

splendour which have earned for it the name of the Petra of Northern Syria.

After dinner I set out under the guidance of a bare-footed Arab to climb these cliffs and explore their ancient aqueducts and tombs. An old Roman road fifteen feet wide has been cleft through the rock for 600 feet and then came to an abrupt terminus. It evidently continued across the pass on a lofty viaduct now destroyed. High up the almost perpendicular face of the cliff, reached by long flights of steps, are numerous rock-hewn tombs, excavated with incredible labour. I counted in one chamber fifteen graves hewn in the rock, quite after the manner of the Roman Catacombs. The tombs were closed with double stone doors, having stone sockets. We crawled through an ancient aqueduct, about two feet wide, and in places so low we had to get upon our hands and knees. At last it came out in the open air on a narrow ledge and was still in part covered by sloping stone slabs. My bare-footed guide could speak no English and I could speak no Arabic, so our communication was entirely by signs. His prehensile toes seemed to clasp the rock, and he firmly held my hand as we crawled and clambered over the precipitous slope.

On a huge slab, on the face of the cliff, was a deeply-cut Latin inscription which affirms that "THE EMPEROR CÆSAR MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS AUGUSTUS ARMENIACUS, AND THE EMPEROR CÆSAR LUCIUS AURELIUS VERUS AUGUSTUS ARMENIACUS RESTORED THE ROAD BROKEN AWAY BY THE FORCE OF THE RIVER, THE MOUNTAINS BEING CUT THROUGH BY JULIUS VERUS, THE LEGATE OF SYRIA, AT THE COST ('IMPENDUS') OF THE ABILENIANS." This identifies this place as the ancient Abilene, so named by tradition from the reputed tomb of Abel, which is still a place of Moslem pilgrimage. The "tomb" is plainly a part of an ancient stone wall, about nine yards long. This district is mentioned by Luke, chapter iii. 1, who says that John the Baptist began preaching in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberias Cæsar, Lysanias being the tetrarch of Abilene.

In the deepening twilight I made my way back to the camp, the shadows of the mountain cliffs stretching far across the valley. Other tourist parties joining us here, our encampment assumed quite military proportions, amounting to over 300 persons, including muleteers and camp-followers. About forty snowy tents were pitched, behind which were tethered about a hundred horses, whose champing and stamping made sleep a difficult achievement.

The next morning was bitterly cold, and the scramble up the rugged cliff was an agreeable exercise, but the effect was far less