

where the people of Israel encamped on their journey through the wilderness.

When we entered the convent near Mount Sinai, we were surprised, after having just quitted the desert, where we had seen only a wretched and unsettled people, to find the interior so neatly arranged and in such excellent order, and inhabited by so many cheerful and healthy looking monks. Ascending to their apartments, we beheld from them a magnificent prospect, to which no artificial addition has been made to increase the charm of reality.

In order to complete my pilgrimage, it was necessary that I should ascend Mount Sinai. None of the monks were disposed to accompany me; they lent me therefore one of their Arabian servants, a sort of Helots among the Bedouins, to be my guide, as well as to carry the provisions which were necessary for this fatiguing journey. I fastened myself to the rope, and the windlass being turned round, I was gently deposited at the foot of the walls. The rope was rapidly drawn up again to assure the poor monks that they were perfectly isolated in the midst of this hostile desert.

The window, which is the only entrance,—the cord, which is the only communication with the external world,—give to the whole of this building a grave and solemn appearance. When I was drawn up by means of this machine, I felt the same impression as if I heard the creak of the hinges of a large door which closes on the visitor who enters through curiosity a state prison. This peculiarity appears to have existed from the time when the monks were obliged to protect themselves from the repeated hostilities of the surrounding Arabs.

Mount Horeb forms a kind of breast from which Sinai rises. The former alone is seen from the valley,

which accounts for the appearances of the burning bush on that mountain and not on Sinai.

“Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush.”

Our course towards the summit of Sinai lay through a ravine to the south-west. The monks had arranged a series of large slabs in tolerably regular order, which once formed a convenient staircase to the top of the mountain. The ins, however have disturbed them, and, as no repairs had been for a long time attended to, the stairs were in many places in ruins. Just before reaching the foot of Sinai, immediately after quitting Horeb, the traveller sees a door built in the form of an arch; on the key-stone of the arch a cross has been carved. A tradition, preserved by the monks, and repeated by many pilgrims, informs us, that a Jew, having been desirous of ascending Mount Sinai, was stopped by an iron crucifix, which prevented him from pursuing his way; and that, to remove the enchantment, he had baptized himself at the head of a stream which runs into the ravine.

We passed another similar door before arriving at a small level spot, whence we discovered the summit of Sinai, and the two edifices which surmount it. The nearest building is the chapel of the convent, the farther one is the mosque. In the distance of the design is seen the chapel of Elias in ruins, and in the foreground the fountain and the cypress, which give some degree of animation to these rocks, whose grandeur is entirely lost by being compressed within so limited a space. The superior of the Franciscans found two cypresses and three olive