



ABRAHAM'S OAK, HEBRON.

An ilex or evergreen holm oak (*quercus pseudo-coccifera*). One of the lower branches was broken down by a heavy fall of snow in the winter of 1850. It was cut up into logs and conveyed to Jerusalem; there were seven camel-loads; one log was sent to England.

THE SOUTHERN BORDERLAND AND DEAD SEA.

THERE is no pleasanter place for an encampment in Southern Palestine than in the valley which leads to Hebron, the Wâdy Tüffâh, especially during the vintage season, and in the vicinity of the traditional oak of Abraham (see page 192). This giant tree, which measures thirty-two feet in circumference, and whose leafy crown is supported by four main branches fifty feet in length, is revered as the direct surviving representative of the oaks (erroneously rendered "Plain") of Mamre beneath which the patriarch was encamped when he entertained his angelic visitors and received the news of the future birth of Isaac, the son of promise. The oak rears its head amongst the vineyards north-west of Hebron, and is surrounded by a stone wall, built by the Russians, to whom the field in which it stands belongs. It is known as Ballûtet Sebta, or the "Oak of Rest," and it is supposed to be about two hundred years old. Tradition has at different times shown the world-famed tree at various

sites. Josephus mentions "a very large terebinth-tree, which has continued ever since the creation of the world," as existing about six furlongs from the city of Hebron. St. Jerome places it at what is now known as Râmet el Khülil, the traditional site of Mamre (see page 189), where a large stone enclosure, a wall and other ruins are to be found; and Sir John Maundeville speaks of Abraham's Oak, which he, however, describes as "the dry tree." "They say," writes the old traveller, "that it has been there since the beginning of the world, that it once was green and bore leaves till the time that our Lord died on the cross, and then it died, and so did all the trees that were then in the world." The present oak, the "Ballûtet Sebta," in the Wâdy Tüffâh, is green and flourishing, and the situation which it occupies accords with the Bible description of Mamre. There is nothing improbable in the supposition that it is the descendant of the ancient grove (see page 193). As a rule, the oaks do not grow to a great size, being cropped while yet young by the goats; but sometimes a tree is preserved for superstitious reasons and attains to an immense age. The worship of trees is an old and widely spread form of primitive religious cult. The Bible constantly couples the mention of groves with "high places" and other sanctuaries of idolatrous worship; the ancient oracle of Zeus Dendrites at Dodona was an oak, and Maximus Tyrius writes of the religion of the Druids, "The image of the Celtic Zeus is a tall oak." So inseparably were groves connected with the worship of false gods that the Israelites were distinctly forbidden "to plant a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the Lord" (see Deut. xvi. 21). In spite of this prohibition we find Hosea (iv. 13) lamenting that the people "sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms." It is not to be wondered at that a grove so intimately connected with the most solemn events in the life of the Father of the Jewish race should be venerated by his descendants, or the memory of the site kept up for ages and a representative tree always cultivated on the spot.

A half-hour's journey farther on takes us to Hebron, now called Medînet el Khülil, "the City of the Friend," or simply "el Khülil;" Khülil Allah, or "the Friend of God," being the name by which the patriarch Abraham is known to the Muhammedans (St. James ii. 23). Few spots in the Holy Land have such deeply interesting associations as this. Here it was that Abraham purchased of Ephron the Hittite the double cave Machpelah to serve as a sepulchre for himself and his house. It was from Hebron that Jacob sent his son Joseph to Sichem, when the Dreamer was cast by his brethren into the well and sold to the Midianites. Hence later on the aged Jacob set out for Egypt by way of Beersheba (see page 209), and here the patriarch's bones were brought to rest beside his kin. Hebron was laid waste by Joshua, and its surrounding territory was given to Caleb, while the city itself was made over as a city of refuge to the house of Aaron. David, after his romantic adventures in the Wilderness of Judæa, reigned in Hebron for seven and a half years, until, becoming sovereign of the whole land of Israel, he removed the seat of his government to Jerusalem. At the gates of Hebron Abner was slain by Joab, and by the pool of Hebron (see page 196) David put to death the murderers of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul. The rebellious Absalom too betook

himself to Hebron, "to fulfil a vow" and offer up sacrifices at the altar of Jehovah for the success of his revolt against his father, for then as now Hebron was next in sanctity only to Jerusalem itself. The ancient name of Hebron was Kirjath-Arba, literally "the city of four," which the rabbinical commentators explain to mean the four patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Adam. The Bible, however, says, "And the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-Arba; which Arba was a great man among the Anakims." (Josh. xiv. 15.)

Unlike most towns in Palestine, Hebron does not stand upon a hill, but lies in the narrow part of a valley, called Wâdy Khülîl, the continuation of Wâdy et Tüffâh. Some have conjectured that the ancient city was situated on the hill north-west of the modern town: this would agree with the Bible narrative, which makes Machpelah to have been "in a field before Mamre—the same is Hebron." It is easy to understand how a new town might grow up round the sacred site, while the original one would disappear. The neighbourhood is exceedingly fertile and the valley has been supposed to be that of Eshcol from the luxuriance with which the vines thrive there. But this site should more probably be looked for in the mountain plateau south of Judæa, which now forms part of the Desert of the Tih, but which must in former times have been as fertile as Palestine itself. Although all is now arid and bare from the failure of the water supply, there are the ruins of immense works for irrigation, and the terraced hillsides are covered with small stone heaps in regular order, which are still called Teleilât el 'Anab, or "grape-mounds." The grapes of Hebron are large, and the clusters grow to an immense size. There is a tradition that it was here that Father Noah planted the vine; his grave is shown at Dura, the ancient Dora, a little to the west.

The town of Hebron contains four quarters: Hâret esh Sheikh, "the sheikh's quarter," so called from the fine mosque of Sheikh 'Ali Bakka on the north-west, which dates from the time of the Mamelukes (see page 197); Hâret Bâb ez Zâwiyeh, "the quarter of the Cloister Gate," on the west; Hâret el Harâm, "the quarter of the Sanctuary," on the south-east; and Hâret el Mushârikeh, "the common quarter," on the south. The population is from eight thousand to ten thousand, of whom five hundred are Jews. These are the only foreigners permitted in the place; they exercise no trade or industry, but subsist on the charity of their European co-religionists, for whom they offer up prayers in return at this peculiarly holy place.*

On approaching the city, the first object which meets the eye is the square castle-like structure of the Harâm, with its towering walls of ancient and massive masonry (see steel plate). These, as already stated, enclose the mosque which now covers the cave of Machpelah. According to Jewish opinion, it was Solomon who first erected the mausoleum, Esther who restored it, and the Empress Helena who rebuilt it after it had been destroyed or fallen into decay. The walls of the Harâm at Hebron are the most perfect examples of masonry of the kind which exist in Palestine, almost surpassing even the ancient portions of the walls of

* There is an important and anciently founded glass factory on the north side of the Harâm; here lamps and smooth rings of coloured glass, worn as bracelets, are made in great numbers, and distributed all over the country. Hebron supplies the southern districts with water-skins made of goats' hides; and there are a few primitive hand-loom in the town, where strong rough carpets are produced.—M. E. R.

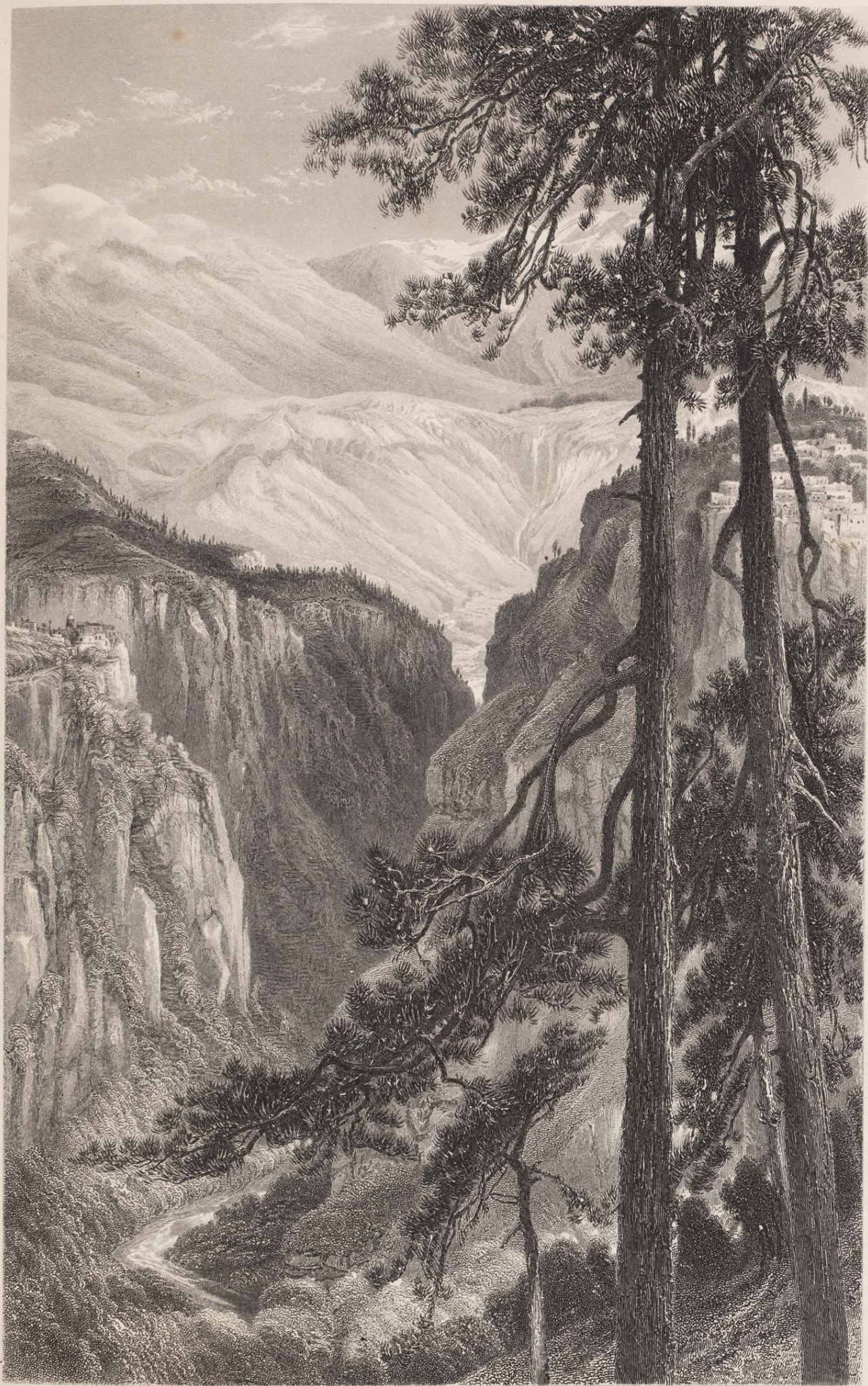
the Temple area at Jerusalem. The stones are still so well fitted together that, notwithstanding



THE POOLS OF HEBRON.

The chief pool is one hundred and thirty-two feet square, and twenty-one feet deep. There are stone steps leading to the bottom at each corner. The other pool is eighty-four feet in length, and fifty-four feet in width. The enclosed building in the distance, on the slope of the hill to the left, is the Quarantine station.

their antiquity, no vegetation has yet found the least place to grow between them. The



H. FENN. PINX.

S. BRADSHAW. SCULPT.

THE GORGE OF THE KADISHA - LEBANON.

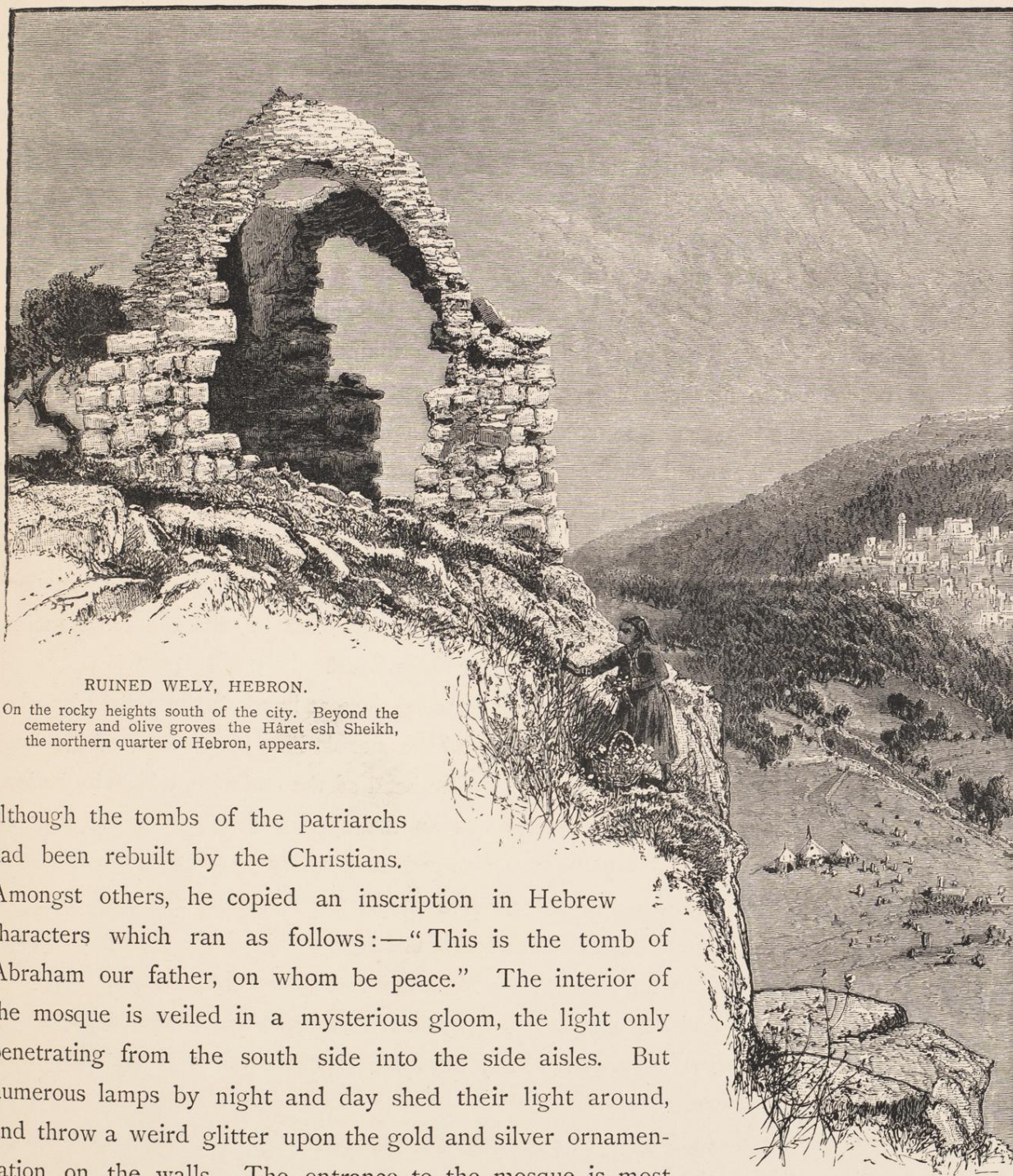
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building within the sacred enclosure which formerly occupied the place of the present mosque was a well-built square stone erection, like the Kaabeh at Mecca, and is mentioned by the Bordeaux Pilgrim, A.D. 333. Benjamin of Tudela, a learned Jew who visited it in 1160, describes "the great church of St. Abraham" as having been at one time a Jewish synagogue,



RUINED WELY, HEBRON.

On the rocky heights south of the city. Beyond the cemetery and olive groves the Hâret esh Sheikh, the northern quarter of Hebron, appears.

although the tombs of the patriarchs had been rebuilt by the Christians.

Amongst others, he copied an inscription in Hebrew characters which ran as follows:—"This is the tomb of Abraham our father, on whom be peace." The interior of the mosque is veiled in a mysterious gloom, the light only penetrating from the south side into the side aisles. But numerous lamps by night and day shed their light around, and throw a weird glitter upon the gold and silver ornamentation on the walls. The entrance to the mosque is most jealously forbidden by the Muhammedans to any but their fellow-worshippers; by special firman of the Sultan, an exception was made in favour of the Prince of Wales in 1862, the Marquis of Bute in 1866, the Crown Prince of Prussia in 1869, and the sons of the Prince of Wales in the present year, 1882.

Of these occasions the most noteworthy was the visit of the Prince of Wales. His Royal Highness was accompanied by the late Dean Stanley, who thus describes the event:—"Before our arrival at Hebron, the Governor of Jerusalem, Sûraya Pasha, had made every preparation to ensure the safety of the experiment. Accordingly, as the protracted file wound through the narrow valley by which the town of Hebron is approached (see page 192), the whole road on either side, for more than a mile, was lined with soldiers. The native population, which usually on the Prince's approach to a town streamed out to meet him, was invisible, it may be from compulsion, it may be from silent indignation. We at length reached the green sward in front of the town, crowned by the Quarantine (see page 196). There Sûraya Pasha received us. It had been arranged that His Royal Highness should be accompanied by the two members of the party who had given most attention to Biblical pursuits, so as to make it evident that the visit was not one of mere curiosity, but had also a distinct scientific purpose. It was, however, finally conceded by the Governor that the whole of the suite should be included, amounting to seven persons besides the Prince. The servants remained behind. We started on foot, two and two, between two files of soldiers, by the ancient pool of Hebron (see page 196), up the narrow streets of the modern town, still lined with soldiers. Hardly a face was visible as we passed through; only here and there a solitary guard, stationed at a vacant window, or on the flat roof of a projecting house, evidently to guarantee the safety of the party from any chance missile. It was, in fact, a complete military occupation of the town. At length we reached the south-eastern corner of the massive wall of enclosure, the point at which enquiring travellers, from generation to generation, have been checked in their approach to this, the most ancient and the most authentic of all the Holy Places in the Holy Land.

"Up the steep flight of the exterior staircase—gazing close at hand on the polished surface of the wall, amply justifying Josephus's account of the marble-like appearance of the huge stones which compose it—we rapidly mounted. At the head of the staircase, which, by its long ascent, showed that the platform of the Mosque was on the uppermost slope of the hill, and therefore above the level where, if anywhere, the sacred cave would be found, a short turn at once brought us within the precincts, and revealed to us for the first time the wall from the inside. A later wall of Muhammedan times has been built on the top of the Jewish enclosure. The enclosure itself, as seen from the inside, rises but a few feet above the platform.

"Here we were received with much ceremony by five or six persons, corresponding to the dean and canons of a Christian cathedral. They were the representatives of the forty hereditary guardians of the mosque.

"We passed at once through an open court into the mosque.

" The whole building occupies about one-third of the platform.

"I now proceed to describe the Tombs of the Patriarchs, premising always that these tombs, like all those in Muhammedan mosques, and indeed like most tombs in Christian churches, do not profess to be the actual places of sepulture, but are merely monuments or cenotaphs in honour of the dead who lie beneath. Each is enclosed within a separate chapel

or shrine, closed with gates or railings similar to those which surround or enclose the private chapels or royal tombs in Westminster Abbey. The two first of these shrines are contained in the inner portico or narthex, before the entrance into the actual building of the mosque. In the recess on the right is the shrine of Abraham, in the recess on the left that of Sarah, each guarded by silver gates. The shrine of Sarah we were requested not to enter, as being that of a woman. A pall lay over it. The shrine of Abraham, after a momentary hesitation, was thrown open. The guardians groaned aloud. But their chief turned to us with the remark, 'The Princes of any other nation should have passed over my dead body sooner than enter. But to the eldest son of the Queen of England we are willing to accord even this privilege.' He stepped in before us, and offered an ejaculatory prayer to the dead patriarch: 'O Friend of God, forgive this intrusion.' We then entered. The chamber is cased in marble. The so-called tomb consists of a coffin-like structure about six feet high, built up of plastered stone or marble, and hung with three carpets, green embroidered with gold. They are said to have been presented by Muhammed II., the conqueror of Constantinople (A.D. 1453), Selim I., the conqueror of Egypt (A.D. 1518), and the Sultan Abdul Mejîd. Fictitious as the actual structure was, it was impossible not to feel a thrill of unusual emotion at standing on such a spot—an emotion enhanced by the rare occasion which had opened the gates of that consecrated place, as the guardian of the mosque kept repeating to us as we stood round the tomb, 'to no one less than the representative of England.'"

The next most interesting objects in Hebron are the two pools (see page 196). The larger of these lies low down in the bed of the valley, which here begins to make a dip, running down with a steady declivity to the ancient border of Beersheba; the other is situated somewhat higher up in the wâdy, and is a little more than half the size. The first-mentioned is traditionally regarded as the scene of the murder of Ishbosheth.

From Hebron the traveller may make a short but deeply interesting journey of some seven or eight hours to the southern end of the Dead Sea. Mounting the slopes of Jebel Jobar to the south-east, we come in about an hour and a half to a small hill on the left, called Tell Zif. This is the Ziph of Holy Writ. The ruins lie on a low hill or ridge between two small wâdys which run from this point down to the Dead Sea. It was in the vicinity of this city that David hid himself (1 Sam. xxiii. 24) and wandered as an outlaw in the wilderness; and "every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him," until his band mustered four hundred men. The inhabitants of Ziph twice attempted to betray him into the hands of his persecutor. The town was afterwards fortified by Rehoboam, after which it passes out of history, the last mention of it being made by Jerome in the Onomasticon. Another hour's travelling in an eastward direction brings us to Wâdy Khabra, where for the first time we enter upon the great wilderness of Judæa. Passing thence over a broad plateau, a favourite camping-ground of the Bedawîn, we reach at length the top of the Pass of Engedi, where the Dead Sea and the rugged mountains of Moab first burst upon the view (see page 201).

When, as often happens in the rainy season, the sky is overcast with clouds, a dense haze obscuring the mountains, and a fleecy mist hovers over the water, the Dead Sea seems, indeed, worthy of its name : look where one may, no sign of life is visible, and no sound is heard save the dull monotonous surging of the waves. The shore, too, is the very picture of barrenness



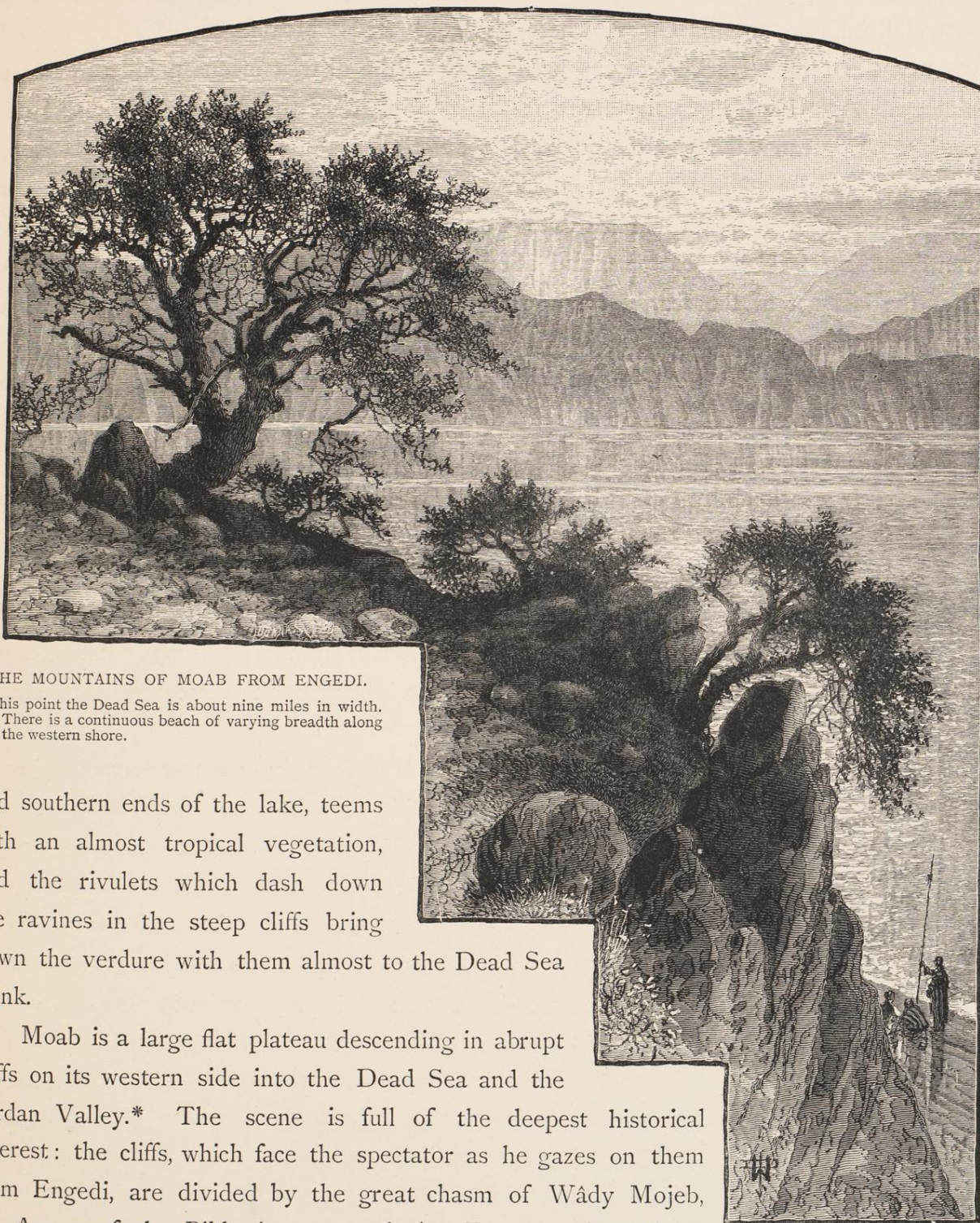
THE DEAD SEA, LOOKING NORTH-EAST FROM ENGEDI.

Anciently called the Salt Sea, and Sea of the Plain. The name Dead Sea, now so familiar, does not occur in the Bible; it was adopted by Greek and Roman writers in the second century of our era. The Arabs call this sea Bahr Lût (Sea of Lot).

and desolation, the white salt incrustation which covers it being only relieved by the dark patches of black rolling mud or stagnant pools of brine.

But on a bright and sunny day the salt lake wears a far different aspect. The clear

transparent waters then sparkle with a sapphire hue, and the mountains glow with variegated tints. All animated nature also seems to quicken into life, and flocks of storks and cranes may be seen flying overhead (see page 200). The Ghor, or low-lying plain at the northern



THE MOUNTAINS OF MOAB FROM ENGEDI.

At this point the Dead Sea is about nine miles in width. There is a continuous beach of varying breadth along the western shore.

and southern ends of the lake, teems with an almost tropical vegetation, and the rivulets which dash down the ravines in the steep cliffs bring down the verdure with them almost to the Dead Sea brink.

Moab is a large flat plateau descending in abrupt cliffs on its western side into the Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley.* The scene is full of the deepest historical interest: the cliffs, which face the spectator as he gazes on them from Engedi, are divided by the great chasm of Wâdy Mojeb, the Arnon of the Bible (see engraving). From yonder heights Balaam blessed Israel, and Moses looked upon the promised land which he might never enter.

* For Canon Tristram's description of the northern part of the Dead Sea refer to pages 154—161, vol. i., and for further illustrations of the Dead Sea, Moab Mountains, and Jordan Valley, see pages 152, 159, 163, 165, 167, and 168.

Stretching out into the lake on the south-west is the promontory of El Lisân, "the tongue" (see page 204), and far above it, on a high precipitous rock, stands the mediæval bastioned castle of Kerek. Kerek is called in the Bible Kir-Hareseth, Haresh, or Heres, and the latter part of this name has for a long time puzzled commentators and philologists. When at Diban, the ancient Dibon, where the celebrated "Moabite stone" was found, I learned that the term "Harith" in the local *patois* of the district means a hill surmounted by buildings. As "Harith" is the exact Arabic equivalent of the Hebrew "Haresh," Kir-Hareseth would mean "the city on the hill," a description the accuracy of which is patent to the eye, especially when viewed from our present standpoint. This furnishes a curious instance of the survival of an old Moabite word, and of the manner in which the most apparently trifling incidents, customs, and idioms may illustrate the Bible. Kerek was the scene of the last act of the fearful tragedy of the rebellion of Mesha, whose successes at some other time against Israel are so proudly and boastfully recorded on the Moabite stone. Here, after having made one last despairing but futile effort to burst through the beleaguering lines, the Moabite monarch "took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead and offered him for a burnt-offering upon the wall." In later Crusading times the castle of Kerek was held by the turbulent knight, Raynald of Châtillon, who, by breaking faith with Saladin and attacking the Muhammedan pilgrim caravan in time of peace, brought about the fall of the Christian kingdom in Palestine.

The nearer shore is not visible until we begin to descend the pass by a precipitous and winding path, which in about half an hour brings us to 'Ain Jidy (see page 203). The modern name of this spring, "the fountain of the kid," is absolutely identical in meaning and orthography with the Engedi of Scripture.

The full stream gushes out from beneath a huge boulder upon a narrow terrace of rock four hundred feet above the level of the lake, and, rushing down the steep declivity, its course hidden by rich tropical vegetation, flows out upon a broad patch of alluvial soil (see page 203). Over this it dashes in a sparkling cascade, and again collects itself below in a quiet pool fringed with graceful tamarisks and fragrant oleanders. The roots of the luxuriant growth, however, absorb the water, and the brook never finds its way down to the sea. The water of the spring is warm (83° Fahr.), of a sweetish taste, and impregnated with lime. Around the spring is a cane-brake, with a perfect thicket composed of different kinds of zizyphus, or thorny lote-tree, the *sidr* or *dôm* of the Arabs, who are very fond of its pleasant-tasting fruit. There is also a great profusion of nightshade, or the "egg" or "mad apple," as well as of the *'osher*, a plant seldom found except in tropical regions, and bearing the so-called "apples of Sodom."

The *seyal*, or thorny acacia, the "shittim-tree" of the Bible, also grows here in great abundance. The ancient town probably lay below the spring, and the ruins of several buildings, apparently ancient, are found in the neighbourhood. To reach the level of the lake we descend for about three hundred and thirty feet along the thicket through which the stream

flows and a very steep and rugged path. The sides of the brook are cultivated so far as the water extends by the Rashaidy Arabs. Farther to the north the fountains of 'Ain Terabeh, el Ghuweir ("the little lowland"), and El Fesh-kah, the last a large and copious one, flow into the



ENGEDI, THE FOUNTAIN OF THE KID ('AIN JIDY).

The sparkling limpid water is warm, rather sweet, and impregnated with lime. To the left there is an example of the remarkable *esclepiad* called in Arabic *'osher*; it bears a bladder-like fruit filled with long silky hairs, used by the Arabs as tinder for their matchlocks.

lake, but their waters are brackish, and the spring of 'Ain Jidy seems to be the main source of sweet water on the western shore. At length we stand upon the shores of the Dead Sea, the frightful desolation of which accords well with the terrible history that attaches to the spot.

We are undoubtedly in the neighbourhood of the "Cities of the Plain," though much difference of opinion exists as to the spot on which they stood. Ancient tradition fixes it at what is now the southern end of the lake, and this accords with the physical geography of the region. We are told (Gen. xiii. 10) that "all the plain of Jordan was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar." And in xiv. 3 we learn that the allied kings "were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea," *i.e.* evidently which had become the "salt sea" at the time of writing. The soundings taken by Lynch prove that



THE SOUTHERN END OF THE DEAD SEA FROM ENGEDI,
Showing the Peninsula called El Lisân (the tongue), which may easily be mistaken for an island.

the southern end of the lake is some one thousand three hundred feet deeper than the northern, and seems to point to some great convulsion of nature on the spot.

Many writers have supposed that the agencies employed in the destruction of Sodom and its sister cities were the natural ones of volcanic eruptions accompanied by earthquake. This hypothesis is quite in accordance with the language of the Bible; the mention in Genesis of the existence of "slime (*i.e.* asphalt) pits" in the neighbourhood, and of Abraham's seeing that "the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace," would certainly seem to indicate some such phenomena. The asphalt pits are still to be seen, and the frequent and severe earthquakes that have occurred in the vicinity also point to the presence of subterranean volcanic action. The present aspect of the place can only be reconciled with the Scripture

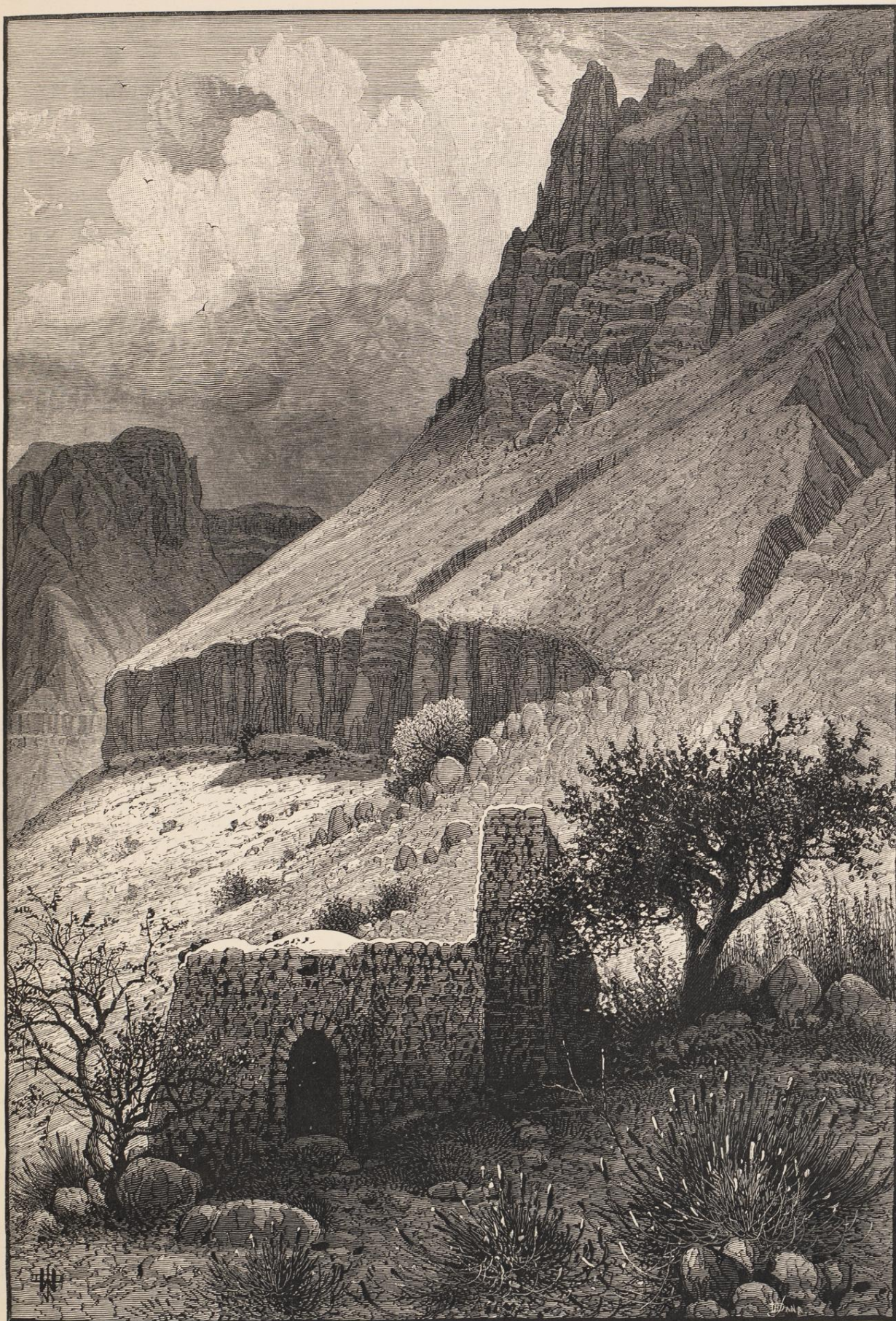


A WILLMORE, SCULPT.

GAZA.

H. FENN, PINX.





THE CLIFFS OF ENGEDI.

They form a very difficult pass, and the zigzag paths are not kept in repair. The surface of the limestone rock is of marble-like smoothness, and a pale reddish tint is the prevailing colour.

account by supposing the vale of Siddim to have sunk down and been overwhelmed by the waters of the lake.

The Dead Sea, which is about forty-six miles long and nearly one thousand three hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean, is shut in on both sides by precipitous cliffs, the bases of which at one time project into the waters of the lake, at others recede and leave a narrow strip of beach. At the southern end a number of low, sandy promontories jut out into the sea, amongst which the largest and most conspicuous is the Lisân already referred to (see page 204). Seen from 'Ain Jidy, the view is magnificent for its rugged and desolate grandeur: opposite are the hills of Moab, and far away to the south stretches the western coast, with its numberless white promontories jutting out into the lake, and towering high over these the rocky precipices rise one above the other like the bastions of some mighty castle. Towards the south-western end of the lake, and washed at the base by its waves, is *Jebel Usdum*, or the *Mount of Sodom*, an isolated hill composed almost entirely of crystalline rock-salt. It is about seven miles in length and three hundred and fifty feet in height, and where the water has washed it away in places it assumes quaint forms resembling pillars and minarets, naturally suggesting the pillar of salt into which Lot's too-curious wife was turned. One, the most conspicuous of these pillars, is indeed pointed out as such, and called by the Arabs "*Bint Sheikh Lût*," or Lot's wife. Just before *Jebel Usdum* the outline of the once-powerful fortress of *Masada* may be discerned against the sky. This famous stronghold was originally built by *Jonathan Maccabæus*, and was enlarged and strengthened by *Herod the Great*; it was the last refuge of Jewish independence after the destruction of *Jerusalem* by *Titus*.

The leafy thicket of 'Ain Jidy, at the foot of the sheer and towering cliffs of the barren mountain, presents a strange contrast to the desolation which surrounds it. The mighty cliffs that overhang it, with the awful chasms and sombre gorges which divide them, also lend an indescribable grandeur to the scene (see page 205). The inhospitable shores of the lake were at one time inhabited, first, perhaps, by the indigenous inhabitants, later on by the *Israelites*, and after them came a succession of hermits—the mystical Jewish sect of the *Essenes* and the *anchorites* of the first few centuries of the Christian era. The mountainsides are everywhere honey-combed with the caves in which these recluses dwelt; many of them are now quite inaccessible, the paths and terraces in the cliffs by which they were once approached having long since been washed or worn away.

The water of the *Dead Sea* contains about 25 per cent. of solid matter. Its pungency and saltiness cause intense pain to the eyes if it is allowed to enter them, and it is abominably nauseous to the taste; but it is so buoyant that to sink in it is out of the question. One may float on back or breast, sit on the surface as on a feather bed, and—provided one does not fall over head downwards—perform almost any antics without fear of submersion. Swimming, however, is very trying to the small of the back, from the jerk with which the legs fly out on the least attempt to strike out in the ordinary way. The *Dead Sea* receives the whole torrent of the *Jordan*, as well as the rivulets and streams from the ravines in the cliffs of *Palestine* and

Moab, on its western and eastern shores. The volume of water thus discharged into it has been calculated at six million tons daily, for which there is no apparent, or, indeed, conceivable outlet, the immense evaporation which takes place being sufficient to maintain the level of the lake.

The wilderness of Engedi is as grand but dreary a sight as can well be imagined: a broad rolling expanse, shut in on every hand by high ridges with jagged summits, their sides deeply scored by torrent beds, and intersected here and there by broad valleys of white marl, with not a tree, and scarcely a shrub, to be seen for miles around (see page 208). From time to time a small Arab encampment or a few isolated figures come in sight, and with their primæval costume, and their wild and savage air, seem like some weird vision of David and his outlaw band conjured up by a highly wrought fancy, rather than the ordinary inhabitants of the place.

From the city of Abraham we proceed to another spot connected with the history of the patriarch, Beersheba—variously interpreted, “the Well of the Seven” or “the Well of the Oath”—where he dug the well, and gave seven ewe lambs to Abimelech in token of an oath of covenant with him (see page 209). There were once seven wells here, two of which are still filled with water, and another, in a fairly perfect condition, is dry; they are all built of solid masonry. In the immediate vicinity may be seen traces of the other four wells. An Arab tradition says that, “The Beni Murr dwelt by seven wells (*seba' biyûr*); each well had seven tanks, each tank had seven troughs, and each trough had seven horses drinking thereat.” Round the two wells which contain water are rude stone troughs, which appear to be very ancient. The southern bank of the valley is banked up with a strong wall of solid masonry, extending for a few hundred yards along the part opposite the wells, which are thus protected from the earth falling in and filling them up. The hillside behind them is covered with ruins, though, from the confused state into which they have fallen, it is impossible now to make out with any certainty the original ground-plan of the town. Higher up in the valley are the foundations of a Greek church. The country around Beersheba consists of a rolling plain, intersected by the wâdy beds of Seba' and Khûlil. In spring, when the rains have fallen, it is often covered for miles around with grass, flowers, and herbage; at other times it is nothing but a dry parched land, bare and desolate as the desert itself. Strange and solemn are the thoughts which such a place inspires. Here were the very wells, in all human probability, which the Father of the Faithful dug. The name he gave it still clings to the spot; the Bedawin, to whom the Scriptures are unknown, still point with pride to the great work which their father Ibrahim achieved, and as they draw water from it for their flocks and herds, the ropes that let the buckets down still glide along the same deep furrows in the masonry which, mayhap, the ropes of the patriarch's servants first began. It was to the wilderness of Beersheba, too, that Elijah fled for his life from Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings xix. 3).

We now take a final farewell of Hebron and its sacred memories, and, providing ourselves with an escort of the Jehalin or the Hawetât Arabs, set out upon a journey through the wilder-

ness towards the rock-cut city of Petra, in the land of Edom. Our road leads us past Semû'a, the ancient Eshtemoh, mentioned in Joshua xv. 50; Tell 'Arâd, the site of the city of "King 'Arâd the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south," who, when he "heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies, fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners" (Numbers xxi. 1); Tell Milh, "the salt mound," where once stood the ancient Moladah, mentioned by Joshua and Nehemiah, and later on by Josephus—it is the Malathah of the fourth century, and is, perhaps, identical with the "City of Salt" mentioned in Joshua xv. 62; and next by 'Ar'arah,

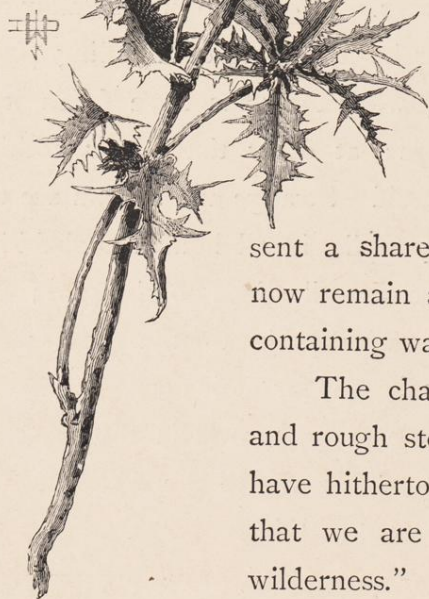


THE WILDERNESS OF ENGEDI,

Where David and his followers lived among "the rocks of the wild goats." There are many caves in the hillsides which might well serve as places of refuge for fugitives and outlaws.

the Aroer of Judah (1 Sam. xxx. 28), one of the cities to which David after his victories over the Amalekites sent a share of the spoil—the only traces of the ancient town which now remain are a few wells built up with rude masonry, some of them containing water.

The character of the scenery now begins to change, rolling hills and rough stony valleys succeeding the open plains through which we have hitherto been passing, and it becomes every moment more evident that we are entering upon the confines of the "great and terrible wilderness." Passing through this wild region, we at length reach Jebel Madherah, a hill of which the Arabs tell the following legend:—"A people once dwelt here, to



whom there came one day some travellers seeking hospitality; but the people of the place did unto them a vile and horrible deed, wherefore the Almighty in his anger rained down stones upon them and destroyed them from off the face of the earth." The base and summit of the mountain are covered with large blocks of stone, to which the Bedawin point in confirmation of their tale. From this point a few hours' journey takes us to 'Ain el Weibeh, with its



BÎR ES SEBA', THE SITE OF BEERSHEBA.

The ancient wells can still be traced, and two of them are serviceable; but the city has ceased to exist. In the distance may be seen an encampment of the Tiyâheh Arabs. In the foreground a woman is asking alms of the artist's travelling attendants.

three springs, which Robinson and others have identified with Kadesh Barnea (see page 210). With this I am unable to agree, and prefer placing Kadesh at 'Ain Kadis, about forty miles farther to the west. The name Kadis is in meaning and etymology exactly equivalent to the Kadesh of the Bible, and the identification of this site is perhaps more important than any other in the region, as it forms the key to the movements of the Children of Israel after leaving

Hazeroth for the scene of their forty years' wanderings. The spring which bears this suggestive name is situated at a part of the mountain plateau where this falls to a lower level, and, being more open and less hilly, is easily approached from the direction of Akabah. It is thus situated at one of the natural boundary lines of Palestine. From northern Syria to Sinai southwards the



'AIN EL WEIBEH, ON THE BORDER OF EDM,
In the valley of El Jeib. The name signifies "hole with water." Many authorities regard this now deserted place as the site of Kadesh Barnea.

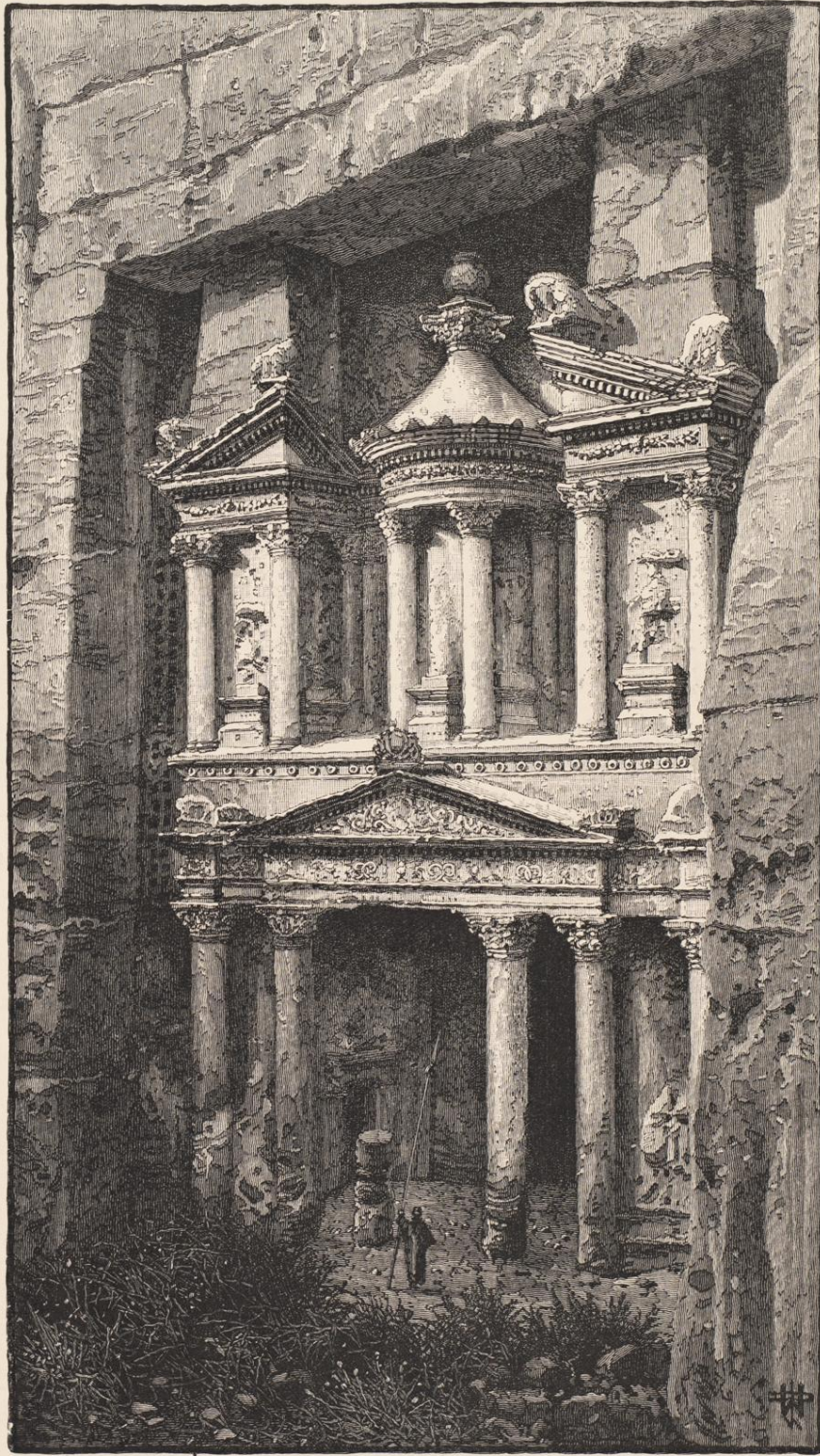
country seems to have certain natural divisions marked by the comparative fertility of the soil of each. In Syria at the present day we have a well-watered and productive soil; in Palestine, south of the Hermon district the soil is much more barren, but shows traces of greater fertility in former times; south of the mountains of Judah, to the point immediately below 'Ain Kadis,

the country, though now little more than a barren waste, shows signs of extensive former cultivation, reaching down even to a comparatively recent period. This tract of land is the Negeb, or south country of Scripture; and 'Ain Kadis is situated on the frontier of the district. Between this and the edge of the plateau of the Tih the country is even more barren, but there are still traces of a primæval race of inhabitants who found a living on its soil. At the time of the Exodus it must have borne the same relation to the then fertile district of the Negeb which that now barren land bears to Palestine at the present day. Now the spies went up from Kadesh, and returned bringing with them grapes from Eshcol, which, as has been stated above, many geographers identify with Wâdy el Khûlîl, or the Wâdy of Hebron. But the city of Hebron is at least four days' journey from 'Ain Kadis, and grapes and figs could not have been brought so far without spoiling—to say nothing of the cautious manner in which Caleb and his companions must have passed through the country. If, then, Kadesh Barnea is at 'Ain Kadis, the grape-bearing Eshcol must be near the same place; and it is a curious fact that among the most striking characteristics of the Negeb are miles of country—hillsides and valleys—covered with small stone heaps, swept in regular swathes, and called by the Arabs to this day *teleilat el 'anab*, or “grape mounds.” From a strategical point of view also, 'Ain el Weibeh is ill adapted for the site of Kadesh Barnea, as the Israelites would there have been confined in a *cul de sac*, with the Canaanites, Amorites, Edomites, and Moabites completely hemming them in; whereas in the neighbourhood of 'Ain Kadis they would have nothing but the wilderness around them, and certainly no very hostile peoples in their rear. A good general like Moses would scarcely have chosen a bad position for his camp, and the probabilities therefore are that the more western 'Ain Kadis is really the Kadesh Barnea of the Bible.

From 'Ain el Weibeh we descend into the broad valley of the Arabah, and, mounting the opposite banks, enter Edom by the Nemelah Pass, and reach Petra by way of the magnificent ravine called the Sik (see page 219). Edom is that narrow strip of country between the Arabah and the Derb el Hajj, or Pilgrim Road to Mecca; it extends northwards from Akabah, the ancient Elath, on the Red Sea to Wâdy Kerek, which formed the ancient boundary between it and Moab. The district is divided into two parts, the northern portion of which is now called Jebâl, the Gebal of the Hebrew, known to the ancient Romans as Gebalene. The southern portion is called Esh Sherah, and corresponds to the Mount Seir of the Bible. The capital city was called in Hebrew, Sela, “the rock” (2 Kings xiv. 7), and still bears the equivalent Latin appellation of Petra, although the natives speak of it as Wâdy Mûsa, or “the Valley of Moses.”

Edom consists of a range of porphyritic rock covered by a mass of sandstone coloured with the most warm and vivid tints. On either side rise limestone hills, those on the east forming the outpost of the great plateau of the Arabian Desert, while the lower range on the west forms the eastern bank of the Arabah, which valley skirts the south country and the Bâdîet et Tih, or “Desert of the Wanderings.” The district is very fertile, the valleys being

watered by pleasant streams and filled with trees and flowers, and the uplands furnishing rich and plentiful pasture interspersed with cornfields. Before the difficulties of ocean travel



ROCK-CUT TOMB OR TEMPLE, PETRA.

Eighty-five feet in height. It is called by the Arabs El Khūzneh Far'on, "the Treasure of Pharaoh," which is said to be concealed in the urn-shaped finial at the summit. The portal leads into a lofty chamber twelve yards square.

were overcome and the desert was the direct and easiest road to the East, Edom was a flourishing country and its capital one of the world's great centres of commercial activity. From the earliest times the Midianites and Ishmaelites conveyed the products of Arabia through this province to Egypt in caravans (Gen. xxxvii. 28), and bartered them for manufactures and other commodities of the realm of the Pharaohs. From the second century before Christ the region was inhabited by the Nabathæans, of whose extensive civilisation there are still abundant traces to be seen in the inscriptions and architectural remains which cover the country. In 105 A.D. Edom became a Roman province, and Petra became an even more important city than before. Christianity was introduced there at a very early period, and Bishops of Petra are mentioned as having attended some of the Councils of the Church. By the fourth

century the commerce had been diverted, the Arabs encroached upon its territory, and anarchy, neglect, and wanton violence soon brought about the fulfilment of the prophecy

that the inheritance of Esau, which was once "the fatness of the earth and the dew of heaven from above" (Gen. xxvii. 39), should become "a desolation" and a curse. The northern part, El Jebâl, is inhabited partly by fellahîn, or peasants, and partly by the Bedawin tribe of the Hejaya. Esh Sherah belongs principally to the Hawetât and 'Ammarîn Arabs (the latter being probably the representatives of the ancient Amorites), and the powerful but lawless tribe of the 'Alawin, who have obtained from the Egyptian



DETACHED TOMBS, PETRA.

Isolated masses of rock, from fifteen to twenty feet square. In one of them there is a small sepulchral chamber. The background represents the excavations in the cliffs opposite to the Amphitheatre.

Government the privilege of escorting pilgrims and travellers. Petra and its immediate neighbourhood is in the hands of a turbulent but interesting tribe called the Liyatheneh. They are more fellahîn than Bedawin in character, and have a singularly Jewish type of

countenance. Indeed, they are in all probability the descendants of one of the Jewish tribes who emigrated from Arabia after the conquests of Islam. Besides their Hebrew physiognomy they retain many distinctive Jewish customs to the present day. After the fourth century Petra disappears from history, and it remained absolutely unknown until an Arab of Esh Sherah described its ruins to Seetzen, in the year 1807. In 1812, Burckhardt, under great difficulties, reached the place and fully explored it.

Petra lies in a valley running from north to south, and about three-quarters of a mile long. At the northern end it is five hundred feet wide, and narrows to half that breadth at the south. This is called by the Arabs Wâdy Mûsa, "Moses' Vale," from a tradition that the spring 'Ain Mûsa, from which the stream takes its rise, was the same which gushed forth when Moses struck the rock. The valley is enclosed on all sides by precipitous sandstone rocks of variegated hues, and presents the appearance of having been originally an inland lake. The first thing which strikes the spectator in Wâdy Mûsa is the magnificent colour of the rocks; the stone where the surface is old and weathered is of a deep chocolate hue, but where it has been more recently cut or excavated it assumes bright red or yellow tints, relieved here and there by white, the general effect being that of gorgeous watered silk.

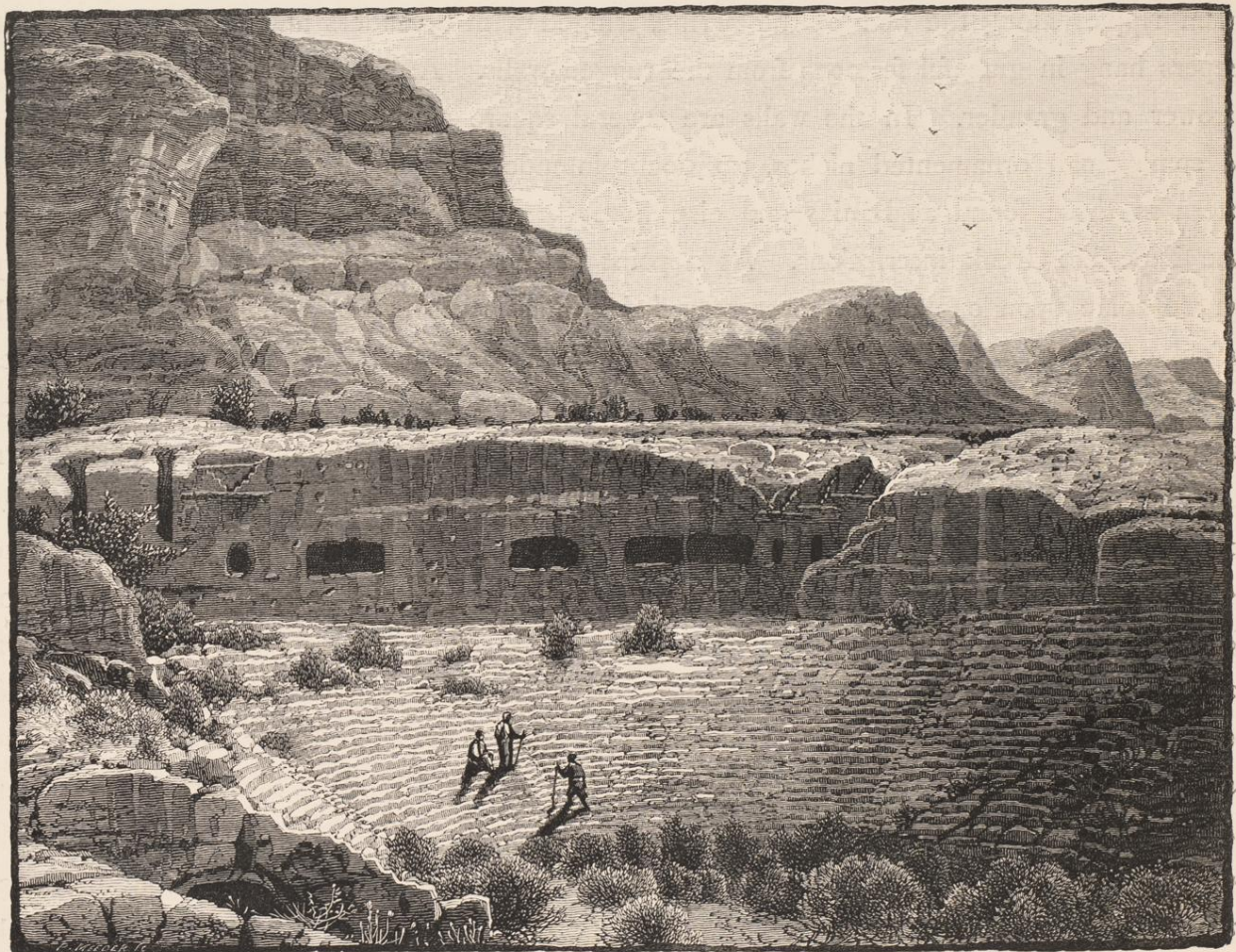
The effect on entering the city is most imposing; the chief monuments being hewn in the solid rock, and the most elaborate façades, pediments, pilasters and all, strictly monolithic. The valley was no doubt occupied in the earliest times by the cave-dwelling tribes who are spoken of in the Bible as Horites, and their dwellings have been enlarged and ornamented by the later inhabitants and used for houses, temples, and tombs. In some of the caves, notably at the smaller and less-known rock-cut towns which still exist in the neighbourhood, though unknown to travellers, the walls and ceilings are decorated with elaborate and graceful patterns painted in distemper, as bright and fresh as though they had been but lately finished. One ceiling at El Bârid, which was discovered by the late Mr. Drake and myself, is painted with festoons of grape-vines and convolvuli, with Cupids playing among the branches. The design is evidently Roman, and is extremely well executed. A smaller ravine branches off to the left by the village of 'Aireh, spanned over with an arch which carries an aqueduct. It is called Kantaret Bint Far'on, "Pharaoh's daughter's arch," and the ascent to the east is also named Besâtin Far'on, or "Pharaoh's gardens," nearly every grand or mysterious piece of architectural work in the country being attributed to the Egyptian monarch. At the entrance of the gorge on the south-west side of the valley are some tombs entirely detached from the rock, which has been hewn smooth behind them (see page 213), and calling to mind the ancient sepulchres in the Valley of Jehoshaphat at Jerusalem (see pages 82 and 83, vol. i.). The buildings of the city have nearly all disappeared, the largest and most important of the ruins being that known as Kâsr Far'on, or "palace of Pharaoh," probably a temple, situated near the entrance of the valley from the west. A little to the east of this is a triumphal arch, farther still a solitary column called Zibb Far'on, on the south, which apparently once formed part of a church, the apse of which may still be traced. To the

west of this rises a lofty hill, upon the summit of which stands what is supposed to be the acropolis or citadel of Petra.

The architecture of Petra belongs to the debased Roman style which was in vogue in the third or fourth centuries of the Christian era, when the severe simplicity of the classical period had given way to florid decoration and harmony of design was sacrificed to striking effect. The Sik is one of the most beautiful and picturesque ravines in the world (see page 219). We enter by a narrow passage running between lofty perpendicular cliffs of magnificent red sandstone, and spanned by a broken archway, now quite out of reach, which once carried an aqueduct from the heights above. A clear and sparkling stream ripples along the bed of the ravine, fringed with oleanders and other shrubs, while creepers hang in graceful festoons from the rugged walls. As we advance the gorge grows narrower and grander. In the walls are several square cuttings which once held tablets, and some small ornamented niches, no doubt intended for dedicatory altars, of the same pattern as those found at Bâniâs and elsewhere (see page 111, vol. i.). Beneath these are some imperfect Greek inscriptions. At a point in the Sik where the ravine takes a sharp turn we come upon one of the most remarkable monuments in Petra, namely, the Khüzneh Far'on, or "Pharaoh's Treasury," excavated in the solid rock and surpassing all the other tombs and temples in beauty of colour and execution (see page 212.) The façade is of a deep but delicate rose colour, which shines out in strong relief against the deep reddish-brown of the uncut rock around it and the bright green of the oleanders and other shrubs that grow beneath. The façade of the temple consists of a portico originally of six columns, but one of them has now broken away. The four middle pillars support a pediment; on the apex of this is an ornament which has been variously described, but which a more careful inspection proved to be a lyre. Above the whole is a very curious piece of ornamentation: a second pediment, the width of the whole façade, is supported by two pilasters at either end; the pediment has then been cut through on each side of the centre, and the block so left has been fashioned into a cylindrical ornament surmounted by an urn. The cylinder and the recesses have then been furnished with pilasters and dressed to correspond with the front portions. This pediment, which is thus divided into three portions, presents nine faces of rock, each having a pilaster on either side, and on these are sculptured female figures with graceful flowing drapery. The curious device was in all probability adopted to admit of the symmetrical arrangement of *nine* figures—those, I take it, of the nine Muses. The lyre, the emblem of Apollo, being also introduced, lends colour to the supposition that it was dedicated to those divinities. The mysterious excavation, then, is nothing but the *Musæum* of Petra—not what the Turks would call an "antiquity house," but the "philharmonic institution" of the place.

The next most important monument is, perhaps, the amphitheatre, which is entirely hewn out of the solid rock (see page 216); it is thirty-nine yards in diameter, and contains thirty-three tiers of seats rising one above another, and capable of accommodating from

three to four thousand spectators. The view from the highest tier is magnificent, and embraces almost all the excavated parts of the valley (see page 213). In the wall of rock behind the theatre are some boxes, or *loculi*, which, perhaps, existed as caves in the face of the rock before the amphitheatre was excavated. Immediately opposite to the theatre are some tombs with beautifully executed fronts, the first of which contains a curious arrangement of graves, or *loculi*. These are cut in the floor of the cave, and are so placed as to make the most of the room, no regard being paid to the direction in which they lie. On the wall to the left are some rudely cut representations of the sepulchral



THE ROCK-HEWN AMPHITHEATRE, PETRA.

Thirty-three tiers of seats rise one above another, and above the seats there are chambers hewn in the rock. The brook of 'Ain Mûsa, bordered with verdure, flows across the arena.

monuments in favour with the Nabathæans, something between an obelisk and a pyramid, and beneath these are two inscriptions in the Nabathæan character. A little farther on is a finely carved temple, which originally contained six caves or recesses; these have since been made into three, and fashioned into apses at the end, so as to form a Greek church of the usual pattern. A Greek inscription in red paint records the fact of its consecration, but the date is unfortunately illegible. Each tomb or cave has its owner, who dwells there with his family in the cold or wet weather.