

Dragoman and guides, cross the desert to Suez, nearly on the route of the children of Israel. Here they stop to survey the actual position of the Israelites, shut in by the wilderness, the mountains, and the sea. Dr. Bonar says:—

"We had now reached the shores of that sea up to which God led Israel. This was our direct route to Sinai, but it was not *theirs*. Had it been a straight road to that mountain that they were seeking, they would have kept more to the east, and there would have been no need of crossing the sea at any point. In coming up to the sea at all they were taking a circuit. But in going south, along the western margin of the sea for miles, they were doing more than taking a circuit. They were *deliberately* imposing the sea between them and Sinai, and voluntarily imposing upon themselves the necessity for crossing a gulf which they could easily have avoided. Only one thing can account for this, and acquit him of the greatest folly ever manifested by the leader of a people. That one thing is, that it was at the direct command of God. God's purpose was to shew his power both to Israel and to their enemies..... Deny the miracle, and you make the circuitous route a piece of reckless folly, or pure ignorance on the part of Moses..... It is only by admitting the miracle in full that you can clear up all mystery, and make the narrative as consistent and intelligible as the event is miraculous and divine. How little is gained by assailing one miracle in a book which relates a thousand! What a poor thing it is to clip and pare off all the edges of a miracle in order to make it look like a natural event! And what a cowardly state of mind is indicated by the attempt to reduce a miracle to its minimum before consenting to believe it."

There is no "paltering in a double sense" in this book in regard to the miraculous events attending the pilgrimage of the Israelites. In this respect it is honorably distinguished from both Robinson's and Stanley's, the most recent travellers in these regions. Our Author's faith is clear and undoubting, and his notes of the topography of the districts through which he passes are remarkably definite and acute. On the "*shoal theory*" of Robinson he says:—

"The shoals all seemed to run up and down the gulph, not *across* it. The *lie* of the immense sand-banks is pretty nearly north and south, with channels of deeper water between them. For though the shoals and sand-banks are frequent, they yet do not run *across* the sea, so as to have formed a highway for Israel to tread."

The same accurate criticism is shown in the topography of Marah, Elim, and Rephidim, and the discussion of the manna question is remarkably interesting and satisfactory. He notices the theory that makes the manna a mere natural growth—the produce of the tarfa-tree—and in twelve particulars, in which he compares the sweet gummy exudation of the tarfa-tree with the narrative of Scripture, and with the necessities of so vast a multitude he shows, with demonstration, how untenable such a supposition is. We shall quote one or two of these.

"(5) The tarfa exudations are in composition and consistency somewhat like honey. They are quite unfit for grinding, or pounding or baking. Who could grind honey? Yet we read of the manna that the people "ground it in mills or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it," nay boiled it. We brought home several little pots of the tarfa manna, and we are willing to give a handsome reward to any German or English rationalist who will undertake to *grind* it or *beat* it in a mortar, or *bake* it in a pan. They would find it easier so believe the miracle.

"(8) The ancient manna evaporated as soon as the sun rose. The tarfa produce does not evaporate. It gets soft in the sun, or when exposed to heat, that is all. I am willing to let any sceptic expose my pot of manna to the sun—the sun of Egypt or the sun of the desert—as long as he likes, and see whether it will evaporate.

"If Israel had lived upon the manna of the tarfa tree, two miracles would have been necessary, one to render the tarfas about ten thousand times more productive than they are, (and this all the year through) and then another to keep the children of Israel in bodily health while living on that one (medicinal) article, and without the first miracle they could not have been fed at all. Without the second they would have died in a few weeks. If Israel's manna were really a new created thing from God, there is no difficulty either to its amount or to its quality. The God who made it and sent it would see that it was right. Just one miracle was needed—no more."