

at the distance of some hours' sailing, being the supposed bitter Marah of the Bible; nor did we feel disposed to proceed further in our crazy craft if we could help it; we, therefore, after holding a council, determined to transfer ourselves, if possible, to the other vessel, and were fortunately able to make an arrangement with the crew to that effect. The next (fifth) day we made much better progress in our new vessel, which, though under other circumstances, it might have appeared comfortless enough, was to us a palace after the one we had left, and we anchored for the night under a lofty range of rugged volcanic mountains. Our new ship having a little boat attached to it, we went on shore to explore the singular scenery of the coast, but we had considerable difficulty in regaining the vessel, which was lying at some distance out, the wind coming to blow hard in shore, and after wading up to the middle to launch our boat, and pulling hard for about an hour, we were barely able to drag ourselves to it by a spar which they had thrown out attached to a long rope, just as we were beginning to get exhausted, and the night was closing in upon us, and for the success of this operation we were again mainly indebted to the coolness and activity of our Irish companion.

On the evening of the sixth day, we came to anchor at Tor, and were not sorry to put our foot again on dry land. Tor is a miserable place, containing a few ruinous mud huts, and a population of some dozen of Greeks, Jews, and Arabs, who support themselves chiefly on fish, which are caught here in great abundance, and which proved a valuable addition to our stock of provisions, which was now reduced to a few coarse sea biscuits. The whole of the country round Tor is a barren, sandy desert, bounded by the Red Sea on one side, and on the other by the bold and lofty mountains of Sinai, which form a magnificent back ground in the distance. It is generally supposed to be the *Elim* of the Bible, where the Israelites in the early parts of their journey, came upon the wells and the palm trees, and the wells and the palm trees are certainly still there, though not exactly according in number with those mentioned in the Bible; they are, however, the more remarkable, from being the only objects to relieve the eye in the expanse of desert, it being the only part of the coast, for many miles, where they are to be found. There was nothing to induce us to prolong our stay at Tor, and we would have quitted it immediately, after filling our water skins at the well of *Elim*, had we had the means, but we had to send a day's journey into the mountains for the Bedouin Arabs, to procure camels for the journey, and on their arrival had to negotiate for a couple of days with them before coming to an arrangement; for, finding us at their mercy, they endeavoured to extort what they could from us, and we having the risk of being again too late for the steamer before us, were glad to compound with them on almost any terms. After much difficulty, and a wearisome detention of almost four days at this inhospitable spot, we at last got away upon our camels, which proved to be none of the best, and after marching all day over the sandy desert, and gradually approaching the magnificent mountain barrier, we reached the foot of it as the sun went down, and there pitched our tent for the night. We had no beds with us, as we judged it prudent, both for the sake of expedition, and to avoid the cupidity of the Arabs, to travel as light as possible; but after a long day's march on the back of a camel, wrapped in our cloaks on the soft sand, and with our saddle bags for a pillow, we had never any difficulty in sleeping soundly enough. The next day we entered the mountains by a pass, which in wild and savage grandeur surpassed anything I ever witnessed; the gorge was very narrow, and the rocks towered above us on either side to an immense height, with a rugged serrated outline, resembling some parts of the Alps, or the pass of Glencoe in the Highlands, but utterly destitute of vegetation, and broken at every turn, in an endless variety of fantastic shapes, with enormous blocks of granite, rolled and tumbled over each other in rude confusion at the bottom, as if by the joint action of fire and water, and every here and there lateral defiles of a like wild and rugged character, branching off and penetrating, as it were, into the very heart of the mountains. We had not entered this pass long before we came upon a small stream of water, losing itself in the sand of the desert, but gradually increasing in

size as we followed it up its course, till it became a fine clear burn, tumbling over the rocks, which was most refreshing both to the eye and the palate, being the first running water we had seen since we left the banks of the Nile. The whole of this day's march was occupied in ascending the pass, which was severe work for the camels, as the pass was in many places very rough and rocky; mine, and that of one of my companions, broke down under it, and we had to leave them to their fate, and proceed the best way we could on foot, till, after a laborious walk of some hours, we fell in with some wandering Bedouins, who supplied us with fresh camels. We encamped for the night on an elevated spot near the head of the pass, where we found the rocky ground made rather a harder bed than the sands of the desert; but this was soon remedied, by cutting down with our swords a sort of broom which we found growing in the neighborhood, and which, spread under our cloaks, made a very good couch.

We had now ascended into a region of considerable elevation, and the first part of our journey on the third day lay through an open valley with a gravelly bottom and no verdure, but thinly scattered over with plants of wild thyme, and various kinds of stunted shrubs, most of them emitting a sweet smell which perfumed the whole air; and we occasionally met with wandering Bedouins, feeding their goats and sheep, from whom we sometimes got a supply of goat milk, which was very acceptable. This is the Desert of Sin, the scene of much of the sojourning of the children of Israel; and where Moses went to feed the flocks of his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, when the Lord appeared to him in the burning bush. We had now, ahead of us, the central range of Sinai, towering aloft in bold and craggy pinnacles, and after leaving the open valley and winding again for some hours up a steep and rugged pass between two lofty mountains, we came out on a circular plain of some extent, with shrubs growing upon it as in the valley, and at the further extremity of this, rose in wild sublimity and grandeur, with the pinnacles at the summit, what is supposed to be the Mountain of Sinai, from whence the law was delivered amid thunder and lightning; the circular plain below being the ground on which the Israelites were encamped; and certainly if any scene on earth could form a fitting theatre for such a transaction, it was this. At the foot of the mountain is situated the Greek monastery of Mount Sinai, and the cypress trees, apricots, almonds, &c., now in full blossom in the little garden which surrounds it, were the first symptoms of cultivation which had greeted our eyes since we left Egypt. We reached the monastery just as the sun was going down behind the mountains, and found it surrounded by high walls, and fortified for the protection of the monks from the incursions of the Bedouins. On our arrival we were hailed by the monks from a window about sixty feet from the ground, and having asked our business, and satisfied themselves as to our credentials, which they drew up by a cord, they granted us admission, and pulled us up, one by one, by a rope fixed round us with a noose, our Bedouin guides and camel-men being jealously excluded, and left to encamp at the foot of the walls. The monastery is occupied by about thirty monks of the Greek Church, who lead a very strict, abstemious life, and are chiefly engaged in their devotional exercises. It is an irregular building inside, and contains a great many cells and chapels of various sizes and forms. The principal church is handsome, and they have a large refectory and library, containing some curious old manuscripts. The whole is, as I said, surrounded by high walls, on which a few old guns are mounted for defence against the Arabs. The monks, however, find it better policy to conciliate than to fight them, with coarse bread below the walls. We were hospitably received by the superior, and two little comfortable dormitories assigned for our use; and they gave us such cheer as they had to produce, viz.: coarse bread, good spring water, (to us a great luxury) and rice. The following morning we descended to the garden through a subterranean passage, guarded by an iron door, and were thence let down to the plain below by a rope from the wall; and proceeded under the guidance of one of the brothers, and a party of Bedouins, to ascend the mountain. The ascent was very steep and rugged, the steps which had been formed to facilitate it having been broken up ages ago.

The scenery increased in grandeur and sublimity as we mounted. About one-third from the top, we came to a level circular space, surrounded on all sides by lofty peaks, which is said to be Mount Horeb, and supposed to be the scene of Moses' forty days sojourn. The extreme summit is a pointed spire a little way higher up, of about twenty yards breadth, on which are the ruins of an ancient chapel. The view from this point extends over the whole of the southern portion of the Peninsula between the Gulf of Arabia and Suez, and in its peculiar style of sublime and savage grandeur is certainly unequalled by any thing I ever saw, and must, I imagine, be quite unique. It is like a sea of boiling lava, suddenly congealed, and rising in a confused chaos of abrupt and lofty pinnacles. We descended the mountain by a different, but not less rugged path, which brought us down into a deep, dark, rocky valley, between Mount Sinai and Mount St. Catherine, a no less abrupt and lofty mountain adjoining it. This is supposed, and with apparent probability, to be the vale of Rephidim, where Israel contended with Amalek, while Moses overlooked them, with his hands upheld by Aaron and Hur. In this valley is pointed out a rock, said to be Maribah, which Moses smote with his rod, and the water gushed out; there are several natural cavities in it, from which water seems at one period to have flowed; though there are also other rocks in the vicinity, marked in an equally curious way, and just as likely to be the real ones, unless the memory of it has been preserved by tradition; but in this, as in the case of many of the traditional spots near Jerusalem, we must be content with the feeling of interest which must arise from a general belief in the reality of the sacred localities, without nicely scrutinising, or implicitly believing, the identity of particular spots, for which no very satisfactory proof can now be alleged. We wended our way for some time through the vale of Rephidim, and round the base of the holy Mount, and then emerged, and crossing it regained the monastery and were pulled up into the garden about sunset, after a day of much interest, and not a little fatigue. The next day, after the usual difficulties and negotiations, we made arrangements with the Bedouins for camels, to take us back by land to Suez, and having been let down again by the rope from the window, proceeded on our journey the same evening. In the book kept by the monks for the insertion of the names of visitors, I saw among the most recent of those who had preceded us, those of Lord Lindsay and William Ramsay; and the Arab Shirkh brought me the same camel which he said poor Ramsay had ridden, and showed much concern when, in answer to his inquiries after him, I informed him of his death. I should have been glad to have followed the route they took to visit the ruins of Petra before returning to Suez, but the delays we had already met with, and the still greater difficulties of effecting an arrangement with the Arabs for such an extension of our trip, made it quite out of the question, without incurring a greater risk of again missing the steamer, than, in our circumstances, would have been prudent. We accordingly took the most direct route in our journey back to Suez. This occupied six days of constant travelling. We mounted our camels every day at dawn, rested a couple of hours at noon, generally under the shadow of some overhanging rock, for breakfast, and reached our ground, where we pitched our tent for the night, about sunset. We had expended all our provisions when we had reached the monastery, and the monks supplied us with barely a sufficiency for our homeward journey, viz.: a small loaf of coarse bread, and half a hard biscuit, to each man a day, which, with the scanty and indifferent supply of water we could find at distant intervals with which to fill our leathern bags, was sorry enough fare for the hard work we had to go through; but we were all fortunately in good health and spirits; so that these petty privations and discomforts appeared very light. Had they continued longer, however, we should have been hard put to it; for our provisions were reduced to the last loaf, our shoes nearly worn out, and the stock of money in our joint purse dwindled down to a few silver pieces when we arrived at Suez.

The past part of our journey lay through a mountainous country, (the wilderness of Sin) which we traversed by valleys resembling in character that which I have before described, and