

façades of splendid temples, rivaling in their aspect and symmetry the most celebrated monuments of Grecian art. Columns of various orders, graceful pediments, broad, rich entablatures, and sometimes statuary, all hewn out of the solid rock, and still making part of the native mass, transform the base of the mountain into a vast, splendid pile of architecture; while the overhanging cliffs, towering above in shapes rugged and wild, produce the most striking and curious of contrasts.

But nothing contributes so much to the almost magical effect of some of these monuments, as the rich and various colours of the rock in which they are formed. The mountains that encompass the vale of Petra are of sandstone, of which red is the predominating hue. But many of them are adorned with a profusion of the most lovely and brilliant colours. Red, purple, yellow, azure, or sky-blue, black, and white, are seen in the same mass, distinctly in successive layers, or blended so as to form every shade and hue—as brilliant and as soft as they ever appear in flowers, in the plumage of birds, or in the sky when illuminated by the most glorious sunset.

The Khuzneh, or "Pharaoh's Treasure," struck Robinson with amazement and delight: "All at once the beautiful façade of the Khuzneh in the western precipice burst upon our view in all the delicacy of its first chiselling, and in all the freshness of beauty of its soft colouring. Nothing I had seen of architectural effect in Rome or Thebes, or even Athens, comes up to it in the first impression. Its wonderful state of preservation, the glow and tint of the stone, and the wild scenery around, all are unique, and combine to take complete possession of the mind. There it stands, as it has stood for ages, in beauty and loneliness; the generations which admired and rejoiced over it of old

have passed away; the wild Arab, as he wanders by, regards it with stupid indifference or scorn; and none are left, but strangers from distant lands, to do it reverence. Its rich roseate tints, as I bade it farewell, were gilded by the mellow beams of the morning sun; and I turned away from it at length with an impression which will be effaced only by death."

The name Khuzneh is given because the Arabs think the place contains the treasure which they ascribe to Pharaoh, and which they suppose to be held in the urn crowning the summit of its ornamental front, a hundred feet above the ground. Their only interest in all these monuments is to search for hidden treasures; and, as they find nothing elsewhere, they fancy they are in the urn, which to them is inaccessible. It bears the marks of many musketballs, which they have fired at it, in the hope of breaking it to pieces, and thus obtaining the imagined wealth.

Robinson thus describes the general impression which he received: "Around us were the desolations of ages—the dwellings and edifices of the ancient city crumbled and strewed in the dust—the mausolea of the dead, in all their pristine beauty and freshness, but long since rifled, and the ashes of their tenants scattered to the winds. Well might there be the stillness of death; for it was the grave itself—a city of the dead by which we were surrounded."

History gives but scanty details of this rock-hewn city which once received the caravans of Arabia, India and Persia, and sent their rich stores on to Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Greece. A city whose king, during the last melancholy tragedies of Jewish independence, marched out at the head of fifty thousand men, entered Jerusalem, and besieged the temple until commanded by Rome to desist—its site was lost to civilization for nearly a thousand years.