

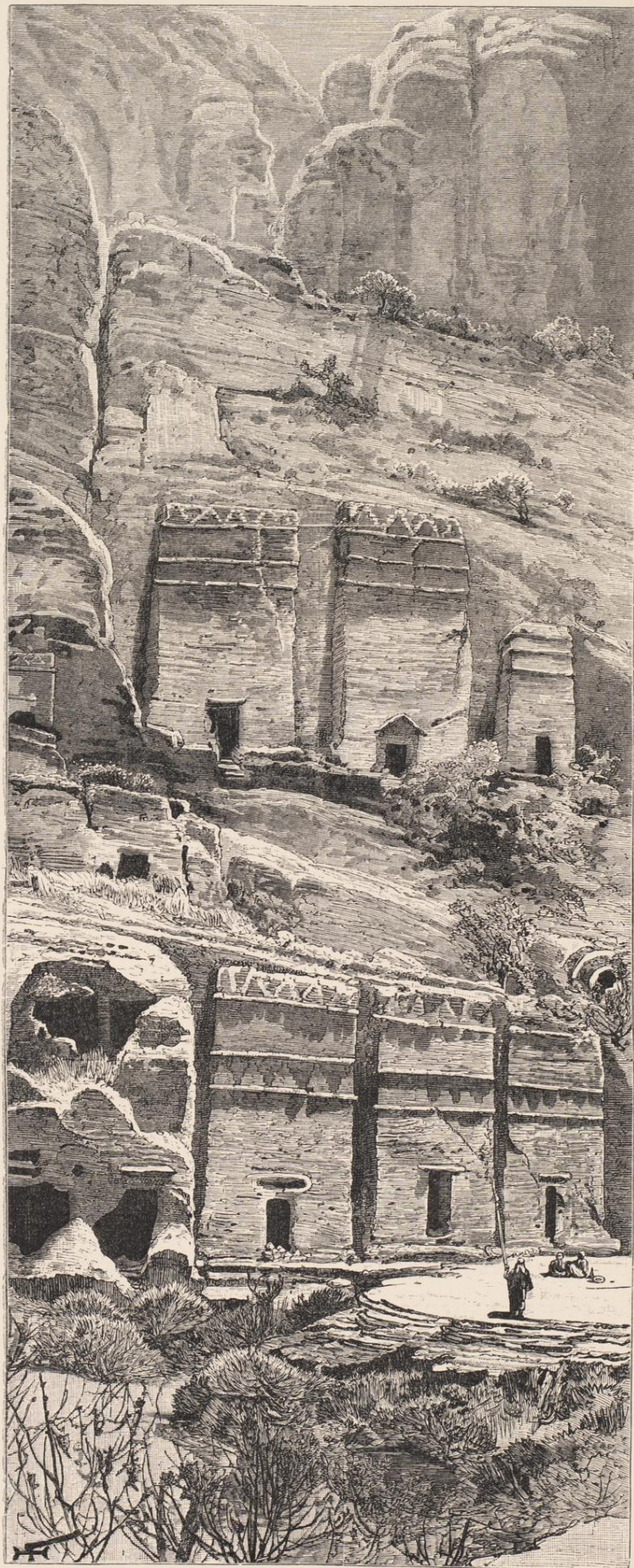


MOUNT HOR.

The scene of the death of Aaron, called by the Arabs Jebel Harûn, "the Mount of Aaron." Its highest point is about four thousand three hundred and sixty feet above the sea-level.

MOUNT HOR AND THE CLIFFS OF EDMOM.

THE steel plate facing this page will convey some idea of the grandeur of the famous defile, which was the chief and probably the only usual approach in ancient times to the deep valley hidden in the heart of the mountains of Edom where the city of Petra once stood, but which now contains only its site, strewn with ruins and surrounded by rock-cut tombs and temples. This wonderful ravine (*Es Sik, the cleft*) approaches the valley of Petra from the east; it is about a mile and a half in length, and winds continuously, taking unexpected turns, as if it were the most flexible of meandering rivers instead of being a chasm in a mighty mountain wall. About fifty feet from the eastern entrance to the defile a picturesque arch (shown on the steel plate, and alluded to on page 215) is thrown across from one precipice to the other, at a great height. Immediately beneath the spring of the arch, on each side, niches enriched with pilasters, evidently intended for statues, are sculptured in the face of the rock. At this point the cliffs are from eighty to a hundred feet in height, and the chasm is not more than twelve feet wide. This is one of the narrowest parts of the chasm, but it does not become much wider for a considerable distance. The bottom of the ravine, watered by



ROCK-CUT TOMBS, PETRA.

Used as dwelling-houses by local tribes in cold or wet weather.

the brook from 'Ain Mûsa in the winter, descends rapidly on its winding way towards the west, and the sides become proportionately higher, varying from one hundred to two hundred and fifty feet or more in height. The near approach of the precipices to each other cause them to appear to be much higher than they are in reality. Irby and Mangles estimated them at from four hundred to seven hundred feet in height, and Mr. Stevens regarded them as from five hundred to one thousand feet high. They are everywhere perpendicular, and the effect of the narrow strip of blue sky seen from the gloomy depths below is very striking. In some places, however, the cliffs overhang to such a degree that, without actually meeting, they almost shut out the view of the sky for a hundred yards together. Suddenly a flood of light streams across the ravine from a deep gash in the cliffs on the north side and on the south side simultaneously, and beyond it the beautiful rose-coloured temple known as Khûzneh Far'on (described on page 215) appears, carved in a cliff of the southern chasm, facing the east (see page 212). From this point the defile, pierced on each side with tombs and caves innumerable, turns towards the north-west until it opens into a little glade overgrown with oleanders and tamarisk bushes (see page 219), a favourite haunt of the present inhabitants of Petra, and close to some tombs, which serve as con-



CLIFFS OF THE SÎK, PETRA.

Showing the western outlet of the great defile opposite to the rock-cut amphitheatre represented on page 216.

venient dwelling-places (see page 218). The rock-hewn amphitheatre is just below, towards the north (see page 216). Beyond it the cliffs, still honeycombed with caves and tombs, once more approach each other, till a little farther to the north they at last open into the valley of Petra. The bed of the winter torrent pursues its way, and as it crosses the valley winds among the ruins of the city of Petra, and then enters a defile in the western hills.

From the west-north-west corner of the area a steep ravine ascends into the heart of the mountains and leads to one of the most important monuments of Petra, Ed Deir (the Convent), hewn in the face of a perpendicular rock, which forms one of a group projecting from the lofty tableland of Edom. The long ascent by which this now isolated temple is approached is for the most part along the edge of a precipice, which is carefully hewn, where the rocks admit of it, into a continuous staircase, the steps of which are in more than one instance marked by inscriptions in the so-called Sinaitic character. After many windings among tangled thickets and round great blocks of sandstone, a platform two hundred and sixty feet square, partly formed by excavation of the rock and partly by masonry, is reached; on the northern side of it stands the Deir, withdrawn between two gigantic walls of cliff (see page 221). It is of greater magnitude than the Khūzneh (see page 212), being upwards of a hundred feet in height. The capitals of the columns and the cornices have, apparently, never been completely finished. In the interior, facing the entrance, is a recess a little above the floor, with a dais in front of it, and a few steps leading up to it on each side. A rude staircase leads to the roof of the Deir, and on the rocky platform with which the roof communicates is a circle of hewn stones, and again, still beyond, is a solitary cell, hewn in an isolated cliff and joined to this platform by a narrow isthmus of rock. It is said that the Deir stands more than a thousand feet above the level of the valley basin of Petra, and the few travellers who have visited it speak highly in praise of the picturesque view which its terraced roof commands. From it can be traced the entire length of the steep defile, by which alone it can be approached, winding among perpendicular rocks; while nearly the whole extent of the site of the once splendid city of Petra can be distinguished below. Towards the south-west, the summit of Mount Hor (see page 217), called by the Arabs Jebel Harūn (the Mountain of Aaron), appears beyond the intervening cliffs. The domed wely over the traditional grave of Neby Harūn (the prophet Aaron) can be discerned on the highest point of the sacred mount.

On the levelled surface of a rock immediately opposite to and facing the Deir there are the remains of what must once have been a stately temple. The bases of the columns of the portico and colonnades on each side are still *in situ*, and in a vault beneath David Roberts, the artist, saw a capital of one of the columns, which he describes as being "of white marble and in the best taste."

The incidental references made by Josephus (Ant. IV., iv. 5, 6, 7) to Idumea and Petra, in connection with his account of the death and burial of Miriam and her brother Aaron, are very striking, and in conjunction with the Bible narrative lend special interest to these now

desolate lands, and help us to repeople them in fancy with their ancient inhabitants and the wandering hosts led by the Lawgiver.

“When Moses together with his whole army came to the borders of Idumea, he sent



THE DEIR, PETRA.

An isolated building on a lofty eminence north-west of the valley of Petra. It faces Mount Hor.

ambassadors to the king of the Idumeans, and desired him to give him a passage through his country, and agreed to send him what hostages he should desire, to secure him from injury. He desired him also that he would allow his army to buy provisions, and if he insisted on it

he would pay down a price for the very water that they should drink. But the king was not pleased with this embassy from Moses; nor did he allow a passage for the army; but brought his people armed to meet Moses, and to hinder them, in case they should endeavour to force their passage. Upon which Moses consulted God by the oracle, who would not have him begin the war first; and so he withdrew his forces, and travelled round about through the wilderness (see Numbers xx. 17—21). Then it was that Miriam, the sister of Moses, came to her end. They made a public funeral for her at a great expense. She was buried on a certain mountain which they call Sin, and when they had mourned for her thirty days Moses purified the people. . . . Now when this purification was over, he caused the army to remove and to march through the wilderness and through Arabia, and when he came to a place called Arke, *but has now the name of Petra*, at this place, which was encompassed by high mountains, Aaron went up one of them (see page 217), in the sight of the whole army; Moses having before told him that he was to die, for this place was over against them. He put off his pontifical garments and delivered them to Eleazar his son, and died while the whole multitude looked upon him. He died in the same year wherein he had lost his sister, on the first day of the month of Abba" (see Numbers xxxiii. 38).

In the time of St. Jerome a shrine, said to be the tomb of Miriam, was shown near Petra (the Kadesh Barnea of early Christian tradition), but the site of this traditional tomb has not been identified. It is distinctly stated in Numbers xx. 1 that Miriam died at Kadesh and was buried there. Josephus states that her death took place on the first day of the lunar month of Xanthicus, and, as Dean Stanley says, "this seems to imply that the anniversary was still observed in his time," and pilgrimages were probably made to the real or supposed tomb. Dean Stanley suggests that the place of sepulture of Miriam was the mountain height crowned by the above-described monument Ed Deir (see page 221), and it is certainly quite possible that the tomb known to Jerome as the grave of Miriam may have been on this spot. Its remarkable position, and the laboriously constructed rock-cut stairway leading to it, tend to prove that it was a pre-eminently "sacred place," and the inscriptions above alluded to indicate that it was a place of pilgrimage in early Christian times.

To the little white-domed wely, which is said to mark the burial-place of Aaron, on the summit of Jebel Neby Harûn (the Mount of the Prophet Aaron), pilgrimages are made to this day by Jewish and more especially Muhammedan devotees. That this venerated mountain is identical with the "Mount Hor by the border of the land of Edom," described as the scene of Aaron's death, is now the general opinion. In Hebrew it is called *הַר הָהָר*, literally "Hor; the mountain." If, as Gesenius explains, "Hor" is only an archaic form of "Har," the usual Hebrew term for "mountain," then it means simply "the mountain of mountains." It well deserves the epithet, for it rises high above the surrounding mountains and cliffs of Edom, and may easily be distinguished, even from a distance, by its twin peaks (see page 217). The shrine of Aaron stands on the higher peak, which is in the form of a truncated cone, and is separated from the less elevated peak by a little plain in which grows a solitary cypress-tree.

The highest point of the mountain is said to be four thousand feet above the level of the sea.

Owing to the frequent contentions which take place among the local tribes of Arabs, and their somewhat capricious dealings with strangers, travelling in the land of Edom is rather difficult, and the ascent of Mount Hor is occasionally rendered impossible.

The late Mr. James Finn, during his residence in Palestine as H.B.M. Consul, did much to facilitate expeditions to Petra and Mount Hor, by personally visiting these places and making arrangements with the sheikhs of local tribes for the safe conduct and escort of English travellers for a fixed sum per head. He thus describes his approach to and ascent of Mount Hor:—

“April 4th. At length we were upon the great plain of the Wâdy 'Arabah, or 'Wilderness of Zin;' and our path was to be diagonally across this, pointed direct to Mount Hor.

“April 5th. . . . Distances are hard to judge of in such extensive plains and in so clear an atmosphere. We had been travelling nearly two days with Mount Hor in sight, straight before us; yet the mountain only grew in size as we approached it, not in distinctness. As we came near to the eastern mountains, we found innumerable and huge blocks of porphyry rock scattered over the ground. . . . We turned off from the Wâdy 'Arabah by the Wâdy Tayibeh, which runs south-east into the heart of the mountain. We ascended a series of precipices, and at a quarter before four caught the first glimpse of Aaron's tomb, and at five pitched our tents on the rugged side of Hor, among crags and scented plants, enlivened by numerous cuckoos and the sweet warbling of one little bird. During the last hour we had seen some blue pigeons, one partridge, and, separately, two large eagles, to which our attention had been drawn by their shadows moving on the ground before us; then on looking upwards, the royal birds were seen sailing along, silently and slowly, against the blue vault of ether.

“April 6th. In the morning we advanced upwards towards Aaron's tomb, sometimes clambering on our hands and knees. We had to rest occasionally in the shade of large trees of 'arar (juniper). The *ret'm* (a large kind of broom) was very abundant and covered with white blossom, shedding the richest perfume.” [This is the *rothem*, רֹתֵם of 1 Kings xix. 4, 5, mentioned as having sheltered Elijah. It is the largest shrub of Sinai, *Genista monosperma*.]

“The mountain is all of dark red colour; and the higher we ascended, the more difficult we found the progress to be. At length all further advance seemed impossible, till, on looking round, we observed an excavation for a well, with masonry around it; and beyond this were steps cut into the rock, which rock was sloped at an angle of between fifty and sixty degrees. This encouraged us to persevere. Still higher I picked up some tesserae of mosaic and morsels of marble and alabaster. At length we attained the highest peak, where there was scarcely more space than sufficient to contain the small wely.” [An oblong stone structure surmounted by a dome plastered and whitewashed.] “On entering we found near the door a common-looking tomb, over which was spread a pall of silk, striped in red, green, and white, but much faded. Against a pillar which supports the roof were hung rows of coloured rags

and threads of yarn, with snail-shells and sea-shells among them by way of further ornament. A wooden bowl at one end of the tomb was probably intended to receive alms for the support of the devotee who claims the place, and who practises the curing of diseases by charms among the wild Arabs. The floor of the chamber has been handsomely paved with tessellated bits of coloured marble, much of which still remains. Over the tomb are suspended some ostrich eggs on a line, as is common in Oriental churches, and near it is a mihrab, or niche in the wall, to indicate the southerly direction for Muhammedan prayers.

“In a corner of the floor a flight of steps leads down to a crypt; and providing ourselves with a light we descended thither. But we only found an iron grating swinging loose to the touch, and within it a plain wall, from which part of the plaster having fallen away allowed to be seen the corner of a kind of stone sarcophagus. The portion visible was not, however, sufficient to enable us to judge of its probable era. The ceiling of the crypt is



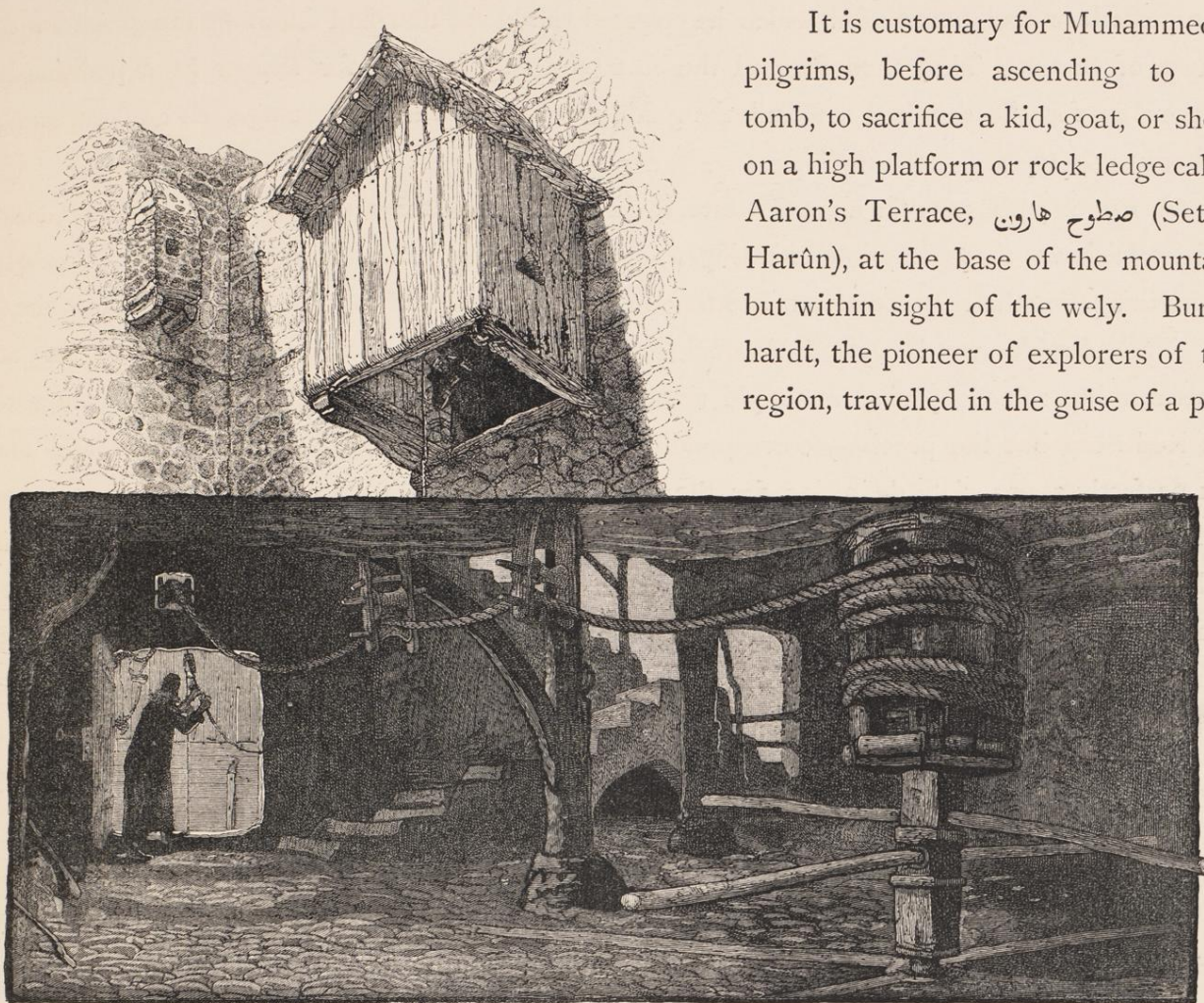
JEZIRAT FAR'ON, THE ISLE OF PHARAOH.

At the head of the Gulf of 'Akabah, as seen from the western shore. The castle which crowns it was built by the Crusaders; the mosque and other Saracenic structures are attributed to Saladin.

blackened by the smoke of lamps. I then mounted by the outside of the building to the top of the dome. I utterly despair of being able to describe the prospect around; and can only say that extensive mountain peaks lay in

lines below, and might be compared to those made upon embossed maps, but that the whole scene was vast, savage, and abandoned to sombre desolation, both the hills and the desert, in every direction. I could see nothing of Petra, so deeply sunk is that valley between the hills.” [From this point, however, the Deir (see page 221) is visible on the hill to the east-north-east, and in clear weather the Red Sea and the Dead Sea can be plainly distinguished.]

“Descending the mountain by the opposite side of that of our arrival, namely, on the side next Petra, we discovered that more pains in road-making had been bestowed there, and that the ascent in that direction would be comparatively easy. Cuckoos and partridges were heard plentifully, and on looking back I saw a very large raven hovering over the wely.”



It is customary for Muhammedan pilgrims, before ascending to the tomb, to sacrifice a kid, goat, or sheep on a high platform or rock ledge called Aaron's Terrace, صطوح هارون (Settûh Harûn), at the base of the mountain, but within sight of the wely. Burckhardt, the pioneer of explorers of this region, travelled in the guise of a poor



LETTER OF ADMISSION TO THE CONVENT OF ST. CATHERINE.
Formerly travellers were drawn up into the convent through the pent-house shown above; now, however, if the letter thus received is found satisfactory they are admitted by a side door.

Muhammedan pilgrim, and hired a guide east of Petra to lead him through the city to Aaron's shrine that he might sacrifice there, and thus it was that he contrived to see the wonders of the valley. The guide led him to Aaron's terrace. Burckhardt killed the goat at a spot where he observed a number of heaps of stones. While he was in the act of slaying the animal his guide called out, "O Harûn, look upon us! it is for you we slaughter this victim! O Harûn, protect and forgive us! O Harûn, be content with our good intentions, for it is but a lean goat! O Harûn, smooth our path, and praise be to the Lord of all creatures!" This

he repeated several times, after which he covered the blood that had fallen on the ground with a heap of stones. They then dressed the best part of the flesh for supper as expeditiously as possible, for the sun had set, and the guide was afraid of the fire being seen and attracting robbers to the spot.

A camel path runs in a south-westerly direction from the southern base of Mount Hor, and leads down through green winding wādys and rocky passes into the Wādy el 'Arabah. From this point the route southward to the Gulf of 'Akabah (see page 224) occupies three days.

The Arabic word *عربة* "'Arabah," signifies *rapid river* (and probably at an immeasurably remote period a "rapid river" flowed along this valley from the Lebanon to the Red Sea), but the precisely corresponding word in Hebrew *עֲרָבָה* signifies *desert*, and this is a perfectly appropriate definition for the great wādy bound on the east by the rugged slopes and cliffs of Edom and on the west by the horizontal limestone ranges of the Tih. It is truly "a land not sown" (Jer. ii. 2). Its bed is mainly composed (as Mr. Finn describes) of "sand and pebbles, in different proportions in different places, sometimes the sand predominating and sometimes the pebbles, with occasionally an abundance of very small fragments of flint serving to give a firmer consistency to the sand. Round boulders are also met with on approaching the hillsides. In some places large drifts of soft yellow sand are wrinkled by the wind, as the smooth beach is by the ripples of a receding tide."

But even here sweet-scented shrubs and a few stunted thorn-trees, especially the mimosa (*tūhl*), contrive to grow. The *neḥk*-tree, too, is common, and the Arabs can subsist for many days on its small insipid fruit, called *dōm*. The colocynth creeps along the sand here and there, and one plant will yield as many as thirty or more "bitter apples;" when ripe the leaves and plant die away, leaving the golden-coloured fruit (the size of an orange) on the sand. The Arabs make no use of it. Tufts of fine grass and a few wild flowers spring up in this desert year after year. Mr. Finn mentions "a starry flower, called *dibbaih*, not unlike a wild pink, which is eaten by the Arabs, both petals, calyx, and stalk."

My brother, Mr. E. T. Rogers, of Cairo, in a letter describing a journey in the 'Arabah, says: "When travelling quickly and noiselessly we came now and then upon flocks of gazelles browsing on the short tufts of herbage, and occasionally a hare was seen. Jerboas started from under our camels' feet and ran about on four legs for a few seconds, and then commenced a series of leaps on their hind legs, till they could regain their holes or till otherwise out of sight and danger. It was interesting, too, to watch for footprints in the sand; we recognised the marks of the long-pointed cloven foot of the ibex and the large paws of the hyæna; in one place we noticed the double footprints of the wolf and the gazelle, with the sand thrown up at every step, as if there had been a chase."

The bed of the 'Arabah gradually rises towards the south till it forms a ridge known locally as the Shrag er Risheh (saddle-bag of feathers), said to be the water parting between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of 'Akabah. The valley is here about five miles in width, but narrows to four miles where it meets the gulf. It slopes towards the west, so that when the

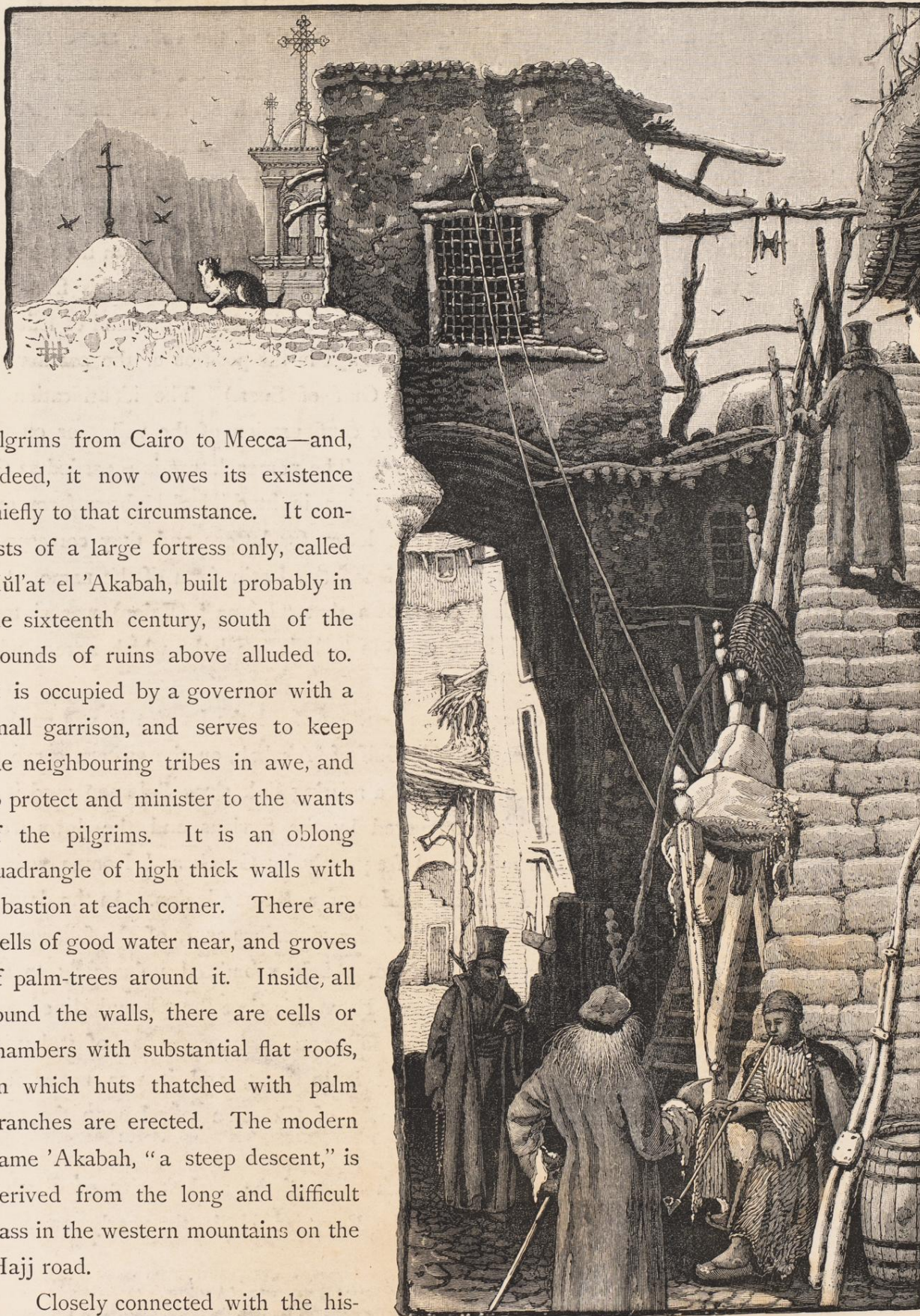
winter torrents rush down from the chasms and wâdys of Edom and from channels in the western hills, they form a little watercourse along the western side of the valley and enter the Gulf of 'Akabah at its north-west corner. The mountains on the east are two thousand to two thousand five hundred feet, and those on the west fifteen to eighteen hundred feet in height.

It is recorded that "King Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion Geber, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom" (1 Kings ix. 26). Of this ancient seaport there is now no vestige left; but its site has been identified with the position of a spring of brackish water called 'Ain el Ghūdiân, and opposite to a wâdy of the same name which runs from the western hills into the great valley of the 'Arabah, at a point which is now nearly ten miles from the sea-shore, but which must have been the northern point of the Red Sea, "in the land of Edom," in the time of King Solomon. (A somewhat similar change in the position of the sea margin is said to have been observed at the head of the Gulf of Suez.) The identification of the site of Ezion Geber does not, however, rely on the configuration of the valley or on the existence of the springs of brackish water at this point. The nomenclature is regarded as the proof, for, though in appearance so different, the word Ezion, in its original Hebrew form, and the Arabic word El Ghūdiân, are actually identical, letter for letter; and they correspond phonetically, as Professor Palmer observes, with "Diana," the Latin form of the name as it appears on the Peutinger Tables.* It is there shown that "Diana" (Ezion) was sixteen Roman, that is fourteen and a half English miles from "Haila" (Elath), which agrees with the position assigned to the former at El Ghūdiân.

There has never been any doubt respecting the position of Elath; its site is still marked by extensive mounds of rubbish at the head of the Gulf of 'Akabah, on the eastern curve of the bay. In the history of this place there is scarcely a missing link since Solomon used it as his seaport. In the reign of Ahaz it was conquered by the Syrians and the Jews were driven from it (2 Kings xvi. 6). It is mentioned frequently by Greek and Roman writers under the name of Ailah and Ælena, and was the station of a Roman legion. In the days of Jerome it still traded with India. On the approach of the victorious army of the followers of Muhammed in A.D. 630, John, the Christian King of Ailah, submitted voluntarily to the conquerors, and secured peace by payment of tribute. From this time the place declined, and Baldwin I., in the year A.D. 1116, with two hundred followers, took possession of it, having found it deserted. Saladîn (Salâh-ed-Dîn) regained it in 1167, and it was never fully recovered by the Crusaders, though the reckless Raynald of Châtillon seized upon the town and held it for a few days.

Aileh, or 'Akabah Aileh, as the modern representative of the ancient city of Elath is called, is one of the chief stations on the route of the Egyptian Hajj—the yearly caravan of

* This remarkable work owes its name *Tabula Peutingeriana* to Peutinger, a scholar and statesman of Augsburg, who was long its possessor. It is a rude chart or delineation of the military roads of the Roman empire, with the distances between the towns, constructed not later than the fourth century. By some authorities it is believed to date from the reign of Alexander Severus, A.D. 222—235. The present copy, the only one known to exist, appears to have been made in the twelfth or thirteenth century. It is a long narrow chart wound on rollers, and is preserved in the Imperial Library at Vienna. It has been of great value to students of biblical topography, and a fac-simile of it has been published.



pilgrims from Cairo to Mecca—and, indeed, it now owes its existence chiefly to that circumstance. It consists of a large fortress only, called Kūl'at el 'Akabah, built probably in the sixteenth century, south of the mounds of ruins above alluded to. It is occupied by a governor with a small garrison, and serves to keep the neighbouring tribes in awe, and to protect and minister to the wants of the pilgrims. It is an oblong quadrangle of high thick walls with a bastion at each corner. There are wells of good water near, and groves of palm-trees around it. Inside, all round the walls, there are cells or chambers with substantial flat roofs, on which huts thatched with palm branches are erected. The modern name 'Akabah, "a steep descent," is derived from the long and difficult pass in the western mountains on the Hajj road.

Closely connected with the history of 'Akabah (Elath) is the picturesque Jezirat Far'on (Island of

A PEEP INTO ONE OF THE COURTS OF THE CONVENT. Showing a rude flight of steps leading to the upper chambers. On the left the summits of the belfry of the church and the minaret of the mosque may be seen.



J. D. WOODWARD, PINXIT

C. COUSEN, SCULPT

BAY OF BEIRÛT.

LONDON J. S. VIRTUE & CO. LIMITED.

It is about



THE GREAT CHANGING
the the peak of job

less from the

Pharaoh). It is about nine miles south-south-west of the fortress of 'Akabah, and half a



THE UPPER CHAMBERS OF THE CONVENT.
With the peaks of Jebel Mûsa in the background.

mile or less from the opposite or western shore, whence the view on page 224 is taken.

Captain R. F. Burton, who has recently visited it, says that the people of 'Akabah call it simply *Jebel el Kūlat* (Mount of the Fort). It has had a puzzling variety of names attributed to it—variations of the words *El Kurey* and *El Kureiyeh*, meaning "the village," or "the ruin." Laborde calls it *El Graie*. It is a grey granite rock, dyked with decaying porphyritic trap, and everywhere veined with white and various coloured quartzes. The shape is a long oval of about three hundred and forty by one hundred and fifty yards, and it consists of two stony mounds united by an isthmus. The northern peak is the higher, and rises about a hundred yards above the sea-level. It is encircled with barrier reefs of coralline. At the extreme north there is a tower, and on the northern mound, which is scarped here and there, stands the castle keep, defended by an enceinte. In the highest part there is a carefully cemented underground cistern, in which there are two pointed arches divided by a tall column. Below there is a small harbour, and the pier leads to a covered way enabling the garrison safely to circulate round the base of the island. The southern knob supports similar but inferior constructions.

Captain Burton, from whose account the above description is gleaned, says: "The castle is evidently European, built in the days when the Crusaders held *El 'Akabah*; but it probably rests upon Roman ruins, and the latter, perhaps, upon Egyptian remains of far older date. The Saracenic buildings may date from the reign of *Salâh-ed-Dîn* (*Saladîn*), who drove out the Crusaders in 1167 A.D." In the year A.D. 1182 the island was unsuccessfully besieged by *Raynald of Châtillon*, and in the time of *Abulfeda* (about 1300) the island was already abandoned and the governor transferred to the castle on the mainland—*Kūl'at el 'Akabah*; thus all the important structures must have been erected prior to that date. For centuries it has been either utterly deserted or used as a place of refuge or abode by pirates and fishermen.

THE CONVENT OF ST. CATHERINE.

THE Caravan or Hajj route of Christian pilgrims from Syria and Palestine to the Convent of St. Catherine and the "holy places" in its neighbourhood, runs from the Valley of the 'Arabah round the head of the Gulf of 'Akabah, and winds along its western shore. Travellers who approach the Sinaitic peninsula from the north-east, instead of from Suez, usually follow the same route, traversing the shell-strewn sands at the foot of a mountain wall of grey granite intersected at intervals by stony wâdys strewn with gravel.

At the mouth of the broad and barren *Wâdy Merâkh*, within sight of *Jezîrat Far'on* (see page 224), the traveller is compelled to change his escort, for here the territory of the *Haiwat* tribe of Arabs terminates, and that of the great *Tawarah* tribe commences. For some distance south of this point the road passes over high promontories stretching far into the sea.

The Land of Midian, on the opposite or eastern side of the gulf, can be plainly seen. Far inland, and tinged light blue by the distance, rise the sharp and saw-like crests of