

dicular ladders hanging against the face of the rock, or be drawn up to the convent door, two hundred and twenty-two feet above, in a net attached to an old rope—all these combine to make Curzon's book one of the most fascinating ever written. Why have not the editors of our cheap libraries added it to their reprints?

[A copy of this book is in the Toronto Public Library, and it is one which the present editor read with great interest. Mr. Curzon probably saw more of the Levantine monasteries than any other man. He was an accomplished and classical scholar, was possessed of ample means, and had a passion for Eastern travel and for the collection of ancient MSS. This is not a dry-as-dust report of the antiquarian research. Save perhaps Kinglake's "Eothen," which it resembles in its polished literary style, we know of no more charming book of travel in Eastern Lands. The old monasteries, some of which date from the sixth, and even the fifth, century, were the natural depositories in which were preserved the precious MSS. of the classical and sacred writings, which would else long since have perished. During the long dark night of the Middle Ages, in these the light of learning feebly glimmered, preserved from entire extinction by the diligence of monkish copyists.

Mr. Curzon explored first the famous monasteries and lauras of the Nitrian Desert in Upper Egypt, and purchased some precious MSS., which littered as neglected rubbish the oil cellars or covered the oil jars of the monks. It will be remembered that Tischendorf rescued from the ovens of the monks of Mount Sinai, one of the most precious Biblical MSS. extant, worth more than its weight in gold. The monasteries of Thebes, and of St. Sabba in Palestine, yielded their proportion of treasures in exchange for Frankish gold. Some of the richest "finds" were discovered in the almost inaccessible monasteries of Meteora, in Albania. To some of these the only access is by a windlass, which raises the visitor by a rope some 200 or 300 feet in air. Engravings of some of these eagle-like eyries are shown. At Monte Casino, in Southern Italy, the site of the monastery founded by St. Benedict in A.D. 529, and elsewhere, we have ourselves noticed similar religious edifices perched in almost inaccessible places.

The most remarkable group of monasteries in the world is the famous score or more of Mount Athos, the largest one having about 300 monks. These adopted the rule of St. Basil, by far the most rigorous of any, seldom or never eating meat, and fasting over 100 days in the year. So holy is Mount Athos that since the days of Constantine, it is averred, "it has never been contaminated by the tread of woman's foot" and no female animal of any sort is tolerated. So the good monks have not even the addition to their austere diet of fresh eggs or milk. Some of them, early brought to this stern seclusion did not remember to have ever