

TRAVELS IN THE HOLY LAND.

THE SHEIKHS OF THE 'ALAWÏN.

V.

SYRIAN QUARANTINE—THE MIGHTY WHO CAME TO HEBRON OF OLD, ABRAHAM, ISAAC, JACOB—THE ANAKIM, CALEB, JOSHUA, DAVID, ABSOLOM—SCRIPTURE PHRASE IN A MOSLEM SOLDIER'S MOUTH—FAREWELL TO THE CHIEFS OF THE 'ALAWÏN—DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY OF A MISSION TO THE BEDOWIN.

Two hours before we arrived at Hebron, we had been taken in charge by a quarantine soldier, for the Syrian authorities do not consider that persons who have passed forty days in hard travel in the desert have thereby given a pretty conclusive proof that they are at least in fair average health and strength. We had undergone this ordeal, but still we must be put into quarantine before the authorities could ascertain that we were not affected with the plague, or other virulent contagious disease, which we might disseminate amongst the Syrian subjects of the Sultan. When once the guardian of the public health had taken possession of us, he decidedly objected to our stopping to sketch, for fear that we should infect the passers-by; but we were resolute in our determination to carry away some reminiscence of the first phase under which the city of the patriarchs presented itself to us, and of our own impressions of the bright cheerful town which clung to the steep hill-face on one side of this famed and fertile vale, so plentifully enriched with shade—a landscape contrasting so strongly with that upon which we had looked for several weeks past.

The desire to bear away with us some memento of this southern approach to Hebron—"the way of the spies"—would have been strong within us, if the scene had possessed nothing but its own physical beauty and freshness to recommend it as a subject for our pencil; but this earthly comeliness was its least attraction in our eyes. It was not for this that we were so anxious to possess some tangible memorial which should serve years afterwards to renew our fading recollections of the distant spot we should never revisit. Our thoughts were not of the present possessors of the trim houses, the groves and gardens and vineyards outspread before us. Our minds wandered far away among the dim shadows of the hoary past. Awful phantoms—the unsubstantial shapes of the mighty who dwelt here of yore—stalk across that narrow plain, haunt those cool dark groves, and glide along those mountain slopes which hem the valley round. It, shadowy outline on the mountain summit, faintly seen against the clear blue sky, with arms outstretched to the heaven up to which his trusting glance is raised, stands a reverend

form, endowed with more than mortal majesty, whose title, when he dwelt here below, was still more awe-inspiring: that is "the friend of God." More than three thousand seven hundred years have been engulfed by eternity's broad flood, since on that same mountain-top he pleaded face to face with his Creator, in earnest intercession for sinning men. There, too, the righteous Judge of all the earth, who descended to the land to "see whether they had done altogether according to the cry of it which had come up to him," yielded to mortal man's petition for his fellow-man. Alas! in vain. The cry that had gone up to heaven had spoken too clearly, too truly; and outside the walls of one man's house there were not ten righteous to save the wicked, or one single righteous soul to fly or perish with them. "The prayer of a righteous man availeth much," and great things were here granted by God to his faithful servant's prayer; but that long-suffering mercy brought no remission of punishment to the land that was so deeply flooded by the torrents of pollution.

The venerable shape upon the high hill-top now melts away from sight; but flitting round that one grand structure of past days, now dominated by the minarets, and desecrated by the possession of the Paynim infidel, the spirits of the faithful and the holy, who sprang from Abraham's loins, watch their own and their fathers' sepulchres.

There, too, are the grim giants, the sons of Anak, in whose sight ordinary mortal men appeared as grasshoppers. Strong and brave were the Anakim, proud and self-reliant; they trusted in their own arm and their own spear.

But the stalwart frames of the pagan giants fade away, and other shapes succeed. Men of common mould they seemed in life, but the might of the all-powerful Deity strengthened their weak arms, whilst Omniscience guided their feeble reason and inspired their fallible speech. They were human, and they were weak, but they were full of faith and humility; their trust was in no resources of their own, but in that great God who made them; and before them, giant force and giant pride fell prostrate in the dust. They were the instruments of God's vengeance, and their energies were wielded by Omnipotence. These were the two who in the prime of life had visited this spot, viewed the good land, and had not feared its giant owners. Near half a century afterwards they returned with the sword, and before their heaven-sent power the valour of the Anakim melted away like summer hail.

And there, with the ointment of a royal consecration on his brow, the ruddy youth, the wondrous harper, the champion of his God and