, especially the ruins; and seeing that we occasionally referred to a book, asked if all these things were down in a register. Not being able to comprehend our real object,



they seemed floating between two suppositions: one that we were treasure-seekers—the other that we came to prepare a new, perhaps heavier, system of taxation. In neither character were we likely to be regarded with great good will. After some conversation, they asked us for our passport, which being in due form, gave them something to think about. Still, on leaving us that evening, they had clearly not quite made up their minds as to how they should act. The firmân enjoined one thing, but their bigotry and suspicion counselled another. Our safety, then, depended on the result of a conflict between fear and malice in the minds of a set of fanatical barbarians, almost deprived of intercourse with the rest of the world, who believe Christians to be the vilest of God's creatures, and whose ethnological ideas represent us English as a degraded race without a home, wandering about the ocean in ships—the French as a people of blacks, dwelling, like Troglodytes, on a great mountain, in caves and holes in the rocks! Most of their ideas of the Nasára are derived from the antiquities of their own Oâsis, which is full of small catacombs, looked upon by them as the abodes of the beastly nation that preceded them.

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## CHAPTER XI.

Push on to the Capital, Siwah-el-Kebír — Pass the Mountain of the Dead — Description of the City of Salt — The Siwah Rabble collects — How we were stared at — Gloomy bigotry of the people — Their Appearance and Costume — An Egyptian Trader — Visit to the Catacombs in the Mountain of the Dead — View from its Summit — Scenery of the Oäsis — Available Land of the Oäsis — The grand Divan of Siwah — Deliberations concerning us — We are refused admission to the inner town, on account of its being the common Harím — General ill-treatment — A polite Sheikh.

I WAS not well the next morning ; and indeed during my whole stay in the Oäsis suffered from a slight dysentery, which did not, however, prevent me from moving about and exploring, though I in part attribute to it some of the incompleteness of my researches. We left our ground at half-past eight o'clock, and made for the nearest of the three conical hills I have before mentioned. This proved to be Gebel-el-Mouta, or the Mountain of the Dead, which, as we approached, appeared to be perfectly honeycombed with catacombs. Their entrances were arranged in lines along the face of the hill, looking like the windows of a ruined building. I have scarcely ever seen so curious a sight as this huge rock hewn into a sepulchre. There was once a proposal to build a pyramid near London full of passages and recesses to receive the thousand a week that go to their last account. Here was the idea in some sort realized. From top to bottom, on every side, were the chambers of the dead perforated in the imposing mass before us ; and as I afterwards found, the excavations have been carried towards the centre and even through and through.

Leaving this interesting object to our right we pressed on towards the great salt-meadow intersected with brooks, that stretches to the north of the town, and serves as a halting-ground for the caravans that arrive from the desert. A great number of camels and Bedawins now occupied it : but passing these, we



advanced at once to Siwah-el-Kebír itself; and having crossed a ditch or stream, encamped in an irregular triangle on the north-east side, formed by an enclosed palm-grove at our backs; a wall, through a break in which we had passed, on our right; and another wall in front, over which the huge form of the town or castle, with its innumerable loop-holes or windows, reared itself. Near the left angle of this open space were some houses forming a kind of suburb.

Siwah-el-Kebír, or Siwah the Great, as the capital of the Oâsis is called, constitutes a most remarkable object in itself; but it is difficult to present an idea of it by words. From our tent it wore the appearance of an immense castellated building or citadel, with very lofty perpendicular walls flanked by buttresses or towers; and with houses appearing over the battlements rising tier above tier to a point where a cluster of one or two small buildings crowns the whole, and may be thought to resemble a watch-tower or keep. A great number of dwelling-places are clustered round the base and spread on all sides; but these are only looked upon as suburbs. The construction of the town is peculiar; but though the objects of defence are well answered they do not appear to have been chiefly considered in the plan, which flowed from the singular character and manners of its inhabitants. The site originally chosen was the summit and sides of one of two pointed hills, or rather masses of rock, that rose direct out of the level plain. This hill seems to have been first covered with a mass of closely-packed houses, with narrow streets or lanes between. As the population increased, the irregular octagon was not spread far and wide around, but began to ascend aloft into the air—house upon house, street upon street, quarter upon quarter, until it became a beehive and not a town. The Siwahí architects appear not to have seen that light was good: how a single ray can penetrate into any of the inner buildings it is difficult to understand. The outer ones have little square windows disposed triangularly. In most parts of the place the streets are covered over, as at Garah, and of course pitch-dark even by day, so that any one who is about to enter, as naturally takes his lantern as if he were sallying forth after gunfire in an Egyptian city. It was amusing to see our Bedawíns thus providing themselves in the midst of some of the most bril-

liant days I have ever witnessed. On what system the passages of communication are arranged I cannot tell, as we were not permitted to ascertain: all I know from my own observation is, that house is leaned against house, and story raised above story, round the central rock, to a great elevation, and that the backs of the outer buildings, regularly corresponding, form a vast wall encompassing the city, of the height of more than a hundred feet. Several houses have been begun outside and carried up to different points; these produce the effect of flanking towers; and, with the nine entrances resembling very small postern-gates, ascended to by steps, help to give to Siwah the appearance of a fortified place, which indeed it may, to a certain extent, be considered. Near the northern extremity is the chimney-like minaret of a mosque, from which the Muezzin at stated hours, not exactly those prescribed in the Muslim ritual, pokes out his head, like a London sweep, and calls the faithful to prayers. The wall is not quite regular, being in some places much lower than in others. There are open spaces in the town; and in one of them the Divan is held; but the greater part appears to be a mass of closely-packed houses, divided by corridors that probably wind spirally round the central rock.

The cause of this singular mode of building was, that when the son of a family married, his father, according to immemorial custom, built him a house, not in the suburbs or by the side of his own, but on the top: every succeeding generation did the same, as though this barbarian people had determined to imitate the Tower of Babel and climb the skies. They stopped short, however, within reasonable limits; the great grandson of a defunct constructive genius perhaps deeming it safer to occupy the lower rooms left vacant by his forefathers than to be thrust aloft into the air to the dizzy height which some have attained, and so the accumulative process at length ceased, after having carried the pinnacles of the place to a vast height. It is probable that successive generations push one another up and down as the stories become vacant, so that whilst in one pile of buildings the chief of a long line is at the bottom, in another he is at the top!

You must know, moreover, that not among the Spartans was marriage held in higher honour than among the people of Siwah. Neither bachelor nor widower is allowed to dwell permanently



within the walls or to remain on a visit after sunset. As soon as the young men reach a certain age they are driven forth to build themselves dwellings in the suburbs; and when a wife dies, sentence of expulsion is forthwith passed on her disconsolate partner; for this reason it is that on every side numerous houses exist, but especially towards the north, where there is a regular quarter round the base of the second conical hill. The shape of this hill is curious; it is filled with excavations and catacombs, and rises in strata of diminishing extent until, at the top, a huge mass of stone appears, to a fanciful eye, in the form of a lion couchant.

I have already hinted that Siwah is built of fossil salt, or rather earth in which salt is mixed in great proportions, sometimes more than half, and this circumstance, curious in itself, becomes the more so from the fact that, as long ago as the age of Herodotus, the people of these regions built their dwellings of the same material, and that the Father of History, for recording this among other incredible facts, gained the name of the Father of Lies.\* It was extremely interesting to us to detach portions from the walls that rose on every side, and to see, on breaking them, the pure salt white and sparkling within, whilst without, of course, dust and dirt and heat had imparted a greyish hue. I imagine that, as at Garah, rafters of the palm-tree enter plentifully into the construction of the whole pile.

Whilst we sat under the shade of the garden wall smoking our pipes and leisurely contemplating the scene that presented itself, we became the objects of the unintelligent curiosity of the bees or rather drones of the hive before us. Up they came, strutting with that air of monstrous arrogance which no one who is unsteeped in the treble darkness of Muslim pride can assume, to gaze at the new comers. There was no salute, no expression of welcome; we had got into an atmosphere of intense bigotry. During our morning's ride we had already felt the change. No hands were extended to press ours, no peace was invoked upon our heads; every face on the road was averted, every eye scowled in hatred, every lip curled in scorn. The curses, however, that were no doubt heaped upon us as we passed were expressed in

\* Pliny (v. 5) mentions an oâsis in which the people built their houses of salt.



their own frightful jargon, and did not therefore offend our ears except by the unmusical succession of sounds.

Well, as I have said, the Siwahí rabble collected around us, and we were soon the objects of an universal stare. Had they laughed at our appearance I should have forgiven them: four such guys as we were had never before surely entered their territories. One sported a nightcap surmounted by an old grey hat much the worse for wear, and a brown holland suit, which at starting scarce contained his portly form, but now hung loose about it; another had decked himself out in a tarboosh and an indescribable summer coat; the brows of a third were surmounted by a huge turban, and he was wrapped in a flannel jacket, in which, according to the necessities of the journey, he had slashed innumerable extempore pockets; whilst your humble servant was overshadowed by an enormous truncated cone formed by a beaver hat with a brim six inches broad, and a white linen covering stretched tight over from the crown to the outer edge. True that there was some attempt at respectability in the shape of clean shirts and trousers, but these could not conceal the fact that we had been knocking about for nearly three weeks in the desert, generally *sub divo*, and always too fatigued at our halts to pay much attention to the toilet: as to shaving, nobody ever thought of such a thing; our faces, too, were burned black with the sun, and several noses were regularly skinned.

But the Siwahís—"May misfortune come to them!"—did not see the comical side of the question. We were Christians, infidels, dogs, had made our appearance under suspicious circumstances, and claimed the protection of a hated authority. Nothing therefore but a vague fear of consequences prevented them from stoning us to death on the spot. I am persuaded that our arrival had been the theme of conversation all night, and that the most fanatical of this fanatical brood had been holding forth on the necessity of giving us a warm reception, whilst the more liberal and timid had counselled our being treated with silent contempt. Be this as it may, they came in sullen silence to gaze at us, and generally went away with looks of gloomy hatred: even the boys eyed us over with the gravity of men, and we made the remarkable observation that neither on this occasion nor on any other did a single smile illumine their sombre features.



Most of the rabble before us were men of middle size and slender make, with sallow complexions and small unmeaning features. As at Garah there were some of a half-negro cast of countenance, besides a number of real blacks, who by the way were often good-humoured, and deigned sometimes to distend their mouths with a grin and show us their white teeth. These are for the most part slaves employed as household servants. Of course not a single woman mingled with the crowd. The usual dress was a white or brown shirt descending nearly to the ankles and furnished with long loose sleeves, and a white *takiah* or linen skull-cap. Very few wore the more expensive tarboosh, but some had a *litham* or scarf of checked blue and white cotton cloth thrown over the head with one end depending in front, whilst the other was wrapped round the chin, hiding part of the mouth and cast back over the left shoulder: this head-dress is rather becoming and graceful, and has long prevailed among certain nations of Northern Africa. Leo explains the custom by saying that the mouth, as the aperture that received food, was a part that propriety forbade to be left uncovered.

Whilst we were interchanging stares with our uncivil hosts a turbaned man came up in a blue shirt, and we at once recognised the Egyptian. He proved to be an Arab merchant from the Saïd or Upper Egypt, engaged in the grain trade. We learned that he crossed the desert once every season with a supply of wheat, rice, and beans, which he disposed of in small parcels, as the arrival of the Bedawins to buy dates brought a few dollars into the hands of the Siwahis. He smoked a pipe with us and seemed inclined to be useful in giving information, though somewhat in awe of his customers.

I walked this morning to Gebel Mouta to amuse myself by exploring the catacombs. A man who observed me taking this direction shouted to me to come back, but I affected not to hear and pursued my way; he was occupied with a drove of donkeys and did not follow me. There was nothing particular in any of the excavations to reward my search. The largest was about sixty feet in depth, and composed of several vaulted chambers, with a choked-up well and some side rooms and passages lighted by long loopholes from the main apartments. Bones and even human hair were scattered about, but there were no hierogly-

phics or paintings except a few ornamental scrolls in blue and red. The curiosity of the hill consists in the extraordinary number of these receptacles of the dead crowded into so small a space. The greater part of the substance of the mountain seemed to have been hewn away. I cannot understand how Browne, who was so many days in the Oâsis, could have written that this hill contains only about thirty catacombs, when the most cursory glance from any point of view reveals an immense number of entrances: his mistake as to the general dimensions is more easily accounted for, as he may have grown weary of examining chamber after chamber.

X I ascended with some difficulty to the top, which is nearly pointed, and obtained a splendid view of the whole Oâsis. Magnificent palm groves waved their feathery summits at my feet for an extent of several miles. Beyond these, to the east and west, were the snowy salt-marshes and the shining lakes; whilst in the latter direction the great square form of Edrar Amelal, or the White Mountain, with the conical hills of Kamyseh and Amoudein, closed up the valley. Southward, as far as the eye could reach, were waves of sand that sometimes rose into hills; and to the south-east the five-peaked mountain I have before mentioned reared its solitary form. I strained my eyes in the direction of Om Beydah, or the Temple of Jupiter Ammon, which I knew lay near the foot of a picturesque village on a hill that towered over the palm-trees due east, but could not discover what I sought. Near at hand the town of Siwah, and a little farther on the companion rocks of Sid Hamet, formed bold features in the scene; and to the north the long unbroken range of red limestone hills bounded the view. Om el Yûs could also of course be seen, like a giant watching over the entrance of the valley.

It is difficult to convey an idea of the pleasure I experienced in viewing the prospect that developed itself on all sides around me. It could scarcely have possessed more elements of the beautiful. The verdure, the lakes, and the arid hills may be found elsewhere, and be deemed to afford contrasts sufficiently striking; but perhaps here alone are added in such close juxtaposition the glittering desert and the snowy fields of salt looking like vast glaciers just beginning to melt beneath that sultry clime.



In addition to this view, which may be obtained with little variety from almost any of the hills I have mentioned, many details of the scenery of the Oäsis are extremely pleasing. I never wish to enjoy prettier walks than some of those we took during our stay. There is generally a garden-wall or a fence on either hand of the lanes, with pomegranate-trees bursting over it in redundant luxuriance, and hanging their rich tempting purple fruit within reach of the hand, or the deep-green fig-tree, or the apricot, or the huge ragged leaf of the banana, or the olive, or the vine. The spaces between these are not left idle, being carpeted with a copious growth of bersim and lucerne that loads the air with its fragrance, and is often chequered with spots of a green light that steals in through the branchy canopy above. Sometimes a tiny brook shoots its fleet waters along by the wayside, or lapses slowly with eddying surface, rustling gently between grassy banks or babbling over a pebbly bed. Here and there a rude bridge of palm-trunks is thrown across, but the glassy current frequently glides at will athwart the road. At one place there is a meadow; at another, a copse; but on all sides the date-trees fling up their columnar forms and wave aloft their leafy capitals. Occasionally a huge blue crane sails by on flagging wing to alight on the margin of some neighbouring pool; the hawk or the falcon soars or wheels far up in the air; the dove sinks fluttering on the bough; the quail starts up with its short, strong, whirring flight; and sparrows, with numerous other small predatory birds, go sweeping across the fields. Sometimes you may observe the hard-working black turning up huge clods with his mattock; asses are driven past laden with dried "aghoul;" files of camels move along in the distance on the borders of the desert. From some points the castellated capital is descried down a long vista, or the village of Gharmy rises aloft on its inaccessible rock, or the majestic fragment of the sanctuary of Ammon, which has so bravely stood the brunt of ages, may be seen still standing erect in the midst of its silent glade. X

The available land in the Oäsis consists of a piece of ground about five miles long and three or four broad, situated in the centre of a long valley, that extends for sixteen or seventeen miles, nearly in an east and west direction from Om el Yus to

Edrar Amelal; and of some small dependencies or colonies, one at the eastern entrance called Zeitún, others, as Kamyseh and Beled-er-Rum, or the City of the Greeks, lying in a cluster at the extreme west. It must always be kept in mind that the central and principal division is nearly insulated by great salt-lakes and marshes, which in some places intermingle with and penetrate the patches of fertile ground, so that it is difficult to say where one ends and the other begins. Many of the springs of the Oäsis are quite salt, whilst others may be called sweet. The latter rise by the side of the former and flow in the same direction; so that, for example, of two brooks that intersect the encamping ground north of the city, one is potable and one quite briny.

On returning to the tent I found that our relations with the people of Siwah had undergone no amelioration, indeed rather the contrary. From what we could learn, they were in a state of great excitement about us; and the Sheikhs, in divan assembled, were deliberating on the course of conduct they were to pursue. Through the medium of Sheikh Yúnus we had made a formal demand of assistance from these people in the shape of a supply of donkeys to carry us about on our excursions, whilst our own weary and jaded beasts were allowed to rest. The first communication we received in reply was a demand for our firmân, which we sent in. It was evident that "we dare not" waited upon "we would" in the minds of these people, and that fear alone prevented them from at once ordering us off. According to the accounts we received there was a stormy debate in the divan. Some were for disregarding the passport altogether, and refusing us all aid and assistance; others voted that we should be granted part of what we demanded. On one point, however, all seemed unanimous—we were not to be allowed to enter the city.

Of course, had the people of Siwah been perfectly agreeable, we should have indulged ourselves with a walk through the streets of their queer-looking abode; but as the wish to see it had had no influence in inducing us to undertake the journey, and as we had already inspected a village—on a smaller scale it is true, but similar in construction—we were not sorry that the wiseacres of the place chose to exhibit obstinacy on this point rather than on



any other. What we feared was that they would throw in our way the same obstacles as in that of former travellers who wished to see the temple of Jupiter Ammon. We were none of us antiquarians, it must be confessed, and had rather made this ruin an excuse than an object of our journey; but to have been turned back without being permitted to behold it would have been exceedingly mortifying. I think we took the best way to compass our ends by assuming comparative indifference on this score, and affecting to insist on admission to the town. We demanded, however, what they were resolved not to grant. They looked upon the place as one vast harim. People of their own nation, as I have said, if unmarried, are jealously excluded at night, so are strangers of every description; and we were told that the streets were full of women employed in carrying water, grinding corn, or performing other offices connected with their domestic affairs. Had this statement been made to us at first, we should perhaps have thought it proper at once to acquiesce in their decision. At any rate we should not have felt angry with them. It was the insolence of the rabble, and the tergiversation and uncertain conduct of the Sheikhs, combined with their incivility in refusing to come out and hold a conference with us, since they would not permit us to come in to them, that raised our indignation.

The decision of the Sheikhs was finally communicated, and it was this: that we should be supplied with donkeys and guides, and allowed to visit any part of the Oäsis, but not permitted to enter the gates of the city. Punctuality and faithfulness in carrying out this compromise would have left us no cause to complain; but during our whole residence we were subject to a variety of little annoyances which I may as well mention here, but which went on increasing in proportion as the bigoted party gained the ascendancy. In the first place, the children cursed us at a distance, and now and then sent a stone in our direction; the demeanour of the people was ostentatiously uncivil; and if we took a walk in the neighbourhood of the gates, we were surrounded by a mob that kept talking *at*, not *to* us, and tried to excite one the other to drive the Nasára back to their tent. If a single one among them had plucked up courage to strike a blow, I have no doubt it would have been the signal for a massacre. On one occasion the fanatics despatched us an order, which we of

course disregarded, not to stir from our encamping-ground; and when, annoyed by their ill treatment, we announced our intention of entering the town in spite of them, they collected armed with guns and spears, and loud threats to put us to death if we attempted it. We were not sorry that they expressed their feelings in this explicit manner, as we should not have felt justified in complying with their prejudices unless there was a certainty that we should otherwise incur a risk disproportionate to the object to be attained.

Our endeavours to procure provisions were almost always unsuccessful, and we should have very probably been starved out had we not had our own supply to fall back upon. One of the few civil Siwahí sent us, it is true, a bowl of rice cooked with oil and flavoured with red pepper, and there was a constant influx of pomegranates and dates. I remember also that we procured, during our stay, two doves, eleven eggs, and a basin of oil, with some unroasted coffee; but our desire to buy a sheep was frustrated by their refusal to take the Pasha's money. Every transaction was accompanied with impediments of some description, and it required the greatest patience and firmness to bring anything to a satisfactory conclusion.

After the resolve of the high and mighty Sheikhs of Siwah had been communicated to us, we were waiting patiently for the means of beginning our researches when a visitor was announced. We received him among our carpet-bags and baggage piled at the back of the tent. He was a broad-faced pale man, with a good-humoured expression; wore a tarboosh, a white burnoose, and sported a small blunderbuss. Apparently he was an ambitious character: at any rate, however, he was a polite one, for he sat down and made a speech full of elegant compliments, divided into firstly, secondly, thirdly, and lastly, and containing the reasons why he disapproved of the inhospitable manner in which the Sheikhs seemed inclined to treat us. It turned out that he himself was only an ex-Sheikh, having abdicated, not like Sylla because he was satiated with glory, but, like other great men, because he could not help it. It appears that he had received an appointment from the Pasha of Egypt as one of the head men of the place, and had once possessed a firmân to that effect; but the other Sheikhs had refused to acknowledge him,



pushing their audacity so far as to tear up the parchment. He was biding his time, and meanwhile reigned supreme in a little suburb. We certainly met with no other really polite man in this outlandish place, and his civility continued unabated to the end. Most of the presents we received came from him. The donkeys we did at last procure were his. Among his other attentions he ordered a black fellow, not a negro however, who it was said bore the office of showish or policeman of the town, to attend on us during our stay, which he did. I suspect this sable gentleman was dignified with an official title, in order, if possible, to soothe our wounded feelings.

In spite of the good-will, however, of Sheikh Yusuf, things did not go on so smoothly as we could have wished. Towards evening, it is true, when it was too late, three donkeys at last came; but as they would not have sufficed, even if they had made their appearance in time, for four people, we were not at all satisfied, and sent them back rather gruffly. We did not know then that these were not official donkeys, but furnished by Sheikh Yusuf, who was really ashamed of the inhospitality of his countrymen. As is usually the case, the vote of the divan in our favour, being carried only by a small majority, was completely unattended to when any active assistance was in question. The only service it rendered us was to give us a certain freedom of action, and enable us to move about with some security.

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## CHAPTER XII.

Visit to the Temple of Jupiter Ammon — Description of the Sanctuary — Hieroglyphics — Images, &c. — Reflections — The Fountain of the Sun — The Palace of the Ancient Kings — Subterranean Passages — See some Women — Their Costume — Ride to the Catacombs of Sid Hamet, and climb the Five-peaked Mountain of Edrar Abou Bryk — The Tribe of "Ropemakers" — Large Sepulchral Chambers — Civil Arab — Return to the encampment — Popular feeling against us — A Burial at Night — Ride across the Salt Lakes to the White Mountain and the City of the Greeks — Ruins of Temples — Catacombs, &c. — Theological conversation — The Two Columns — Bird's-eye View of the Oâsis — Raisins, &c. — Return — Further Explorations — The Date Market — Varieties of Dates.

ON the morning of October the 5th we at length determined no longer to allow our visit to the Temple of Jupiter Ammon to be deferred, and the whole party was about to start on foot, when two donkeys and as many men, one of them the civil showish, made their appearance. I and Longshaw mounted them, Lamport and Forty preferring to walk, and we set off. Our guides took us into a narrow winding lane, between two low walls, of the usual material, namely, earth mixed with salt. These enclosed gardens, filled with palm and other fruit trees, and carefully cultivated likewise in the interspaces; presently a lazy brook bordered our way, and, further on, it became a swift gurgling streamlet. During our ride we observed no traces of hamlets or detached houses, but on emerging from the first palm-grove came to some broad fields in which a number of blacks were at work. It appears that these were the slaves of the great men. The instrument they used was of a curious shape, the handle being long and straight, and the iron as broad as an English spade, brought round so as to form an enormous mattock. The labourers threw the clods between their legs, so that they had their work before them instead of behind.

After crossing the open fields, in an easterly direction, we



entered another vast grove, and soon came under the south-west side of the village of Gharmy (the Agremieh of Hornemann and the Siwah-el-Sharjeh of Minutoli). It is situated on the summit of a lofty precipitous rock—the houses hanging over and piled up as in Garah. Possibly in the palmy days of the Ammonian state it was covered with the fortified palace of the ancient kings; but I cannot bring the detailed account of Diodorus into any reasonable agreement with the present state of the locality. He speaks of a sort of town, surrounded by a triple wall, one enclosing the palace, another embracing the temple, and a sacred fountain with the habitations of the women; a third containing the military force. Now if the ruins of Om Beydah are those of the celebrated temple, and there is no good reason for doubting that they are, the second enclosure alone must have included a very large portion of the most fertile territory; and the third, if proportion was at all regarded, taken in the whole grove. I am disposed to think it more probable that there were three independent enclosures, in which case Gharmy might have been one, the present Siwah a second, and the Temenos of the temple a third. However, this is a question not perhaps to be settled at present.

Three or four hundred paces to the south of the village we at length observed a dark mass of ruins rising on a slightly elevated platform of rock, in the centre of an open glade. We knew at once that this was the object of our visit, and leaping from our saddles, pressed forward with beating hearts to the spot. A few strides over broken fragments of rock and formless ruins placed us beneath the shadow of the vast blocks which, probably many thousand years before, had been upraised to form the roof of a sanctuary in which one of the most venerable oracles of ancient times was wont to pronounce its sententious decisions.

The remains of the temple may be described in a few words. The first object that strikes the eye as you approach is one side of a ruined gateway, standing immediately in front of the fragment of a chamber, which appears much smaller than it is on account of the vastness of the blocks that form the roof. Around the base of this elevated portion of the ruin are heaped up in picturesque confusion huge masses of calcareous stone, several fragments of the shafts of columns, and two or three capitals of

alabaster, whilst the surface of the ground on all sides is covered with excavations, pieces of walls, and other indications that of yore there must have existed a considerable pile of buildings on this spot.

From the traces still remaining I should judge that the temple was enclosed by a wall of immense thickness, nearly four hundred feet from north to south, and rather more than three hundred feet from east to west. Towards the south-east angle a considerable portion may be easily made out, based on the rock and composed of large blocks of stone. Whether there was a second or inner enclosure I could not ascertain, but am inclined to think that the interior was filled up by a variety of chambers and buildings, possibly the residences of the priests, as several holes dug by the natives in search of treasure admit one to a view of solid foundations of walls and small chambers at various points. Probably some idea of the plan of the ancient structure might even now be obtained by carefully clearing away the accumulated rubbish.

As I have intimated there was a central apartment or sanctuary about fifty feet in length and sixteen in width. Of this only the northern end still remains. Its construction was peculiar. The side walls, nearly six feet in thickness, were built of comparatively small blocks, whilst the roof consisted of long beams of stone, if I may so express myself, twenty-seven feet in length, and four in breadth and depth, stretching from side to side, and projecting a little beyond the walls so as to form a kind of cornice on the outside. Three of these are still aloft, and I counted the fragments of ten more strewed about, which enables us to calculate pretty correctly the original length of the apartment. Most probably this was the sanctuary of the building, the place where the oracles were delivered. If I may judge from the ruins of Beled-er-Rum, which seem a modern imitation of the original building, I should say that the gateway was united to the body of the sanctuary by thin side walls, pierced with windows through which light entered. The person who wished to consult the oracle most probably penetrated no farther than this spot, whilst the priest, stationed at the farther end of the apartment, in the deep shade of its Druidical roof, delivered the mysterious responses of the god.



A few feet from the north end of the sanctuary is the eastern side of a massive stone gateway with perpendicular jambs. It is covered with hieroglyphics and figures in a style that may be said to partake both of intaglio and rilievo, as also are the walls of the chamber itself. In the roof are the representations of eagles or vultures, with outstretched wings, flying one behind the other, on a ground interspersed with stars. It appears that all these were originally painted blue and red, as traces of these colours still remain. There are fifty-five lines or rather columns of hieroglyphics on the west side of the chamber, and fifty-three on the east. Underneath are processions of figures with tablets above their heads.

Among the heap of ruins round the fragment of the gateway, many of which are covered with hieroglyphics, is to be found a block of stone, having on three sides sculptured representations of an ugly personage with ram's horns. I will not decide whether or not this was meant for the Krioprosopic Zeus, but confess my curiosity was somewhat raised on catching a glimpse of the hideous face through the crevices left between the enormous fragmental masses beneath which it is buried. I experienced some difficulty in getting down to it, but, by sitting in a constrained posture, succeeded in making a sketch. I endeavoured also to copy some of the hieroglyphics, but from my want of knowledge and practice could do nothing worth while. The important tablets, moreover, are so high-placed that they could not be taken except by means of a scaffolding or ladder; neither of which, considering the state of our relations with the people of the Oäsis, was to be thought of for a moment. I saw a cartouche high up on a portion of the gateway, but, although blessed with pretty good eyesight, could not make out the letters with sufficient certainty to copy them. As to the figures of gods or kings, or heroes with their various emblems which ornament the whole surface of the walls, they can scarcely be explained without the assistance of the inscription. It may be worth while to mention that the camel occurs as a hieroglyphical character, as well as a bird resembling the ostrich.

My description of the remains of this celebrated temple is brief, perhaps unsatisfactory. The truth is, that to say anything very interesting about it would require an amount of architec-

tural and antiquarian knowledge which has not fallen to my lot. For my part, moreover, I do not pretend to have been able to make more than a cursory examination, just sufficient to convince myself that I was really standing amidst the ruins of a temple wherein rites were once performed as ancient in origin as those of Dodona, perhaps on the very spot where Alexander first heard himself assured of his divine parentage. Around me all was ruin and decay. One single fragment only of this vast building was uncrushed beneath the heavy foot of time. Tablets in an unknown language stared at me unmeaningly from crumbling walls. Figures of almost forgotten races—probably of unrecorded dynasties—developed themselves in stately files. I should have liked to come after darkness had descended upon the earth, and the sun's too powerful glare no longer revealed all the mournful devastation around; what time by the moon's uncertain beams in the heavy shade of the palm-woods that would keep up an incessant murmur as of spirits talking in the air, I might have built up again in imagination this antique fabric. I might at least have allowed my thoughts to wander back to the traditionary period when mystic, perhaps dreadful rites, were performed within this now unhallowed fane, when processions of grave Hierodouloi moved through its sombre halls and galleries, when oracular voices muttered along its ponderous roof, when wealthy caravans halted at its gates to acknowledge or to implore protection against the dangers of the waterless desert. I might have been able to picture to myself the tumult and dismay that was created in this tranquil spot of earth by the intelligence that in the distant land of Egypt an army of fifty thousand men was collecting to destroy their temples and their idols, and smite their priests and their kings with the edge of the sword, and carry off their sons and their daughters into captivity. Solemn rites were no doubt then performed within these now silent walls; and cries of frantic piety rose amidst those vast groves. And when Cambyzes' mighty armament was shipwrecked on the sea of sand upon which it had too daringly launched, what cries of joy were raised! what sounding of cymbals and beating of drums! what glances of triumph lit up the eyes of aged and timid priests! how much more gallantly did stout young heroes sing the song of defiance and tell admiring



damsels what deeds of valour they would have done in their country's cause !

But neither these nor any other pictures was I allowed leisure to paint. The impatient showish and his companion who drove the donkeys were hurrying us away ; and as we did not know how long the lull might continue at Siwah, and observed a suspicious group of people on the outskirts of the palm-grove, we thought it best to glance over as much as we could without dallying. We accordingly proceeded south along the banks of a little winding stream, and plunging into a delightfully cool grove, soon reached the Fountain of the Sun. It is a very deep and remarkably clear pool ; in ancient times enclosed with masonry, fragments of which still remain. Tradition says that the water, which has a slightly bitter taste, is hot at midnight and cool at midday. We tried its temperature and found it at half-past nine o'clock in the morning exactly the same as the surrounding atmosphere, namely, only  $84^{\circ}$ . The surface is continually covered with bubbles, which rise from the bottom and give the pool the appearance of being in an almost continual state of effervescence. The spot is exceedingly beautiful ; a little hollow as it were in the grove, with a translucent and yet disturbed expanse of water, the remains of the broken fountain strewn upon the brink and half concealed by a growth of rushes and reeds twined with wreaths of creeping plants—the works of art shattered and moss-grown—the spring gay and laughing as ever—reminding one of the ruin of the body and the enduring youth of the mind. A small stream takes a gentle leap over a diminutive barrier and goes whispering on its way through a shadowy bed towards the mouldering temple. We lingered some time at this place, now looking at the shred of sky reflected in the busy waters ; now at the blue sky itself ; now at the fruit-trees that pressed in tangled luxuriance around ; and now at the long vistas that opened on all hands between the palms like the aisles of a great cathedral.

The accounts which the ancients give of the Fountain of the Sun are remarkably uniform. All describe the variations of its temperature in nearly the same language ; and I have no doubt that their observation was perfectly correct. Ammonium was for a long period a place comparatively easy of access, and

travellers were constantly going and returning. On questioning the natives of Siwah on the properties of this fountain, I found it impossible to extract anything from them; but the Bedawins had heard of its regular change of temperature from hot at midnight to cold at midday. A stay of ten minutes did not of course enable us to verify the tradition; but the fact of our thermometer remaining unaffected by immersion in the water would seem to indicate that it is a hot spring. Probably it may be very hot at night and comparatively cool in the day. As I have mentioned, the water supplies a little stream, which taking a northerly course and being joined at a little distance by another, runs towards the temple, where it is lost, being used up in irrigation, or absorbed in a marsh that extends to the foot of the remains of the old enclosing wall. Herodotus mentions that the water of the fountain was used to fertilize the gardens; but adds that it was only at midday, at the time of its greatest coolness, that it was allowed to reach them.

We had heard of some other ancient remains in this neighbourhood; but though we peered over the fences, made of dry reeds, ornamented with a delicate creeper, and asked all sorts of questions, we could not discover any traces of them. After proceeding down the beautiful shady lane a little farther, we returned, and made some ineffectual researches to the westward. We found nothing but palm-groves and meadows.

Returning by another path towards the village of Gharmy we searched about among the orchards at its eastern base, and discovered the traces of some extensive stone building; but I could not make out any form. A few large blocks remaining entire suggested the idea that the outworks of the fortress might have extended thus far. We approached as near as we could to the entrance of the village, but were warned off. The walls seemed to contain several hewn stones of enormous size that may have belonged to an ancient Ammonian structure, perhaps the palace of the kings. I regretted not being able to examine the interior of this village, which most probably contains some curious remains. One of the Siwahí informed me that in the court of the chief sheikh's house was an opening like that of a well, leading to a subterranean passage said to communicate with Gebel Mouta. By his account, if such a passage really exist, I should



say it contains catacombs on either hand ; for he compared it to a street, having the houses of the Christians on either hand. A different informant told me that he had discovered a subterranean passage in one of the tombs of Gebel Mouta leading into the bowels of the earth ; and that he had gone along it for some distance, but was afraid to prosecute the search. We may therefore perhaps take it for granted that the existence of these communications is generally credited in the Oäsis. Another underground corridor is reported to lead from the same village of Gharmy to the ruin at Om Beydah. It may be as well to add that I was told of the existence of extensive excavations in the hill on which the town of Siwah is built. The house on the summit moreover is said to be supported by the roof of a building something similar in character to the great temple itself. It is not at all improbable that the remains of an ancient town are concealed under the comparatively modern Siwah el Kebîr.

In one of the lanes in this neighbourhood we met three women, one white and two black ; they unanimously covered their ugly faces as we approached with their checked melayas. Excepting one other in the neighbourhood of Siwah, these were the only women we saw during our stay. There was nothing particular to distinguish them from the Egyptians ; they had nose-rings and armlets twisted of brass wire.

In the afternoon I again started on an exploring excursion, mounted on a lame donkey. My object was to examine the two hills that rise in company out of the borders of the desert about a mile south of Siwah, and bear the name of Sid Hamet. On the way I passed near the forbidden gates of the town, and through what may be called the eastern suburb. I had now an opportunity of observing the appearance of Siwah from the south, and found that it preserved the same character of lofty walls covered with irregularly placed "wind-holes." Along the base of the rock that impends over it were to be seen the openings of numerous catacombs, like those in Gebel-el-Mouta.

There was nothing remarkable in the hills I had come to visit to reward my trouble ; they were steep masses of rock with several caves cut in them, used sometimes for dwelling-places, as appeared from the marks of fire. My guide told me that these were the houses of "The Ropemakers," who were not Siwahis.

Perhaps some wandering tribe, that employs itself in this branch of industry as a chief means of livelihood, may occasionally take up its abode here, resembling in character that degraded race of people that in Egypt professes at least to support itself by making brass rings, and leads a nomadic life among the palm-groves in tents.

From Sid Hamet I proceeded, leaving on my right a small fortified barrack that formerly contained a garrison of Egyptian troops, and took an easterly direction along the mingling limits of the desert and the Oāsis towards the mountain called Edrar Abou Bryk, which rears its five red peaks on the top of a great rounded swell covered with white sand blown up from the plain below. This mass of stone is so vast and solitary, like a cluster of pyramids, that I thought myself almost at its feet at starting; but I was more than an hour working my way towards it through the heavy sand. To my left were the dense palm-woods with numerous clumps at their outskirts; to my right the undulating and hilly desert rising gradually in the distance. Here and there were a few cabins of date-branches, the refuge at night of the men and boys who watch the melon-trenches that occur on all sides. It is a curious sight to see the bright green snake-like stalks and broad leaves of this beneficent plant with its gigantic fruit spreading over the parched surface of the sand. The trenches are dug in order to reach the richer soil below. A similar practice is observable in the neighbourhood of Alexandria, especially on the road to Aboukir.

On reaching the foot of the hill I alighted and toiled up on foot; it was a much more fatiguing undertaking than I had at first anticipated, and I was more than once compelled to avail myself of the assistance of my guide. Just as I reached a glen between two of the peaks the sun set behind the White Rock at the end of the valley, and bathed in golden light for a moment the road to the Oāsis of Augila. I beheld the hills and the desert, and the fields of salt and the groves, tinged with a rosy hue; and then the fleeting twilight of these latitudes rapidly came on and passed and deepened into darkness. I was enabled, however, to distinguish at my feet the deep glade of Om Beydah, in the midst of which rise the solemn and deserted ruins of the Temple of Ammon.



There was barely time for me to penetrate into the two catacombs I had come to visit. They were oblong chambers, each about twenty feet in length and eight or nine high. The roof of one was still supported by two rows of small square pillars cut in the rock; in the others the pillars had been removed, but the rough capitals still remained attached to the roof. In the centre of that which was highest on the side of the mountain appeared the choked up mouth of a well, said to lead to a lower chamber that had formerly been opened in search of treasure. There was nothing in either at all remarkable, except their solitary position. Probably some great man had been buried there for distinction's sake, as Edrar Abou Bryk is the only mountain within the limits of the Oäsis that does not appear to have been used as a common cemetery.

On my return I met a young Arab from the West settled in the country; he accosted me very civilly, talked freely, and insisted on my accepting one of two large water-melons which he was bringing home. It had become very dark, and the road, which lay through lanes and groves, took me past a small hamlet, the lights of which twinkled through the trees. At another, named Minshieh, not far from Siwah, my new acquaintance left me, after I had refused a very pressing invitation to enter his dwelling and partake of the evening meal.

When I reached the tent I found that the excitement among the Siwah people was gradually increasing; it was evident that, if we stayed much longer in this inhospitable place, we should do so at considerable risk. Our Bedawins had been threatened, and our donkey-boys, who ventured to the gates of the town, taken by the throat and insulted as being the servants of Christians.

Whilst we were at supper we heard a great commotion in the town; discordant shrieks and yells burst forth, and red lights flashed across the windows and glared upwards through the few open places that appear to exist within the walls. This was almost the only indication of a common life that had proceeded from the sombre pile before us. A great part of the population was evidently on the move; and we soon understood that a death had taken place, and that a nocturnal procession was hurrying the corpse to the grave. During nearly the whole night the howlings and lamentations continued, but they gradually sub-

sided into an occasional shrill scream, and at length the vast fortress relapsed into complete repose.

Early next morning I again procured a donkey, not lame, it is true, but little larger than a dog, and possessed of a curious habit of sidling along as if there were a contest between his tail and his head which should be first. My object was to proceed to the western extremity of the Oâsis and visit the ruins I had heard of in that direction. They put me this time in charge of a black, who was as talkative as the Siwahis are taciturn, and who contrived, before long, to turn the conversation to religion, and to tell me most good-humouredly that Christians and Jews are allowed the enjoyment of wealth in this world, but that hell-fire is prepared for them in the next. He did not say this by way of denunciation, but stated it as a fact with which I must be acquainted. I could not help wishing that the task of "dealing damnation round the land" should be left to this unenlightened wretch; and that the wise and the pious of my own country would think it better befitting them to widen rather than to contract the sphere of divine mercy. My sable theologian, however, did not allow me much time for such impertinent reflections, and confidentially expressed his willingness to profit by my intimacy with Satan. He was in love with a dark-skinned nymph, whose various charms he described with all the freedom of unsophisticated nature, and begged of me to write him an amulet which should constrain her affections. In vain I professed my inability. He could not believe I had bartered my soul without a good consideration, and evidently thought that nothing short of the possession of the powers of incantation and the wand of the magician could compensate any mortal for remaining without the circle of Islam.

I can only give an idea of the scene that presented itself after passing the cultivated part of the Oâsis, by comparing it, as I have already done, to a vast plain covered with half-thawed snow. The path, or causeway, wound its serpentine length along the centre of this, now bordered with purple patches, now cut up by streaks of water. Here and there, at first, were little islets, with a cluster of tall palms or a few clumps. A hut appeared in one or two places, and I saw several persons attending to the plantations. As I was riding along I heard a shrill voice very



far overhead salute me with the epithet "Nazarene!" (Christian), and looking up beheld a grinning black working his way up the trunk of a tall palm-tree, some sixty feet in height. A brief dialogue was interchanged between my guide and him in a tone between a whine and a scream, during which I endeavoured by digging my knees into my donkey's side to get on. The progress we made, however, was very slow; but at length the great salt-lake or marsh spread out unbroken to the feet of the mountains on one hand, and to the borders of the desert on the other. The reverberation of the sun's rays from its surface was exceedingly disagreeable to the eyes, and I was eager to arrive at the foot of Edrar Amelal, or the White Rock, that rises like a fortress, square, massive, and frowning, at the extremity of the valley. It was true that no shade could be expected, but, at any rate, there were patches of verdure promising to afford an agreeable contrast to the glaring expanse through which I was forced to pick my way. The black showed no inclination to expedite the motions of the refractory animal I bestrode; so it persevered in its peculiar mode of progression—that is to say, advancing sideways or with sudden jerks.

Patience, however, at length had its reward, and I arrived at the Rock, which is nearly precipitous on all sides, whilst the summit is perfectly level. I could distinguish no way of ascent, but my guide asserted that he had once had the curiosity to climb aloft. Not far to the west rises the equally isolated conical hill of Kamyseh, between which and Amoudein, or the Two Columns, there is a narrow pass containing the ruins of a hamlet, and a field or two watered by a small stream that flows into the salt morass and is lost. The hill of Kamyseh is filled with an immense number of catacombs from its base to its summit. I visited several, but all were small, and, though neatly cut, contained nothing of interest. Numerous large caves are to be found in the base.

Beyond these rocks the valley again opened; and to the left, just on the edge of the white sand, which here rose like a bank, covered at intervals with thickets of bushes resembling the hazel, appeared a large and dense wood of trees, principally olives intermixed with apricots and pomegranates, but no palms. Towards this I proceeded along the banks of a stream, to visit the ruins

that were said to exist at Beled-el-Kamyseh. I found, however, nothing but the remains of thick stone walls, now forming part of a donkey-shed. A man dwelt in a small hut close at hand, probably as a guard to the plantation; but there were no signs of a village. I gave a piastre to my guide to buy some pomegranates; and he slipped behind me as I went away, and returned with about a dozen, which I have reason to believe he had plucked, keeping the money to himself.

In a field near the wood of Kamyseh I noticed the spine of a camel fixed on the top of a pole; and near at hand the horns of a goat. These were set up as charms, to protect the plantations from the evil eye. I afterwards noticed the same thing all over the Oâsis; and I remember also seeing the skull of a camel at Garah above the door of a house, just as the civilized people of England nail a horseshoe. In Egypt the usual charm used is an aloe-plant.

I returned by the side of the stream, over the ground I had already traversed, until I came on a line again with the hill of Kamyseh, which reared its catacombed sides direct out of the plain. In front was the prolongation of the hill of Amoudein; whilst to the left stretched the valley, bounded, and at some distance once more obstructed, by isolated, conical hills. At the foot of Amoudein was an insignificant ruin of brick, probably a convent in Christian times, but so dilapidated as scarcely to be worth even a passing glance. Turning to the west, I proceeded about a mile in the direction of Beled-er-Rum, or the City of the Greeks, and soon came in sight of the ruin for which it is remarkable. It stands in the midst of the valley, which is here almost completely barren. A few melon-beds, at wide intervals, and some wild shrubs alone enlivened the stony waste around. In general form and mode of construction it very much resembles that of Om Beydah; but is evidently an imitation of a much more modern date, and has no inscriptions or sculptures of any kind. There remain erect the gateway, facing the north, and a portion of a chamber or sanctuary, with a roof of five solid beams of stone rather smaller than those of the Temple of Ammon. The ruins of this chamber form a mound about sixty feet long; near the southern extremity, about twenty paces distant, is a hillock of stones and sand, with a hole at bottom opening into a passage



broken through the solid foundations of some other portion of the building, probably in search of gold. I got down into the passage, and worked my way to its other extremity, and out by a small aperture, but found nothing to reward my search. There are very clear traces of an enclosure having once existed round the temple. I may mention that the gateway is joined to the body of the edifice by side walls, each containing a small window, square without, but lengthening downwards within, so as to throw the light upon the floor.

This fragmentary temple was the farthest point to which I proceeded westward; and I could not help sitting down awhile under its antique shelter, and, giving the reins to my imagination, allowed it to carry me to the palm-dotted plain of Gegabe, the once mysterious lake of Arashieh, and the distant Oäsis of Augila. For a time I regretted not being able to penetrate farther into the Desert; but the knowledge that the few travellers who have ever reached those regions have found nothing to reward their curiosity soon consoled me, and I turned to reflect with great complacency on the fact that I was the second Englishman who had ever reposed within the solitary ruin of Beled-er-Rum!

My impatient black guide scarcely allowed me leisure to make a rough sketch of the ruin; but warned me constantly that time was passing, and that if we tarried long we should not reach home before darkness came on. I at length remounted my refractory donkey; and the brute sidled away towards Amoudein. On the way I met a man carrying a load of cucumbers, one of which he insisted on my accepting. I did so without much difficulty, pleased to find that bigotry was almost entirely monopolized by the inhabitants of Siwah-el-Kebir.

Having regained the pass I have before mentioned, I left my donkey and my black to roll on the grass beside the clear, gurgling brook that shoots its eddying waters towards the salt-lake beyond, and climbed up the hill of Amoudein to have a good view of the Oäsis. About three or four hundred feet from the base I was stopped by a line of precipices, beneath which I sat down for some time to sketch a sort of panoramic view of the valley, including Edrar Amelal, near at hand on my right, and Om-el-Yus in the distance on my left. Between these two points, on various planes, appeared the salt lakes, the little islands scattered

here and there, the great palm-groves, the three conical hills of Sid Hamet, Siwah, and El Mouta, the castellated village of Gharmy, the five peaks of Edrar Abou Bryk, and the long line of white waves of sand. To the left of my position there was an opening in the limestone-hills, with a hamlet near which, as I afterwards learnt, were some vineyards, producing a large supply of grapes, from which are made tolerably good raisins, consumed principally in the Oäsis.

The hill of Amoudein is composed of calcareous rock full of immense numbers of fossil shells, principally oyster-shells; in that of Kamyseh I noticed no fossils, but the layers of stone alternated with thin veins of hardened mud streaked with yellow. I may here mention, by the way, that Edrisi makes the obelisks of Alexandria, commonly called Cleopatra's Needles, to have been brought from the neighbourhood of Siwah.

I returned late in the afternoon to the tent, when I learnt that, after some negotiation, permission had been obtained for us to visit the hill that impends over the town. Of this permission we availed ourselves, and found that the base was covered with houses, some in ruins, others inhabited, forming a suburb under the superintendence of our friend Sheikh Yusuf. Half way up the face of the hill are some large caves, catacombs or quarries; but without inscriptions or ornaments. In one of my rides I remember seeing on the other side the entrances of numerous chambers, which we did not visit. The principal interest of this stroll was that we obtained a view into the interior of the enclosure on the north of the town, and under the walls of which we were encamped. It appeared to be the Shoonah, or Date-store; and consisted of a vast open space covered with innumerable heaps of dates, white, blue, and brown, divided by walks. Close by was a white marâbut, or tomb of a sheikh, under whose protection the fruit is left. There seemed to be a considerable stock waiting for exportation; and we learned that at this season there was a great demand for camels, sufficient of which were not to be got. There are reckoned to be eighty-six thousand date-trees in the Oäsis, watered and profitable, and between four and five thousand camel-loads are annually exported. The best dates are worth eight dollars a load at Siwah, and about double that amount in Alexandria. Four kinds were mentioned to us—the



Sultani, long blue ones, not yet quite ripe; the Farayah, white ones, of a kind said not to be grown in Egypt, and all exported; the Saïdi, or common date, eaten by the Arabs; and the Weddee, good only for camels and donkeys. The last kind, I believe, grow on the untrimmed palm-clumps that spring up here and there of their own accord. No doubt there are other varieties with well-defined differences. Some yellow dates, of which a basket was sent to us as a present, were much less elongated than any others I have seen, with more flesh in comparison to the size of the stone, and very luscious.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

## Sketch of the History of Ammonium.

SUFFICIENT materials have not been handed down to us by history for tracing back with any certainty the oracle of Jupiter Ammon to its origin. There is reason, however, for ranking it amongst the most ancient of those sacred spots on which the great God of the heathens was supposed to make mysterious revelations of the future, by the mouths of inspired priests or prophets, to the world. I am disposed to think that most of the oracles were established in places characterized by some remarkable natural phenomenon, which suggested the idea of the presence of the divinity. It is improbable that any of them were derived from the arbitrary choice of a designing priesthood; and it is not even necessary to suppose that any hypocrisy, except of that class which seems to ally itself easily with fanaticism, had much to do with the construction of the responses that were given forth.

I set aside at once the idea that there was any connexion between the oracles of Dodona, Delphi, and Ammon. They appear to have been of totally independent origin; and the attempt made to mingle their histories by the Egyptian priests is calculated only to throw confusion over the subject. If it be true, however, that a similar institution at Thebes was an importation from Ammonium, this fact would tend to prove the immense antiquity of the Oracle which for so many ages uttered its enigmatical predictions on the now ruin-strewn glade of Om Beydah.\* Diodorus,† however, attributes its foundation to Danaüs the Egyptian.

There is a question among geographers whether the oâsis of Jupiter Ammon‡ can be said to have been situated, as Pliny and

\* See the interesting remarks of M. A. Maury in his Note on Creuzer's 'Religions of Antiquity.'

† S. xvii. c. 50.

‡ I must give due justice to Rennell's 'Geography of Herodotus,' in which



Mela place it, in Cyrenaïca, or in the province of Marmarica. Properly speaking, it was beyond the southern limits of either; and ought to be considered as a separate country. From the remotest antiquity indeed until the present time it seems, from its very position, to have had a constant tendency to independence. Very imperfect accounts have reached us of its ancient political condition; but we know that, at its first appearance in history, it was a state governed by a king, having a peculiar form of religion and possibly a peculiar language. From several slight indications in ancient writers I am led to believe that the oâsis of Siwah was the principal island of a kind of desert archipelago, obeying a common king. Several of the minor dependencies have been re-discovered in modern times. Of these Garah is one, a valley towards Arashieh a second, the neighbourhood of Lake Arashieh itself a third, and a place on the road to the Fayoom named Bahrein a fourth. At all these places remains are found, something similar in character to those at Siwah; and our Bedawîns informed us that to the south and south-west, at several days' journey, were two more green islands, inhabited by a dark-skinned race, and abounding in ancient remains. Near Siwah itself are numerous little spots, some with, some without traces of ancient buildings which may formerly have supported a village or even a little town. We know, by the observation of the coast, how completely the fertility of a country may be destroyed by neglect. Possibly many formerly productive spots have changed completely into desert, whilst others have been concealed beneath the sands.

If this idea be correct, we can no longer be surprised at the reports that are handed down of wars being carried on between the Ammonians and Ethiopians. A cluster of islands such as I have described would have supported, with the assistance of commerce, a very considerable population, and invested the dynasty, to which the kings Clearchus and Libys belonged, with far more importance than is generally allowed it.

The origin of the Ammonian people is entirely wrapped in obscurity. The ancients tell us they were a mixed colony of

the identification of Siwah with the Oâsis of Ammon was completed before the publication of any materials but Browne's very cursory and imperfect account.

Egyptians and Æthiopians,\* founding the idea no doubt on the same phenomenon that is now observable, half the people presenting a negro character, the rest being comparatively light coloured. The traditions represent a close connexion as existing between the oâsis of Æthiopia and Egypt; but the genuine Pelasgic mythology has been too much mixed in more modern times with that peculiar to the banks of the Nile to enable us to distinguish what may be really Libyan in the story of Andromeda, daughter of the king of Æthiopia, exposed to be devoured by a sea-monster at the instigation of the oracle of Ammon,† of the halt of Perseus at the temple on his way to encounter the Gorgon, and of the visits of Hercules when marching against Antæus and Busiris.‡

The god called Jupiter Ammon is generally represented as *Kriprosopic* or ram-faced; but there is reason to believe that this was not the original form of the god of the Ammonians. Quintus Curtius, who no doubt copied the materials of his grandiloquent description from the best authorities, distinctly says that the god was represented in the shape of the *bezil of a ring*, and was ornamented with emeralds and other gems. As an incidental confirmation of this, I may mention that the Arab historian Makrizi speaks of emerald mines in the neighbourhood of Siwah. Diodorus gives nearly the same account, although he does not specify the exact form of the god. It is added that the representation, whatever it may have been, was carried about in a sort of boat gilded and adorned with silver cups depending on either side,§ by eighty priests, who seem to have affected to receive an impulse from the idol itself which determined the direction in which they were to go.|| This reminds one of the Egyptian Welis, whose bodies have all sorts of caprices, refusing to be carried down certain streets, so that six strong bier-bearers even by taking a run cannot succeed in overcoming their obstinacy.¶ The god of Ammon, then, by exerting a similar influence, seems to have made a regular progress through the palm-groves of the Oâsis before retiring to the temple and giving the sought-for oracle. A crowd of women and girls followed chant-

\* Herod. ii. 42. See the note of Creuzer.

† Apollodor. ii. v. § 3.

‡ Arrian, iii. 2.

§ Compare Thirge, *Res Cyrenensium*, p. 296. Compare the engravings.

|| Diod. Sic. xvii. 49.

¶ See Lane's 'Modern Egyptians.'



ing rude ditties: *patrio more inconditum quoddam carmen canentes*.\*

The rudeness of the form of the original image of the god is favourable to the great antiquity of the Ammonian religion. How it became mixed with the complicated Egyptian and Greek mythologies, and how the ram-faced divinity came to take its place by the side of the primitive *bezil*, it would be difficult to trace. Certain it is that the mixture has been made, and that great confusion is the result. It has been suggested that the worship of the god Amoun or Ammon only became known in Greece at the epoch of the foundation of Cyrene, about the year 648; and that after that time the legends which connected him with the Olympian Zeus were invented. In the time of Herodotus† the Ram-headed figure had been introduced; and it was always considered by the Greeks and Romans to be identical in character with their Jupiter or Zeus, though different in form—

———— stat sortiger illic

Jupiter, ut memorant, sed non aut fulmina vibrans,

Aut similis nostro, sed tortis cornibus Hammon.‡

One of the most obscure events connected with the history of Ammonium is the attempted invasion of Cambyses. The vastness of the army he put in motion for the purpose proves that the Libyan state was much more powerful than is commonly supposed. It started from Thebes, passed the Great Oāsis, and after seven days' journey perished utterly in the desert, most probably from having taken an insufficient supply of water.§ We have no other record of any military expedition having been sent in ancient times against the kingdom of Ammon, which seems on the contrary to have always preserved a prudent neutrality, content with a flourishing commerce and a reputation of peculiar sanctity.

Siwah, or Ammonium, has always been a great commercial station in the route of intercourse between Egypt and the states of Northern, Western, and even Central Africa. The periodical passage of immense caravans, which found it necessary to halt

\* Quint. Curt., iv. 7, 29.

† iv. 181.

‡ Lucan. Pharsal., ix. 512–514.

§ Herod. iii. 26; Diodorus, Fragment.

and refresh themselves by the side of its glittering streams and beneath the shadow of its vast groves, no doubt contributed to enrich the inhabitants, who carried on also a trade in their own productions both with Egypt and Cyrene. I do not agree with those, however, who derive from this the religious celebrity of the place.\* There are many Oases, but there was only one Oracle in the desert; and Delphi and Dodona, equally celebrated, owed certainly nothing to commerce. It is worth mentioning that the first report of the existence of the Niger river that reached Europe came from some people of Cyrene, who, in an interview with Clearchus, King of the Ammonians, had heard of the discovery made by certain Nasamonian travellers.

It soon became the custom, both in Greece and Asia Minor, to consult the oracle of Ammon with reference to the result of any important enterprise. Cræsus, King of Lydia, once sent to ask advice as to whether he should undertake a Persian war. The Elians were particularly celebrated for their veneration of the Libyan god. Pausanias mentions a temple raised to his honour at Elis, where upon a tablet were engraved the questions that had been sent for solution to the oracle, the answers of the god, and the names of the deputies who went with them. We find several traces of the worship of Ammon at Athens; and it must not be forgotten, that when Cimon was lying off the coast of Cyprus (B.C. 449), meditating the conquest of Egypt and the overthrow of the Persian empire, he sent some friends to the oracle charged with a secret mission. What its subject was has never transpired; but when the messengers entered the temple, the god, without listening to their questions, ordered them to return, saying "Cimon is already with me!" They returned accordingly, and found that about the time when the god spake to them the great general had expired.†

That the Spartans, on account of their connexion with Cyrene, should come to have a peculiar veneration for Ammon is not at all surprising. They had a temple dedicated to him;‡ and often sent to consult him on the subject of wars or colonial establishments. Between King Libys, moreover, and Lysander, there

\* See Heeren on the Ancient Commerce of Africa.

† Plutarch. Cimon, c. 18; Thrice, Res Cyrenenses, p. 296.

‡ See Pausan. iii. 18; Cicero de Divin., i. 42.



was an hereditary bond of hospitality, of which the latter on one occasion endeavoured to avail himself in an improper manner. We have the record of two journeys of Lysander to the Oäsis. The first was when, finding his popularity diminish at Sparta, he thought it wise to remove himself out of the way for a while, and accordingly set sail for Cyrene, from whence he made his way probably by the usual caravan road to Ammonium. During his absence the Thirty Tyrants of Athens were overthrown. On a subsequent occasion, when he was intriguing for the sovereignty, and had in vain endeavoured to corrupt the Delphian Pythoness, he started off once more for Ammonium, trusting to the friendship of King Libys, after whom his own brother had been named, and to the influence of money. The god of Ammon, however, was always celebrated for poverty; his servants were not in the habit of making the temple a treasury, but preserved the primitive simplicity of early times.\* Lysander failed accordingly, and the priests sent deputies to Lacedemon to accuse him. He was absolved; and the Libyans, on leaving, said—"We will judge with greater justice when you come to establish yourself in Libya"—for there was an ancient oracle to the effect that the Lacedemonians were one day to inhabit that country.† I will add that Ammon was adored at Asbystis, or Pallene, with as much respect as in the Oäsis itself, and that the god is represented as saving it from being stormed by a direct and miraculous intervention.‡

The Thebans had also a great veneration for Ammon, arising from their having sent a colony to Cyrene. They possessed a temple and a statue of the god, dedicated by Pindar himself.§ The poet likewise wrote an ode to Ammon, and sent a copy of it to the priests. The beginning only has been preserved;|| but in the time of Pausanias it existed entire, engraved on a three-sided column at the altar erected by Ptolemy, son of Lagus, to the Libyan Zeus.

We now come to the event which has, perhaps, contributed more than any other to the celebrity, in modern times at least, of the Oäsis—I mean the visit of Alexander the Great. The details given of his journey by classical writers are few; and Diodo-

\* Lucan. *Pharsal.*, ix. 119.

† Plutarch, *Lysand.*, c. 20, 25; *Diod. Sic.*, xiv. 13; *Cornel. Nep. Lysand.*, § 3.

‡ Plut. *Lysan.*, c. 20. § Pausan., ix. 16. || Schol. *Pind. ad Pyth.*, ix. 89.

rus Siculus, Arrian, Quintus Curtius, and others, do little more than reproduce the same facts. We are told that, after having put the affairs of Egypt in order, Alexander took it into his head to rival the exploits of his ancestor Hercules, and pay a visit to the oracle of Ammon. None of the ancient historians make any statement as to the number of people he took with him, but they sometimes talk as if he was accompanied by an army. I doubt, however, if this was the case. Certain it is, that the preparations made for the journey do not seem to have been on a very large scale. There were only taken camels and skins sufficient to carry water for four days.\*

Alexander marched along the coast, by the same route that we followed, as far as Parætonium, finding water in the wells, but encountering no cities. It was at a subsequent period, as I have before observed, that that desert country was colonized and invested with artificial fertility. During the first portion of the journey the army encountered none of the frightful difficulties which, in those times as in ours, the timid Egyptians† represent as existing. At Parætonium (which travellers have thought they recognised as Bareton, a name I could hear nothing of at Mudar) Alexander met ambassadors from Cyrene,‡ coming to him with propitiatory presents. It appears from Strabo that the usual point at which caravans turned off from the sea for the Oâsis was Apis, a hundred stadia to the east. This place, which is called a village by Strabo, in whose time the celebrity of the oracle had declined, is designated by Scylax as a city. The difference may be accounted for by the immense falling off in the number of travellers. I am inclined to place Apis somewhere in the position of Mudar, the existence of which is almost entirely owing to the passage of the outward-bound caravans, the return ones now taking a shorter cut, and which would now have been of some considerable importance had it not been destroyed some years ago by the Pasha, and its inhabitants removed to the Bahârah.

It was at Parætonium, however, a few miles to the west, that Alexander, after having taken in a supply of water, left the coast

\* Quint. Curt., iv. 7, § 29.

† Hæc Ægyptii vero majora jactabant. Quint. Curt., iv. 7, 28.

‡ Diod. Sic. xvii. 49.



and struck into the desert. It is possible, as I have suggested in another chapter, that he may have crossed a small tract of sandy country before joining the route we followed; but it is more probable that most of what we read in his historians about the frightful moving sands in the midst of which he found himself, is the production of fancy. The idea the ancients had of a desert was an expanse of fine moving sand, sometimes in a state of quiescence like a calm sea, at other times rolled into billows, and thrown up in clouds by the wind. Such is no doubt the case in some parts of the Libyan desert; and, except on the rocky ridges, it is not uncommon to see the sand driven along the surface of the desert like a light spray or filling the whole atmosphere with a vast mist. According to Arrian this is the case on the road from Parætonium to Siwah, when the south wind blows; but I did not see sufficient sand to justify the description. As to the extensive plains or table-lands that occur, I have already described them. It is not inaccurate to compare their appearance to a sea—not, it is true, of sand—but of stones. There are seldom any landmarks to assist the traveller, who, as of old, directs his course by the stars,\* or by the little heaps of stones piled up at intervals by successive caravans for the purpose. At some points it is perfectly correct to compare the caravan to a ship looking out for land—*terram oculis requirebant*. There is really no tree, no vestige of cultivated soil.†

According to the most probable account Alexander was eight days traversing the desert. At the end of four of these, during which the party must have moved at a royal and dilatory pace, the water in the skins was exhausted and the horrors of thirst began to be felt. A copious rain, however, came on and restored strength and courage to the despairing expedition. They now, it appears, found out that they had lost their way, and seem to have wandered about in uncertainty for some time. I have already mentioned that, from the nature of the country, the monotonous character of the hills, and the labyrinthine windings of the valleys, it is very difficult to maintain a direct line in traversing this country: we ourselves missed the track during a whole night, for the same reason. On account of the existence of the

\* Arrian, iii. 2, § 2.

† Quint. Curt., iv. 7, 29.

heaps of stones, which seem to be of modern date, our guide was enabled to repair our misfortune with ease; but Alexander, as the chroniclers of his exploits inform us, was reduced to depend on the miraculous interposition of a crow, or two crows, or a flight of crows. The rational interpretation of this fanciful story has been given in a previous page. There is every probability that the denominations of places in the desert, when once given, do not easily change;\* and I have no doubt that many of the various "*Nugbs*," or Passes, which occur on the caravan road to Siwah, had acquired the name they now bear long before the journey of Alexander. One of the principal of these *Nugbs* is the only way by which it seems possible to descend from the tract of hilly country, or rather the great range of hills interspersed with table-lands that extends thither from the sea, into the nameless valley, or basin filled with detached rocky hills, lying between that range and another called the Milky Mountains. This *Nugb* is called the Pass of the Crow, and because it ultimately led Alexander out of his difficulties, may have given rise to the tradition which says, "the crow showed him the way."

Let us now trace the further progress of the conqueror. At the end of the eight days he reached certain cities of the Ammonians, which I am inclined to identify with Garah, at that time no doubt one of the most important of the desert Sporades of which the Libyan state was made up. It is true that we performed the same distance in little more than fifty hours of actual travelling, but we pushed on at times at a rate much exceeding the usual caravan pace. Besides, the Bedawins who accompanied Alexander only filled their *kúrbehs* for four days: this was about what they would do if they looked forward to a five days' march, as they prefer being pinched a little towards the end to overloading their camels. The additional time expended was owing to the leisurely movements at the outset and the loss of the track.

A hundred stadia before reaching the cities of the Ammonians Alexander came to a bitter lake. Now, at the northern foot of the Milky Mountains during the night previous to our arrival at Garah, we crossed the bed of a dried-up lake at least a mile in extent; this may be the very spot.

\* See some of the curious discussions in Forbes's 'Geography of Arabia.'



Diodorus Siculus represents Alexander as passing in one day's journey from the cities of the Ammonians to the principal Oäsis. We took two days, but caravans sometimes perform the distance in one; and it is probable that the impatient traveller left the principal part of his train behind and pushed on with a few attendants to the capital.

It is needless to transcribe the rapturous and exquisite descriptions found in the Greek and Roman historians of the scenery presented by the Oäsis at the time of the visit of Alexander. From its beauty even in its present degraded state, we have a right to infer that their language rather fell short of than exceeded the reality. They mention the palms, the olives, and the other fruit-trees that abounded in the Oäsis, and dilate upon its salubrity as a place of residence. I have no doubt that the fevers which now infest the place are caused entirely by the neglect which allows the collection of stagnant and fetid water that ought to be used up in irrigation.

As is the case at present, there were several villages in the Oäsis: indeed the people seem to have lived in scattered hamlets amongst the trees; whilst the kings, the priests, and the rich families dwelt in fortified places. There is every probability that at both the eastern and western extremity of the valley there were numerous little dots of verdure; but the palm-groves seem always to have been confined to the centre island. The lakes were probably in the same state then as now. The salt was much esteemed and was sent in baskets to Egypt as presents to the kings and the great dignitaries. Even the Persian monarch had his table supplied with salt from this distant spot.\* On the Fountain of the Sun I have already made some observations.†

The interview of Alexander with the priest in the sanctuary of the temple at Om Beydah was perfectly satisfactory; and the son of Philip went away with a good excuse for asserting his divine origin and wearing the tortuous horns of Ammon. Some person, jealous of the honour of the servants of the oracle, has endeavoured to explain away the whole circumstance by saying

\* Athen., ii. 74. See a curious passage in Synesius (Epist. 147), on the Ammonian salt.

† See Herod., iv. 181; Diod. Sic., xvii. 10; Quint. Curt., iv. 7, 29; Arrian, iii. 2, § 2; Pomp. Mela, i. 8.

that the prophet, as he stood in the gloomy depths of the sanctuary, began to address Alexander in Greek, and meaning to say "O Paidion!" "O my son!" said, "O Pai Dios!" "O son of Jupiter!" If this be the case, as a French commentator remarks, the solecism of an African priest intoxicated a madman full of genius with vanity, and led to the melancholy fate of Callisthenes.

The Macedonian returned to Egypt by the same way he came, and then continued to prosecute his Asiatic conquests. At the death of Hephæstion, however, he remembered the oracle of Ammon, and sent to demand permission to pay him divine honours. This was refused, but the rank of a hero was assigned to the deceased favourite.\*

After the age of Alexander we lose sight for some time of the kingdom of Ammon: there is every reason to believe, however, that its celebrity increased, and that many of the temples, the traces of which may now be found, bearing something of a Doric character (as, for example, that at Beled-er-Rum), were built during the period that intervened before Siwah suffered the fate of the rest of the world and fell under the dominion of the Romans. It does not appear, however, that this people ever looked with any great respect on the oracle, believing rather in the auguries of birds, or the inspection of entrails, and in the Sibylline leaves. They were too political, moreover, to allow their magnificent scheme of universal conquest to run the chance of being checked by the decisions of a foreign deity speaking through the mouth of a barbarian priest, who might not be venal, in the depths of a desert. The progress of the sceptical philosophy had also something to do with the disrespect into which this and other oracles gradually fell. When Cato of Utica, if X Lucan's representation be at all correct, visited the Oäsis, he was urged by his friend Labienus to enter the sanctuary and question the future. He however refused, saying he did not believe in the peculiar presence of God in this particular locality: his seat was the earth, the seas, the air, the heaven, and virtue.

Jupiter est quodcumque vides, quocumque moveris.

When such speculations as these began to be indulged in, the

\* Arrian, vii. 2.



fate of the oracle was sealed, and not very many ages afterwards it must have grown dumb. At length Christianity flew across these deserts as a bird flies across the wide seas, alighting on every fertile spot on its way, and the fane of Ammon is said to have been consecrated to the Virgin Mary. Of its fortunes during the succeeding periods we know nothing except that many monasteries arose within its limits, and that exiles were often sent thither by the Roman emperors. It continued, however, to be a great commercial mart until the neighbouring countries of Egypt, of Marmarica, and Cyrene began to relapse rapidly into barbarism. Synesius, Bishop of Ptolemais, gives a melancholy description of the ruin of the last-mentioned province in the fifth century—the overthrow of churches, the pollution of grave-yards, the castles razed to the ground, the flocks and herds driven off. The same destruction fell upon Marmarica, principally accomplished by the desert tribes which from time immemorial had occupied the less fertile parts of the country, and which seized on the first favourable opportunity of rooting out an exotic civilization from their land. In all these misfortunes no doubt the kingdom of Ammon shared, losing moreover immensely by the diminished number of the caravans, perhaps their total cessation for a time. The latter seems probable from the circumstance of the Arab historians mentioning traditions of the re-discovery of all the Oäses by people who had wandered from Egypt. When caravans did pass to and fro from east and west probably they for a time adopted the coast road.

This brings me to the curious passages contained in the Arabic historians with reference to the primitive condition of the Oäses. They speak of them as abounding in marvels such as are described in the most imaginative tales of the 'Arabian Nights.' They fill them with palaces, and circuses, and magic mirrors, and pinnacles on which brazen birds were stationed as guardians of the cities. In their poetical language all this must be taken as a description of the most flourishing times of Ammonium. They all agree with Herodotus in ascribing the original colonization of the place to "the Coptic kings;" but according to Makrizi that obscure people the Berbers soon came and joined them. For a long period the two races lived harmoniously together, and were united by the bands of marriage. Civil feuds, however,

at length broke out and constant fights took place, so that the population rapidly decreased, the Berber element getting the upper hand: to what period of history this refers it is difficult to decide.

When Mousa, son of Nossier, in the time of the Ommyades, had conquered Egypt (A.D. 708), he attempted to reduce the Oäsis, but was so valiantly repulsed that he came back and said the walls and the gates of the city were made of iron. Tharic ben Zayad, the invader of Spain, made a second unsuccessful attempt two years afterwards and told the same story to explain his defeat. It is probable that it was at this time that the population consisted of the relics of the Ammonian race and a strong infusion of Berbers. This people, if we can accept their traditions in the place of more certain information, were descended from the Philistines, and paid a peculiar veneration to the memory of Goliath, after whom one of the mountains near Siwah was named. It is possible they had a Phœnician origin. However this may be, mixed with the Ammonians, they professed the Christian religion, and made a long and valiant resistance to the Muslim invasion. It is not until A.D. 1150 that we find the Koran triumphant and the seat of an Imam established within sight of the venerable remains of Om Beydah.\*

In the fifteenth century we find Siwah at a very low ebb indeed, the Berber population having dwindled down to six hundred, whilst the other tribes had, no doubt, diminished in an equal or greater proportion. The place was celebrated for its emerald and iron mines, but had become subject to fever and infested with noxious animals. Its fertility, however, continued unabated: it exported dates, raisins, figs, and jujubes; and Makrizi relates that he saw there an orange-tree as large as an Egyptian sycamore, producing fourteen thousand oranges every year.

From this period forward Siwah decreased in importance, and was allowed gradually to acquire a complete independence and to constitute itself into a sort of rude republic. In this state it was found by our enterprising countryman Browne when he re-discovered it in modern times. But Mohammed Ali acquiring

\* See Langles, *Mémoires sur les Oäsis*, d'après les Auteurs Arabes.



power in Egypt, and infusing a good deal of destructive vigour into the administration, one of his subordinates, Hassan Bey Shamashurghi, planned and obtained permission to carry out an invasion, and, in 1819, burst like a thunderbolt upon the Oäsis, defeated its inhabitants, profaned their inviolate city of salt, counted their trees, and saddled them with a tribute. An account of the expedition may be found in the first part of an illustrated publication in imperial folio, begun many years ago by M. Jomard from the papers of M. Drovetti, and intended to be entirely devoted to the Oäsis of Siwah. Unfortunately it remains to this day unfinished. Our guide, Sheikh Yünus, accompanied Hassan Bey, and gave us his account of the affair. He said there were two hundred Egyptian horse, three guns, five hundred Bedawíns, and seven hundred camels to carry water. The march only occupied fourteen days by the same route that we took from Alexandria. When they arrived, the Bedawíns, who hate the Siwahís and felt themselves well backed, did nearly all the work with their swords and guns. Thirty-two natives and only three Arabs were killed. Since that time Siwah has been regarded as part of the Pasha's dominions, although his authority has often been slighted in matters of detail. About three years ago, encouraged by their distance from the seat of government and the difficulty of the roads, they had much relaxed in the punctuality with which they paid their tribute, and a body of forty horse with a number of Bedawíns came from Cairo to bring them to their senses. On this occasion heavy additional contributions were levied, and the Egyptian troops, who encamped within a fortified barrack commanding the town, which was moreover kept in awe by a battery of one gun, made themselves very unpopular. The principal Sheikh, moreover, was sent away as a hostage. In about eight months the troops withdrew, having inflicted what should have been a salutary lesson on this headstrong and bigoted people; but it does not appear that their spirit is much subdued. The revenues of Siwah are now farmed by a native merchant of Alexandria for a sum of ten thousand dollars.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

Observations on the Language, Manners, Appearances, Origin, &c. of the People of Siwah — The Productions of the Place, its Commerce, &c.

It will readily be imagined that, during the short time I stayed in the Oäsis of Síwah, I was not able to collect materials for a complete account of the people. We cannot read as we run, nor gather statistics and traits of manners like pebbles by the highway. It requires much patient study to understand the character of the smallest tribe of men, and we must live for a long time in the midst of them to collect anything really valuable on their habits and modes of life. There was a time when I was more rash and confident; but I have come a good deal in contact with travellers of late in a country with which I am tolerably familiar, and have remarked that even the shrewdest make three mistakes in every four observations. Thus I have learned to be more cautious than of yore.

It is really indispensable to know something of the language of a people if you would form anything like a correct opinion of them. I am aware that this is an original idea which will not find favour with the modern traveller; but I nevertheless maintain it to be perfectly correct, and am much less positive in my opinions of the Siwahís than I should be if I were able to penetrate within that other and more familiar and domestic circle of thought which finds expression with them in their dialect of the Berber. This is the language they curse in; and there is a great deal to be learned of the character of a people from the manner in which they break the third commandment. They pray, however, in Arabic; at least they have no translation of the Koran; and indeed their language, whatever it may formerly have been, is not now written, except in ordinary letters, and that but seldom—no great loss to them, by the way, for not one in a thousand can read.



I began a small vocabulary of Siwahí words, but did not get very far with it. Had I been aware at the time of the scanty knowledge possessed of this language, I should have endeavoured to be much more complete. The following will serve as a specimen:—

|                                                          |                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <sup>2</sup> Aman . . . . water.                         | <sup>4</sup> Awgeed . . . . a man.      |
| <sup>4</sup> Anou . . . . a well.                        | <sup>3</sup> Tultee . . . . a woman.    |
| <sup>3</sup> Tagillah . . . . bread.                     | <sup>2</sup> Fucht . . . . the sun.     |
| <sup>2</sup> Jerdun . . . . wheat.                       | <sup>4</sup> Jeree . . . . the stars.   |
| <sup>2</sup> Teenah . . . . dates.                       | <sup>2</sup> Agmar . . . . a horse.     |
| <sup>2</sup> Teswatet . . . . a date-tree.               | <sup>3</sup> Zeit . . . . a donkey.     |
| <sup>2</sup> Edrar . . . . a mountain.                   | <sup>4</sup> Shál . . . . a town.       |
| <sup>2</sup> Alghum . . . . a camel.                     | <sup>2</sup> Agbin . . . . a house.     |
| <sup>1</sup> Bunduk (Ar. Bendo-<br>giyeh) . . . . a gun. | <sup>2</sup> Tabragh . . . . tobacco.   |
| <sup>2</sup> Toksil . . . . a knife.                     | <sup>3</sup> Timseeh . . . . fire.      |
| <sup>1</sup> Sad (Ar. Asayeh) . a stick.                 | <sup>4</sup> Usaghuz . . . . writing.   |
| <sup>4</sup> Zurabeen . . . . a shoe.                    | <sup>1</sup> Lugalim (Ar. Galim) a pen. |
| <sup>2</sup> Kyazut . . . . a fowl.                      | <sup>4</sup> Dahan . . . . oil.         |
| <sup>4</sup> Giddee . . . . sand.                        | <sup>4</sup> Tibber . . . . gold.       |
| <sup>4</sup> Geer . . . . a boy.                         | <sup>2</sup> Amelal . . . . white.      |

In this brief vocabulary, which I give exactly as I wrote it under the shade of a palm-clump at Garah, from the answers of our escort of four men from Siwah, the words marked 1, are imported from the Arabic; those marked 2, are to be found in various vocabularies of the Berber dialect; those marked 3, occur in a list of Ghadamsee words written by Taleb Ben Musa bel Kasem; while those marked 4, appear to be entirely new: at any rate I have not yet been able to find them after a careful search through all the vocabularies that have come in my way. We may presume, however, that they are correctly written, from the circumstance of the remainder of the list being so completely confirmed by other documents. I will add that there is a probability that the word "Om" prefixed to many of the names of places in this part of the Libyan Desert, as well as in Egypt, may be Berber, although the Arabs explain it to mean "Mother." According to them, "Om-el-Yus" is "the Mother of Yus;" "Om Beydah," "the Mother of Beydah;" "Om-es-Soghayer" (as the Bedawins call Garah), "the Mother of the Little One;" "Om Eaymé," "the Mother of Eaymé." These names, they

say, indicate the tombs of female Marâbut; but I believe them to be misled by the similarity of sound. There seem some other words used by the Arabs of the Libyan Desert, which, as far as I know, are peculiar to them: Garah, *pl.* Gour, means a mountain or hill; Gaood, is a camel; and Nugb, a pass. Gebel is never used except in the sense of a desert; all the hills in the neighbourhood of the Oâsis are called either Edrar (pure Berber) or Garah.

A great many of the words in common use are imported wholesale from the Arabic;\* and I have no doubt that the latter language is daily gaining ground. Most of the people seem to speak it more or less: they would otherwise be unable to carry on their intercourse with the Bedawins who come and go and wander hither and thither, and have no leisure or patience to learn this unharmonious gibberish. I repeatedly asked the Siwahî words for day and night; but could get nothing but Arabic. M. Drovetti says that the Siwahîs have an unwillingness to reveal their language to strangers, which he infers to be the case because they used Arabic in speaking to him, but not among themselves. I should not have thought it necessary to draw so refined an inference from the fact that they addressed him in a language which they thought he would understand, and not in one of which they knew he was ignorant. I noticed, on the contrary, that those of whom I inquired words seemed rather to be flattered than otherwise, and showed an alacrity to satisfy me quite unexpected, considering their reluctance to allow us to examine the country.

Traces of the Berber language still linger about Damanhour in the province of Bahârah. This was told me by Linant Bey, one of the Europeans who visited Siwah under the protection of Hassan Bey. I remember myself talking once with a Levantine just returned from that neighbourhood, and he said that the women of the villages employ a peculiar language called, I suppose from its barbarous sound, the language of birds! Few men

\* It has been observed that the letter *t* is both prefixed and affixed by the Siwahîs to Arabic words in order to appropriate them; but my informants said *bunduk* for gun, not *tabundukt*. See 'Voculaires appartenant à diverses Contrées de l'Afrique,' published by M. Jomard; and the valuable Grammar and Dictionary of Venture.



comprehend anything of it; and their wives, therefore, can conspire amongst themselves against them in their very presence without being understood. My informant could only cite *tumtee*, which he translated, but I believe by guess-work. I wrote *tultee* at Siwah for "woman," but in all the vocabularies of Berber, brought from various parts of Africa, I have been able to consult, *tumtoot* occurs with this meaning. I may add that M. Kienig gives *tultan* for "woman;" but I am positive the Siwahis said *tultee*. As, moreover, *an* in this language is the plural termination, the difference may be merely one of number.

I will just allude to the opinion which has been put forward to the effect that the Berber language bears a strong affinity to the Coptic. It is supposed that in ancient times all the dialects spoken in Northern Africa were cognate; and that the Berber race in all the changes of their fortunes have preserved much of the ancient forms of speech. A careful study of the dialect spoken in Siwah might throw considerable light on this question, as the spot nearest to Egypt is that where most traces of its ancient language ought to be discovered. We must not, however, as I have hinted, expect to find a pure dialect among these people. On the contrary, Arabic has usurped the place of a great portion of the ancient tongue; and I have no doubt that the slaves, from time to time imported, have exercised some influence in modifying phrases and introducing words.

I have already noticed the mixture of races at Siwah. The pure Berber type is difficult to be made out, but, I think, occurs in greatest perfection among the mob of Siwah-el-Kebîr itself. The inhabitants of the other villages are different in expression and physiognomy, bearing an affinity with the Bedawîns, with whom they have probably intermixed. They are said to be much despised by the *canaille* of the capital, just as the Garah people are despised by the general body of the Oâsians. A large proportion of the population is composed of blacks, some slaves, others free. Herodotus makes the place inhabited half by Egyptians and half by Ethiopians.

The genuine Siwahî is of a slender make, sometimes tall and stooping, but generally middle-sized. He does not appear to be active or energetic, although capable of undergoing great fatigue. Numbers of them go every year to Egypt with the date caravans,

and seem to support the journey as well as the Bedawins themselves. The man that accompanied us on our march from Garah to Siwah was a miserable-looking, knock-kneed fellow, but he shuffled along with considerable vigour. He was an inhabitant of the capital, and, like the rest of his countrymen, sallow and small-featured, but lacking [the expression of gloomy bigotry which lowered upon most of their faces. A few thin tufts of hair sprout upon the unhealthy cheeks of this ill-favoured people.

I do not know whether any one has attempted to identify the Berber race, as well as language, with the ancient Egyptian; but if such be the case, no assistance, at any rate, can have been derived from a comparison of their physical characteristics. Without entering into detail, I may remark, that at the first sight of a Siwahí we miss the smooth brow, the contemplative eye, and finely-formed though heavy mouth of the old people who drank of the waters of the Nile. To find a reminiscence of these you need not go out of Egypt, where you may often see *fellaha* girls carrying loads upon their heads, and with their blue coverings arranged down the sides of their face, so as exactly to resemble the head-dress of the Sphinx. The more you examine their physiognomies likewise, the more impressed you become with the resemblance; and the idea must suggest itself, that in the agricultural population of Egypt there exists much of the blood of the ancient race, of which the Copts are usually put forward as the only representatives. The *fellahs*, though perhaps slightly mixed, are nothing but Copts converted to Islam.

I believe, however, if we knew more of the language and the internal life and modes of thought of the Siwahís, we should find stronger reasons for affiliating them with the ancient race than can be derived from their personal appearance. It is true that some of their customs have changed; they do not now build temples or bury their dead in catacombs; but, as in the days of Herodotus, they may be said to dwell in houses of salt, and of course receive the same modifications as of yore from the fact of depending almost entirely for subsistence on their date-crops and the passage of caravans. In some respects Siwah is still, as formerly, the St. Helena of the Libyan desert.

We had often heard, before our arrival, of the sickliness of Siwah, especially in autumn, and various reasons were assigned



for it. Some said it was entirely caused by the dates, others by the winds, and others by the bad quality of the water. As soon as we had leisure to observe, however, the true reason suggested itself. The town is surrounded by sluggish streams, or rather moats, along which a fetid current creeps at a funereal pace, and by standing pools covered with a heavy green mantle. The exhalations of these must charge the air with malady, and as the rooms of the houses are close and small, their inhabitants are, no doubt, fully prepared to receive the infection. This is probably the cause why, with their heads muffled in the *titham*, the Siwahís look like so many Lazaruses, with the grave linen still about them. I did not see a single man who appeared old, whilst all looked worn and haggard. The children, especially, all seemed as if just turned out of a hospital. The whole population are subject to intermittent fevers. Sore eyes also are very common, probably attributable to the saline particles which must be carried about by the wind.

Some old writer, in describing the Oāsis, forgets the springs, and will have the vegetation to be supported entirely by the dews of heaven. It is certain that there were heavy falls of dew during our short stay. At sunrise the thermometer generally stood about 64°, rising to 92°, 95°, and 105°, a little after noon. The air was seldom perfectly still, warm blasts being common in the day-time, whilst at night there was usually a violent northerly wind. Not the slightest resemblance of a cloud was seen. We asked about rain, and were told it rarely fell—a fortunate circumstance, as otherwise their earth and salt houses might melt down some day like a snow-ball at the approach of spring. Slight shocks of earthquakes are said to be very frequent, and to render the flow of water from the springs more copious. A large part of the wall of the town had fallen in, probably from some recent shock, and men were employed repairing it.

As to the mode of life of these people, it seems quite agricultural, and I could not learn that they manufactured anything but baskets and mats. Formerly they grew indigo, but seem entirely to have abandoned this profitable branch of production, for which they had so excellent a market in Egypt, nearly all their care being now devoted to the culture of dates. About their modes of procedure I could learn nothing, except that, contrary to the usage in

many other countries, they both water and manure the trees. Most of the woods or groves are surrounded with walls chiefly composed of salt-earth, with fences of reeds, with a camel's bone stuck here and there as a charm. In many places there are orchards, nay perfect gardens, much more beautiful than those of Rosetta—the apricot and the olive, the pomegranate and the banana, intermingling their leaves and branches at the feet of the palm-trees, which in some places rise to a stupendous height, and contribute, with the variegated tints of their trunks, their leaves, and their fruit-clusters, to increase the pleasure of the eye. I have mentioned the beds of *bursim* and lucerne that here and there occur. I believe the Siwahís also grow a little barley, dhourra, and perhaps wheat, but the greater part of what they consume comes from Upper Egypt, whilst their rice is brought from the Wah. Among the vegetables produced are onions, some of them really magnificent. The evening we arrived one was brought as a present, quite five inches in diameter. The cucumbers are large but watery, and the melons insipid. I must not forget to mention that the oil of Siwah is quite famous in this part of the world. We could learn nothing of their mode of preparing it, but from what we saw believe it to enjoy too good a reputation. It is not, however, bad. We brought back, as a present to the Nazir of Abusír, a small skinful, which was highly appreciated. Our Bedawíns also procured a supply, which served them as sauce to everything they ate upon the road.

The live stock of the Oâsis does not appear to be very extensive. For a long time we were under the impression that there was but one cow among them all; a few others, however, afterwards made their appearance. They have some fowls, goats, and sheep; and a great number of little asses. These diminutive creatures are constantly employed carrying dates, which they would eat off their backs were not their necks kept straight by two flat pieces of stick crossed on each side. Several of the Sheikhs ride on horseback; and I believe that some Siwahís possess camels of their own, though the Bedawíns supply the greater number of those employed in exporting the produce of the place.

I wish I were able to give a completer idea of the manners of this secluded people than I have done, but am unwilling to draw



upon my imagination. It would require much better opportunities of observation than I possessed. Perhaps a closer acquaintance might have induced me to soften the harshness of my sketch of their character. I will now add, that to strangers of their own faith, though always jealous and suspicious, they do not seem particularly inhospitable; and that those who visit them on business seem to be supplied with provisions at the public expense—in other words, are allowed to take as much dates from the store as they can eat.

Though tributary to Egypt, Siwah is still in many respects a republic, governed by its own laws and customs. The Sheikhs, I believe in number twelve, are raised to power by the suffrage of the people, and probably receive a formal confirmation from the Pasha, but are removed without ceremony in case they commit any unpopular act. Their authority is by no means absolute. They are compelled to carry on their discussions in the presence of the people, who often intervene with spear and gun, like true Jacobins, to overawe them, and prevent any obnoxious measure being carried into effect. The Sheikhs, on the other hand, may sometimes league together and establish a kind of oligarchy by means of their armed slaves and followers. All these characteristics of their government I infer from what went on in the place during our stay with reference to ourselves.

Probably there are no more curious facts to learn about this remarkable people than those connected with their treatment of women, as we have seen they are extremely jealous, and have allowed this feeling completely to determine their mode of life. In order to keep their wives and daughters sacred from the gaze of strangers, they have shut up themselves and them in a huge structure, which may be called the common harīm of the Oāsis, and is governed by regulations almost as strict as the harīms properly so denominated. I do not know at what age young men are excluded at night, but suppose it is as soon as they can shift in any way for themselves. Widowers are turned out as well as bachelors. I have mentioned that at Garah the men outnumbered the women. It may be proper to add that there was one Laïs in the village: at Siwah there were several, living in retired houses by themselves among the palm-trees.

## CHAPTER XV.

The bigoted Party make an unprovoked attack on us at night, and fire into our Tent — We obtain an Apology — Preparation for our Return — Arrival at Garah.

ON the evening of October the 6th everything was ready for a start next day. We had failed, it is true, in procuring a good supply of provisions, but there were no hopes of better success in a longer delay. There never was a place so meagrely provided as the Oāsis of Siwah, at least if we may judge from our own experience. In addition to what I have already mentioned, all we could get was a little hard bread, very black and gritty, which we had baked for us in the town, at an exorbitant price by the by,\* and a small quantity of dried meat. The first was made from wheat sold by the Egyptian trader I have before mentioned; the second we procured from some Bedawins who were not prevailed on to sell it without some difficulty. It was chopped into small pieces, and as they clawed it out of a skin with their hands, looked by no means inviting. However, when fried, we found it, though very salt, not at all unpalatable, which the reader may attribute, if he pleases, to our good appetite. The Moggrebins, who came on pilgrimage along this road, generally bring with them jars of oil for sale whereby to defray their expenses; but in the oil they keep meat for their own consumption, for which reason small pieces are sometimes found in the common eating oil bought in the market.

We also got some beans and a little chopped straw for our donkeys; but it seemed highly probable that there would be famine in the caravan before it reached Alexandria. Our stock

\* Our boys also got a supply for themselves, and we should all probably have had enough had not Yūnus and Saleh pilfered the greater portion in the most impudent manner before we had been three days on the journey. I can scarcely give an idea of the audacious dishonesty of these two individuals. Suffice it to say that, had we not kept up a good watch, we should have been pilfered of everything. The bread and biscuit we were at length compelled to distribute in our carpet bags.



of biscuit was seriously diminished, and only seven or eight tins of our European preserved meats remained. There was a small bottle of anchovies, and a diminutive jar of bloater paste. Our coffee was exhausted, our sugar ran low, in spite of a small addition we here obtained ; also the soda powders : and there were not quite two bottles of brandy. A vague report had reached us that some *araki* was distilled from dates at this place, and we tried to procure some ; but although the Showish made himself very busy in the matter there was none forthcoming. It is true the supply of tobacco still looked respectable, but none of us seemed to like the idea of living on smoke. It was extremely lucky for us that the Siwahís as a body refrain from the fragrant weed ; we should otherwise have had plenty of visitors. Some few take snuff, and fewer still chew like the Bedawíns. However, I believe our boys managed to buy a small quantity of tobacco for their own consumption.

On the whole we thought it advisable to determine on practising the strictest economy, and on making a kind of forced march. On our outward journey we had employed nearly twenty days, whereas fifteen, and sometimes thirteen, was the time taken by the caravans. It is true we were delayed two days at Abusír, and that we chose to stop one day at Mudar, and nearly two at Garah. Besides, we were not then inured to desert travelling, as now we were. There was a possibility, therefore, that we might perform the distance in less time than the swiftest caravan. We resolved at any rate to try, and it will be seen that we succeeded.

I dare say the reader will not be displeased on being admitted to a view of our domestic arrangements, as illustrated by this evening's proceedings. Our little tent was divided by imaginary partitions into four apartments, each permanently allotted to one of the party. A mat, now somewhat ragged, was spread on the floor, and served to ward off to a certain extent the cold that struck upwards at night from the salt earth. Around the foot of the tent-wall were spread a variety of articles, carpet-bags, and cloaks, arranged as divans, shawls, hats, guns, pipes, gazelle-skins stuffed with tobacco, bottles, tin cups, &c. A large demi-john, filled with water for ordinary consumption, stood outside the doorway ; and swinging in various directions were our in-

valuable flasks, with shot-belts, powder-horns, and so on. The lantern hung half-way up the pole, to which the Bedawín guns were now tied.

It will readily be imagined that, as soon as we were comfortably bestowed in our respective places, pipes were lighted all round, after which an amicable discussion arose as to whether it should be "grog" or "tea," two inestimable luxuries not to be enjoyed on the same evening. The vote having been given for the latter, Derweesh and Saad, who had been heard through the canvas astonishing the weak minds of the Bedawíns by accounts of the "fast" life they led in Alexandria, received orders to light the fire, to boil the water, and to skim it, for at Siwah a thick scum always rises to the surface as soon as it begins to warm. Our kettle was nothing but a tin can, employed for a variety of purposes, none however more important than this. Well, a cheerful blaze was soon lighted up, and the two lads crouched down to it, spreading out their blue shirts to keep off the wind that came sweeping along as usual, howling amidst the palm-groves, and threatening at every moment to bear away our shivering little tent. By this flickering light we could discover our patient donkeys still weary, after four days' rest, hanging their noses in melancholy companionship together close along the wall of the plantation near at hand; and the surly Yúnus casting ever and anon towards us a sinister glance from his remaining eye; and the good-tempered Wahsa showing his white teeth, and old Saleh mumbling and shaking his long thin beard—all three crowded round some mess of their own making; and we could dimly see the camels at no great distance either holding their heads erect or working their way here and there in spite of their fettered legs; and in the background the huge dark mass of the town of Siwah rising in sullen silence against the sky.

It will readily be believed that, in spite of the few causes of displeasure that existed, we fully enjoyed our last evening in the Oäsis of Siwah. We had achieved the object for which we had undertaken our journey; had received, moreover, unexpected delight from the contemplation of a country far more romantic and beautiful than we had been led to expect; and were now about to return towards the place which we must regard for a time at least as our home. If other thoughts presented them-



selves—if, in the depths of the African Desert, we yearned towards a distant land of which we were all proud to be sons—if each in the recesses of his own heart pronounced names and called up forms which must be loved as long as remembered, we were not, therefore, the less happy. Man is so framed that a shade of sadness gives a finer touch to all his pure enjoyments. There is something cruel and inhuman in a mirth which shakes off all communion with sorrow. We are naturally swayed by contending emotions. Regret tempers the selfish ardour of hope; hope deprives regret of its bitterest pang; and glances of pleasure never gleam so brightly as through the medium of a tear.

Our conversation that evening was not of long continuance. One by one we stretched out to repose in anticipation of the labours of the next day, and a general silence soon prevailed. The fire had gone out, our guides and attendants had sought shelter from the wind in little nooks formed by the zembeels and bean-bags, and the whole encampment would probably have been soon wrapped in slumber, had not the report of a gun close at hand among the palm-trees aroused us.\* It was pretty evident that some evil-disposed person had crept up behind the wall and taken a shot at the Nasára; luckily he could not aim, and was too cowardly to try his fortune a second time. However, Mr. Lamport, who was the first to understand what was going on, put out the lantern at once, for there was no knowing how many ruffians were prowling about anxious to make a target of us, and we quietly waited events, making our preparations in silence to resist any attack unless of overwhelming numbers. Presently a crowd of people were heard coming with loud cries from the direction of Siwah, and we could soon distinguish the name of Yúnus several times repeated. It appeared that his friends within the city had heard the report, and being aware of the feeling that existed against us, because we were Christians, and against him for bringing us, had come out to see what was the matter. They expressed great sorrow at what had taken place, and some of them resolved to remain all night in the neighbourhood of the tent. We now understood that there was a large party at Siwah, who, if they had their will, would massacre us

\* The Bedawíns and our boys always maintained that two shots were fired, but we heard only one.

at once; and unpleasant reports reached us that twenty-four individuals had leagued together to waylay us on our return towards Garah. However, sleep being absolutely essential, we arranged our carpet-bags so as to protect us as much as possible, in case half-a-dozen slugs should intrude into the tent, and soon forgot the incivility of which we had been the objects.

In the morning there was of course great talk of last night's affair, but as talking would not mend matters, we thought it better to reserve speculation till we were on the move, and hastened our departure. As usual, however, the Bedawins had left a great part of the arrangements to the very last; and it was, moreover, only when everything else was ready that our bread arrived from the "bakery." It was eight o'clock before we could get all our traps into the zembeels, and the zembeels on the camels. Of these animals we had seven, five from Abusir, one from Mudar, and one purchased by Yúnus for seventeen dollars at Siwah. Three, however, were quite sufficient for our traps: Wahsa's camel being laden with dates on his own account, and our guides also engaging in a little speculation in oil and fruit.

We at length shook the dust off our feet and left this inhospitable place, after saying farewell to the black Showish, who was one of the few civil persons we had met with, and sending our respects to Sheikh Yusuf. We had not gone above a mile through the palm-groves when a breathless messenger came up to beg us to stop, for the Sheikhs were coming out in a body to have an interview. We halted in a shady spot, rather annoyed at the delay, but curious to know what these people, after keeping themselves out of the way so long, now wanted with us. Presently up they came almost at a run—a row of old fellows tucking up their white burnouses, puffing away, shaking their beards, and sweating like bulls. They had evidently been frightened by our departure, thinking it to be on account of the attempt at assassination the previous night, and were beginning to reflect on the consequences of the reception they had given us. They speechified and palavered some time, and faintly expressed a desire that we should return. We said very little to them, except that we were not at all satisfied with our treatment. We acknowledged, however, our obligations to Sheikh Yusuf, who really seemed vexed, and would have treated us to another edition of firstly, secondly, thirdly, and



lastly, had not Yúnus interrupted him, and laying his hand on his shoulder, told him it was of no use talking, the point essential now being, that we should get back in safety, which we were not likely to do if their people were resolved to lay an ambuscade for us. "We don't want words," he said, "but deeds. If you are sorry for what has happened, send us a dozen guns (*i. e.* men with guns) as an escort." They assured him that nothing should befall us, and we left them looking at each other under the tree.

When we reached the eastern extremity of the Oäsis some men employed in the fields gave us a few parting curses, at which we were rather surprised, as the country people had been hitherto civil. Without pausing to inquire the reason, we proceeded a little farther and stopped for our first frugal meal on the homeward journey. Whilst we were discussing it, a horseman came riding up the valley towards us; he wore a white burnoose and a tarboosh, and had a gun and fixed bayonet slung at his back, seeming, indeed, to be altogether the most respectable individual we had seen. He turned out to be Sheikh Mansoor come out to make his separate excuses, and talked very big about answering for our lives with his own in case we would return; promising, too, that we should be allowed to enter his quarter of the town, and so on. But we had had enough of Siwah, and left him in the midst of his tardy apologies. For a short time longer the valley, with its green islands, its lakes, and its hills, remained still in sight; but our track soon turned northward, and as we moved, the beautiful scene seemed to fly swiftly away behind the gigantic rock of Om-el-Yus, which in a few minutes hid it from us, most probably for ever. As if by magic we found ourselves again transported into the realms of desolation; on every side there was nothing but rock, sand, sky, and light, and yet we felt none of that horror which some travellers have affected at the bare sight of the desert. The air was pure, our spirits were buoyant; we were glad to escape from a land inhabited by so inhospitable a race, and we looked forward, not without pleasure, to enjoying some of the comforts of civilization in less than a fortnight.\*

\* Om-el-Yus, by compass, is exactly east of Edrar Amelal, and N.E. of

This day we rode, in a general E.N.E. direction, for ten hours, and halted near the copses of Om Eaymé some time after night-fall. The cold was very great, and next morning we found the thermometer down to  $58^{\circ}$  at half past five, when we started.

Having traversed a valley strewn with large pieces of flint we reached the Nugb-el-Mejebbery, and ascending to the tableland that forms the summit of the ridge dividing Garah from Siwah, proceeded in an easterly direction. In the course of the morning we saw some men running behind us, and their numbers being magnified by the mirage, our Bedawíns took it into their heads that we were pursued. They accordingly prepared an ambuscade behind some hillocks, but it soon turned out that the new comers were a slave and three household servants of Sheikh Mansoor, sent as an escort, or rather as a guard of honour to appease us. They said there had been great dispute in the town about us after our departure, and that there had even been a fight between the moderate and the fanatical parties.

Our mode of travelling was now far less agreeable than that adopted in going. There was no moon, and we were compelled therefore to keep moving almost without a pause all day. We thus missed entirely those comfortable stoppages when we had time to set up the tent and divide the work by a rest of five or six hours. These formed some of the most agreeable parts of our outward journey, and, indeed, more than counterbalanced all the fatigue we experienced; their influence even was more than momentary. Our affections for particular localities are of rapid growth, and take root immediately wherever pleasing sensations have been experienced. Thus every spot that had been the scene of one of these delightful halts was remembered and gladly recognized on our way home. "Here was the tent, and here the donkeys were tethered, and here the Bedawíns reared an extempore shelter;" these reminiscences, however faintly they resemble those we cherish of places where strong feelings have developed themselves, were quite sufficient to relieve for a time the monotony of our forced march. We contrived also to snatch some agreeable moments in one part of the country, where a few thorn bushes occurred here and there, by hurrying on ahead and enjoying the Edrar Abou Bryk. The distance between the former two is about sixteen miles; between the latter two, say seven.



thin shade they afforded. A projecting ledge of rock sometimes proved still more useful, and we would stretch ourselves out, light our pipes, and make ourselves comfortable until the little *kafila* came in sight.

The scenery on these occasions was often sufficiently striking to interest the eye, sometimes even beautiful. Brilliant tints often presented themselves in a variety which we could scarcely expect mere barrenness to assume. In the midst of such scenes a group of camels moving slowly up forms a picturesque object enough; but I could not help observing how erroneous are the ideas of most painters as to the appearance which a caravan usually presents. There seems to be a tradition among them; they habitually bring in their camels following each other in a long unbroken file, just as they are to be seen in the streets of Eastern towns, where, that they may not quite block the way, the tail of one is tied to the nose of the other. In the desert, where they are allowed to take advantage of any scrap of vegetation that may occur, they are urged on—at least such was the case in every instance that came under my notice—in irregular droves, sometimes spreading over a wide extent. Those entrusted with their guidance are constantly obliged to be on the watch to collect them if they scatter too much, now whistling, now grunting, now crying “Zah! zah!” plying the stick or hanging on by the tail as by a rudder. I have mentioned in a former page that the camel roars and complains when he is either loaded or unloaded; I will add, that he otherwise exhibits great indocility. To make him kneel, the drivers are obliged to emit the guttural sound “Cheh! cheh!” about fifty times, to beat his shins and hang upon his neck; and when they have him down, to stand upon his bent knees whilst they remove any article they may want. He often struggles furiously to get up.

To return. The table-land we were traversing was almost perfectly level and barren. We rested for an hour or so in the burning sun at midday, and then proceeded. This evening, although we were on an extremely elevated spot and very far from water, the air was filled with a light mist, the origin of which we could not ascertain. We proceeded, slightly diverging to E.N.E., by the aid of the lantern, until 7 P.M., when we halted, after having travelled that day eleven hours and a half.

*October 9th.*—We were off this morning, as usual, by half past five, and turning N.N.E. came in sight of the Milky Mountains, nearly thirty miles distant, immediately after entering Nugh-el-Abiad, which we had ascended by night in coming. It is a pass remarkable for the whiteness of its rocks, and is strewn with shells, petrifications, and talc, intermingled with small black stones that appear to be of volcanic origin. This day began our serious quarrel with Sheikh Yúnus. We had clambered down the steep descents which had given us so much trouble during our outward journey, and having reached the lower table-land that leads to the edge of Garah valley, determined to push on and arrive as soon as possible at the date-trees. Our so doing, without asking the old gentleman's advice, displeased him excessively, and we could see by the scowls with which he left us, after moving by our side for some time and endeavouring to play off the stale device of "robbers ahead," that he would, if possible, make us feel the full weight of his indignation. On we went, however, for several hours over the plain, and at length reached the valley, and descending soon found ourselves beneath a huge clump loaded with fine fruit. Here we made a delicious meal, and when we were satisfied advanced to Aïn Fāris to give the donkeys a drink. From this place we made our way to the western side of the village, which we were as glad to reach as on the first occasion; and, throwing ourselves down in the shade, determined to have a good rest that day, as, although we reached at half past twelve, we were not to start until the following morning.

When Yúnus came up, he could not keep down his ill-temper, and we had a regular row with him, which ended in his threatening to go away with his camels and leave us to make our way back to Egypt as best we might. As this arrangement would have suited neither of us, mutual concessions ensued; but it was not to be expected that very agreeable feelings should exist in our minds towards the surly old wretch.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

Forced March to Alexandria — Sufferings from Hunger and Thirst —  
Various Incidents — Our Kafila once more in danger of being robbed —  
Safe Arrival at Abusir.

ON the morning of October the 10th, having added two baskets of fresh dates and *one stewed fowl* to our provisions, we bade farewell to Sheikh Abd-el-Sayed and started from Garah at 7 A.M. At midday we reached the bottom of the Gour-el-Laban Pass and halted under the shade of a precipice for about half an hour, whilst the camels, in order that no time might be lost, went on ahead. We soon regained the lost ground by a gallop over such a road that it was a miracle some of us did not get a break-neck fall. This was the system we adopted throughout the rest of the journey.

In the pass we noticed an immense number of petrifications, fossil shells, pieces of coral, &c., interspersed with vast quantities of black stones, some as large as the fist, others as small as split peas. They appeared to have been strewn there by a volcano. Mr. Forty made a collection of various specimens; but did not succeed in bringing the whole back in safety, as the Bedawin maliciously threw a great portion out of the baskets. For my own part I have never had a propensity to collect curiosities, and omitted even to bring back a piece of alabaster from the temple of Jupiter Ammon as a relic.

We crossed the Milky Mountains during the afternoon and halted for the night at their base, having made eleven hours. During this ride we passed the bed of the dried lake I have before mentioned. It is of considerable extent, and the edges are strewn with innumerable small black stones like those in the pass above.

*October 11th.*—We started at half-past five, and having travelled thirteen hours halted in the Nugb-el-Ghrâb, well wearied out. This was the first night of the new moon that cheered the

latter part of our path by the pale light of her thin silver crescent. The cold was excessive at this bivouac, and prevented some of us from sleeping. I remember having to leave the shelter of the row of zembeels to catch two rascally donkeys that had strayed away into the valley, and informed us of the fact by a distant bray.

*October 12th.*—This day we ascended the great pass of the Crow, and retracing our steps almost exactly along the old road passed Hooshm el Gâood, and halted after eleven hours' work near the place where we had formerly lost our way.\*

*October 13th.*—Six hours and a half brought us to Haldeh. I and Longshaw pushed on to reach the well, and found the shepherd vigorously watering his sheep and goats. With the assistance of his confederate below he filled and refilled a large skin bag stretched on a hoop and used as a trough, with astonishing rapidity. The sheep approached three or four at a time, drank a little, and went away of their own accord, although this is a luxury they only enjoy once in two days. Yûnus, on coming up, put a stop to this proceeding, rightly inferring that the water was scanty, and that the man had begun to draw it only on getting sight of us in the distance. There was scarcely enough left to afford us a small supply and water our animals, which had to go without wetting their lips for the next two days. The Marâbut seemed at first a little sulky at being scolded; but was restored to contentment by our purchasing a sheep for fifty piastres, having it killed, and giving him the head. To show his gratitude, he informed us that a body of seventy mounted robbers were hovering in the neighbourhood; and it was instantly surmised that, having heard of our presence in those regions, they had come for the very purpose of waylaying us. Possibly it was this intelligence that determined Yûnus not to return in the direction of Mudar.

From Haldeh accordingly we took a north-east by east direction, different from our route in going; but fell in, in less than three hours, with the Wady Fâragh. Here the Bedawîns, who had not tasted fresh meat for a long time, resolved to stop and

\* From Garah to Gour-el-Caban, nearly eight hours, our direction was N.N.E.; from thence to Nugh-el-Ghrâb, about fifteen hours, N.E.; up the Pass, North; then again N.E.; and then nearly North.



cook. We made no objection, and old Yúnus was soon at work, cutting up the carcase with a sort of hatchet, of which the cutting part was not above an inch and a half wide, and was curved like a gouge or auger; and putting it into an earthen pot that now made its appearance. A large fire of dried wood and camel's dung was soon kindled; and very shortly four plates covered with huge gobbets highly peppered were set before us. I shall say nothing about the tenderness of the meat; suffice it to remark that we did succeed in tearing it to pieces with our teeth and swallowing some pounds, all the while anathematizing old Barabbas, *alias* Yúnus, who thought more of quantity than quality, for picking out a big old ram.

*October 14th.*—This day we started at 6 A.M. and soon got on a level stony plain, covered with millions of white snail shells. An hour's rest was granted us at noon, after which we went along again, cursing the monotony of the road. At length it seemed likely to become varied and interesting enough; for eleven men made their appearance coming down upon us in a long line finger on trigger. We performed some martial manœuvres, but did not like the aspect of things. Our guides all seemed to feel queer; and Wahsa absolutely looked impressive. Yúnus, who after all did not lack courage, went to meet the new comers with his gun thrust forward as usual; and the approaching party dispatched a herald to explain their intentions or ascertain ours. The greeting was by no means friendly. There was no shaking of hands or embracing; and these two interesting objects stood looking at each other like two wild cats that have met on the branch of a tree, neither liking to spring first. At length the others came up and one of them turned out to be a friend of Yúnus, who seemed to be pretty universally known in those parts. So amicable instead of hostile hugs took place; and eleven ill-looking ruffians mixed with our caravan crying out for dates and water. After examining our guns and donkeys with the eyes of connoisseurs, and evidently regretting that the duties of friendship prevented them from stripping us to the skin, they stopped behind and relieved us of their company, at which we were not sorry; for although of course we felt very heroic, it seemed not advisable to fight against such odds. Five or six other men coming in a different direction rather confirmed

us in this idea. We stopped not far from a solitary tomb on a small mound at a little past six, having been on the move eleven hours.

In the afternoon of this day a cluster of hills appeared on the horizon in front, to the left of our track. These were pointed out to us as rising near Mudar; and in fact occupy the base of Ras Kenaïs.

Next morning we were in the saddle before sunrise and soon parted with Wahsa, who left us to return to his own encampment. I ought to mention that our party had been further increased at Siwah by a poor invalid Arab who had started from Egypt on a visit to his brother at some place far to the west, and was now on his return with a fever about him.

In about an hour we passed some gulleys, and coming unexpectedly to the end of the table-land, obtained a sudden view of the sea. We were equally delighted at the prospect with the Greeks in the Anabasis; and soon recognizing Gatta Bay, found that we were nearly eight hours nearer Alexandria than when we left the coast on our way out. We descended at 7 A.M. the steep sides of the Catabathmus, called by the Arabs Medower-er-Rokbah; and at 9 A.M. reached the well of Ghookah, sunk in the level valley. It is deep, and two men were employed drawing the rope over a roller to water a herd of camels that was halting in the neighbourhood. We stopped an hour and a half, and then proceeded east-south-east along a valley parallel with the sea, but farther inland than that we had followed in coming. At 3 P.M. we passed the well or rather cistern of El-Ameer, cut in the solid rock and dry in summer. Near sunset we came up with a large caravan going to fetch wheat from Alexandria; and halted awhile, after which we proceeded in company until 8 P.M., having made eleven hours of actual travelling that day. The cold being intense, we determined to abandon our Spartan hardihood this night and to set up the tent.

I have often, in the course of this volume, had occasion to mention the going down of the children of the Desert into the land of Egypt for wheat; this is now a regular practice. Every autumn the young men of each tribe gather all their spare camels and travel many hundreds of miles in order to bring back a few sacks of grain to eke out the produce of the unkindly soil of their own valleys. All the markets on the banks of the



Nile are at that time filled with wild-looking men, who bring blankets, woven in their tents, from the wool of their flocks, or dates from the Oäses, or more commonly good round dollars, to give in exchange for what they require. The sons of Jacob, it will readily occur to the reader, brought money only for the purchase of wherewith to relieve the famine that had fallen on their people.

It not unfrequently happens that a great scarcity permanently displaces the head-quarters of a tribe. There has been a tendency of late years among many of the Bedawins to draw nearer and nearer to the frontiers of Egypt; and some of them have even built houses on the limits of the valley of the Nile and taken to cultivation. Travellers in Egypt may, without trouble, convince themselves of this fact on their way to the Pyramids of Gizeh, the monopoly of the exhibition of which they will find in the hands of a village of Bedawin agriculturists: but it is a mistake to suppose, as some seem to do, that this is an abnormal case. The confines of the whole province of Bahârah, especially near Damanhour, have been invaded in the same manner. Sometimes the process of transition from the nomadic to the stationary state is but half gone through; tents and stone or mud houses are found intermixed. Probably the wandering instincts so deeply implanted in this race may never be wholly uprooted, and at some future day they may again take to the desert. On one occasion, "Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land;" and I have no doubt the difficulty of finding subsistence in their old haunts had much to do with bringing the Bedawins to attempt settlements in Egypt.

These were the speculations that suggested themselves as we looked forth from our tent-door and saw by the last rays of the setting moon some thirty or forty Bedawins occupying, in circular groups, the slope of the hill, whilst nearly a hundred camels were browsing around. The aspect of the country was like that of a vast heath or down stretching away on all hands in immense black undulations. Being sleepless in spite of fatigue I went forth and stood apart for some time. It was curious to observe how rapidly the bustle subsided—the men disappearing one by one as the evening meal was concluded, and stretching themselves among the baggage to sleep; the camels kneeling

down to rest, but continuing for a long time to keep up a tremendous chumping. By the light of the stars I could at length distinguish nothing but our tent, as it shook, and trembled, and strained on its cords beneath a strong north wind; I retired late under its shelter. On rising I found that our friends had moved off long before daylight. With the usual improvidence of Bedawins they had lingered and loitered during the beginning of their journey; and now, being short of provisions, were compelled to make sixteen hours a day.

*October 16th.*—We proceeded over an undulating plain; the day was windy and cloudy, and we soon saw showers approaching, and heard their footsteps pattering on the hollow-sounding desert. Several flocks of white geese flew over head before and during the rain. In less than four hours we had passed the ruins of Kasr Gemaima, and halted about seven or eight miles from the sea on a line with the well of El-Emrûm. This was the place where we had left a supply of beans for our donkeys; and we had to wait for them to be fetched as well as whilst the poor animals went to drink.

During this halt I returned on foot to the ruin above mentioned. It was formerly a massive quadrangular stone tower with two lower rooms, one probably serving as an entrance-hall: it is about thirty paces square, and the wall must have been at least ten feet in thickness. It was built of large hewn stones, most of which are now weather-worn and shattered. There are no traces of inscriptions or architectural ornaments. From its position on the crest of a steep hill overlooking the road we came by, I should think it was erected for the protection of the caravan-road to the Oâsis, as well as that to Cyrene. Outside on the west is a vast cistern cut out of the solid rock, with a narrow opening at top and widening gradually as it descends. To the east is a square cistern like that at Selem, broken in at one corner. The entrance is nearly choked up with a carob-tree; but I managed to get down and astonish a huge number of frightfully ugly lizards and a black scorpion that slunk into its hole at the sight of a Frank. In one corner was the mouth of a well choked up with great stones.

I am of opinion that there were anciently two roads through this province: the upper and more level by which we returned,



frequented, I suppose, by caravans only in winter, when the rock cisterns under the protection of the forts were full of water; the lower one following the windings of the coast, where there are undried wells at all seasons of the year. I could not help, whilst contemplating this ruin, giving way once more to a feeling that had often been aroused in the course of the journey—one of regret, namely, at beholding the triumph of desolation and the unequivocal signs of the victory of barbarism. And I was confirmed in the idea which must present itself to all who transgress the boundaries of the narrow circle of our young civilization and expand their view over the senile regions of the earth, that “there is a tide in the affairs of men;” that we advance and retreat, never reaching the goal towards which we tend, and slipping back sometimes even when we fancy we are progressing. Let those who still dream of the perfectibility of the human species go to the Libyan desert and turn up its soil, and they will find the skeleton of a civilization now as much extinct as the mammoth or the mastodon.

I returned to my companions and found preparations making for a grand repast. We had a small tin of *ox-tail soup*, which it was proposed to dilute with water, mix with biscuit, and warm over a fire of camel’s dung. What was said was done; and we enjoyed our meal excessively. Our donkeys at length returned, after six hours’ absence, with the beans and their bellies full of water. The man who had acted as our store-keeper also came for his present; and, having settled with him, we started, and managed to make four hours more that evening at a rapid pace.

We were off on the 17th very early, and moved nearly all day in sight of the Marâbut, Sheikh Abd-er-Rahman. We had been lately enlivened by the sight of a hare: during this ride we saw a field-hen and a tortoise. Towards evening we sighted the Salt-Lakes; but left them to the north at night.

*October 18th.*—Early this morning we crossed over a ridge of hills, and coming to the eastern end of the Salt-Lakes, soon entered the long valley that leads without a break to Alexandria. We watered at one of the wells of Shemaimah and then proceeded to Kasr-el-Amaÿd, the Saracenic structure we passed at night on our way out. It is a four-sided building, with a square tower or ring projecting from the centre of each face. The entrance is

low, and formed of thin blocks of red granite: it looks southward, and is placed in an arched niche, over which there is an inscription beautifully preserved, explaining that this castle was built by Ahmed-el-Tahír-el-Yasmurí, under the orders of Bibars, Sultan of Egypt, whose arms appear beneath in the shape of two lions rampant. Similar ones occur on a bridge at Cairo, attributed to the same monarch. All the rooms within are arched. There are two stories; and I am told that this building is conspicuous at a great distance out at sea, although it is not usually mentioned as a landmark.

Leaving this place we pushed on for Abusír, which we reached after a hard ride at about seven o'clock, having travelled in the last two days twenty-two hours and a half. The worthy old Nazir seemed overjoyed to see us. The news of our having been shot at by the Siwahís had travelled to him, gaining volume as it proceeded, by some caravan; and he was rather surprised at finding the party with the full complement of legs, arms, and eyes! He was sharp enough, however, to understand that a good meal would be the best way of bidding us welcome and expressing his sympathy; and so he bustled about with right good will to prepare a supper.

Next morning we started for Alexandria, and, excluding a stoppage at the springs half way, made the distance in less than eight hours. Our poor donkeys seemed to know that they were near their journey's end, and went most willingly, so that we came into the Minsheyeh in capital style, very ragged, very dirty, very much burnt, and very hairy, much to the surprise of our friends who expected us to be devoured by the cannibals.

We got out of Siwah in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-seven, on the seventh day of October, about eight o'clock in the morning, and reached Alexandria at four in the afternoon of the nineteenth, having been therefore twelve days and eight hours on the journey, or one hundred and thirty-two hours and thirty-five minutes of actual travelling. Our first sentiment on completing this journey was of course one of pleasure; but a feeling of natural regret began soon to steal into our minds. We had grown accustomed to the free and wild ways of the Desert; and seemed scarcely to breathe so freely amidst streets and houses. The moments of keen enjoyment we



had experienced came back upon us with full force, invested with all the enchantment of distance; and although doubtless no one of us ever seriously contemplated setting up a tent as a permanent habitation and plunging amidst all the disagreeable realities of Arab life, yet there are times, perhaps, when we could wish to realize the idea of the poet, who says:

“ Oh! that the Desert were my dwelling-place,  
With one fair Spirit for my minister !”

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I AM indebted to the kindness of David L. Price, Esq., a chemist of distinguished abilities, for the following analysis of the water of Siwah:—

“ The water, which was brought to this country in a well-secured wine-bottle, emitted on being uncorked a very perceptible odour of the gas known as sulphuretted hydrogen, and which was made manifest on applying the usual test for the same. Its presence may be attributed to a small quantity of organic matter, which had subsided in the bottle, having undergone decomposition. Compared with other waters (I will select the water of the Thames before it reaches the vicinity of London), it has a greater density, which I have found to be 1·0015, whereas the Thames has a density of 1·0003, thus indicating that it holds a larger amount of solid matter in solution. I have found that 100 parts of it contain 0,23950 (the Thames water 0,032932) of solid constituents: of these, 0,1615 are common salt. It might be inferred from this large amount of common salt, that its taste would be saline, which is however not the case, it being of a very agreeable and somewhat sweetish nature. The remainder of the solid matter is composed of potassa salts, sulphate of lime, carbonates of lime and magnesia, silica, and a small quantity of organic matter.”

THE END.

*Map of the Author's Route* . . . *the end of the book.*

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PREPARING FOR PUBLICATION, IN FOLIO,

**TWELVE VIEWS,**

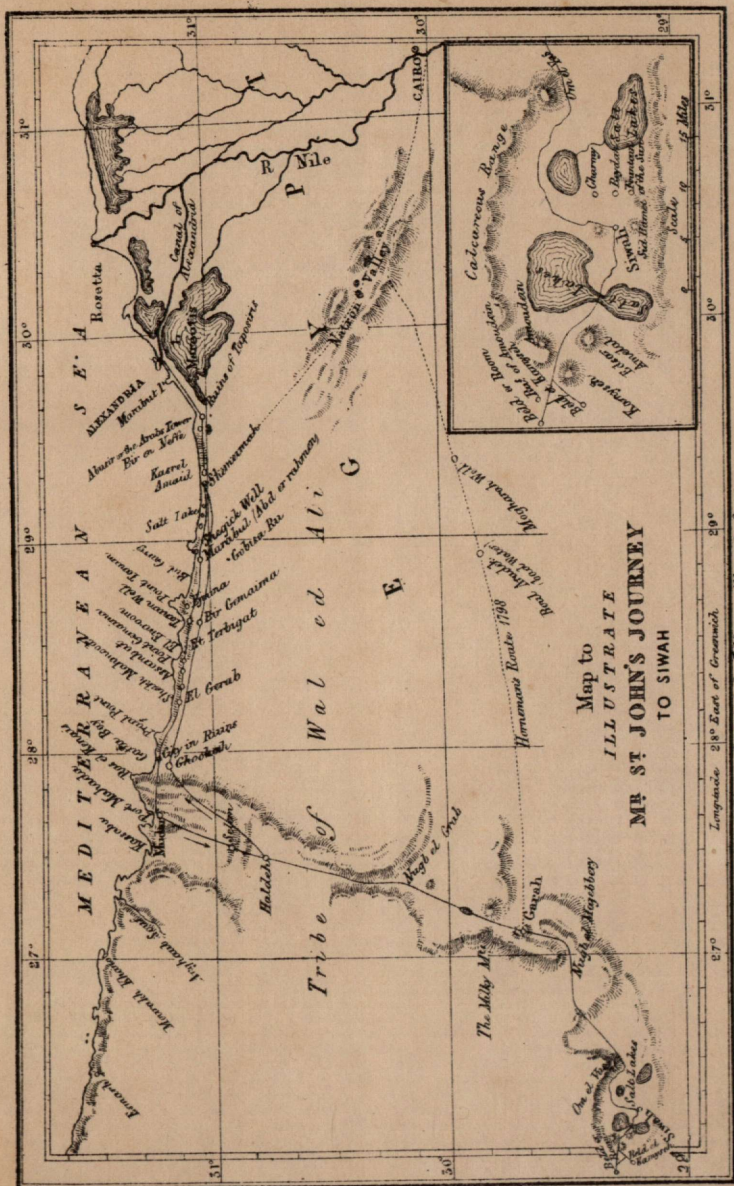
FROM SKETCHES TAKEN ON THE SPOT,

TO ILLUSTRATE

MR. ST. JOHN'S JOURNEY IN THE LIBYAN DESERT  
TO THE OÄSIS OF SIWAH.

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