

SAND OF THE DESERT IN AN HOUR-GLASS 139

And singing² slow their old Armenian psalms
In half-articulate speech;

Or caravans, that from Bassora's¹ gate
...h westward steps depart;
Or Mecca's pilgrims,³ confident of Fate,
And resolute in heart!

These have passed over it, or may have passed;
Now in this crystal tower
Imprisoned by some curious hand at last,
It counts the passing hour.

And as I gaze, these narrow walls expand:—
Before my dreamy eye
Stretches the desert with its shifting sand,
Its unimpeded sky.

And borne aloft by the sustaining blast,
This little golden thread
Dilates into a column high and vast,
A form of fear and dread.

And onward, and across the setting sun,
Across the boundless plain,
The column and its broader shadow run,
Till thought pursues in vain.

The vision vanishes! These walls again
Shut out the lurid sun,
Shut out the hot immeasurable plain,
The half-hour's sand is run!

¹ **Bassora**—A centre of eastern trade founded in 632. It is in Turkey-in-Asia, about 50 miles from the Persian gulf.

² **Mecca's pilgrims**—Pilgrims of the Mohammedan faith on their way to Mecca, the sacred city of their religion and the birthplace of Mohammed.