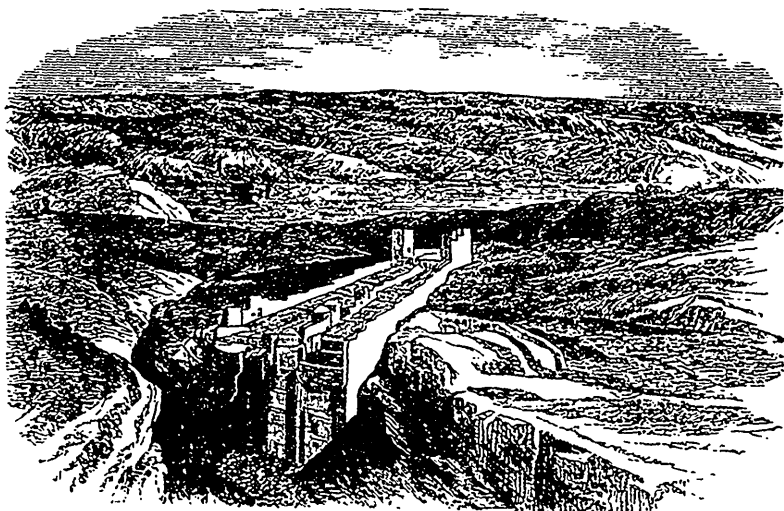


while our letter of introduction from the Greek Patriarch at Jerusalem, beautifully written in Greek characters, was examined by the monk on guard. Formerly these letters were received in a basket let down from an opening in the wall. But, such precautions against Bedouin invasion are not now deemed necessary. No Bedouins, nor women, are admitted within the door—the former for fear of treachery, of which the history of the convent is not without examples, and the latter by the rules of the order. “The monks,” says Miss Martineau, “are too holy to be hospitable.” A high, square tower without the walls provides accommodation for these unwelcome guests. We were told that five days before the Arabs had killed a man in the neighbourhood.



CONVENT OF MAR SABA AND THE DEAD SEA.

Our visit to the convent was like a bewildering nightmare. We climbed up and down from one terrace to another where were clustered narrow courts, hanging gardens, groups of cells, partly hewn in the living rock and partly clinging to the cliff, so that one could hardly tell which was cave and which was cell. A large chamber with broad divan overhanging the ravine was prepared for the reception of guests.

The monks, a sad-eyed, silent brotherhood, with sandalled feet and brown serge dress, cord girdle and tall, brimless hats, were very courteous, and glad apparently to receive a visit from the outside world to break the strange monotony of their existence. The church of St. Saba is crowned by gilded dome, the walls