

from which it receives the name of El Jebail. Here we found the ruins of a small building called Heddet Emhannah, probably a station on the same old caravan road, traces of which we had noticed in Wády Abu Taráfi, and at other places.

We were now fairly inside the unknown and mysterious mountain region which we had so long wished to explore, and our pulses quickened with the excitement. We felt that we were on the eve of solving a geographical problem which had occupied our attention for months past, and, if there were any truth in report, we were in a fair way of meeting with some dangerous adventures. From El Jebail we passed through a narrow opening in the mountains into another plain of much greater extent, and covered with herbage, upon which a number of the 'Azázimeh Arabs were pasturing their flocks. The structure and drainage of this portion of the plateau has been less understood than any other, but we had at last reached a point from which the whole system became intelligible. The outlet from El Jebail is called Wády el Baggár; it flows for a short distance in a south-westerly direction over the plain just spoken of, and then, taking a sharp turn to the north, passes through the Dheigat el 'Amerín, where it joins the net-work of valleys north of Rubeibeh and is carried down to the Mediterranean. On the west and south-west of the same plain the mountains attain their highest elevation, and in these, two main valleys, Wády el Abyadh and Wády Marreh, take their rise; the first flowing westward into Wády el 'Arísh, the second cutting through the eastern slope of the plateau, and finding its way down to the Arabah and Dead Sea. A steep pass, called the Nagb el Ghárib, at the south-eastern corner of the plain, leads down into Wády Marreh, and toward this we directed our steps. The view from the top is very impressive, as well as the precipitous cliffs which everywhere meet the eye; huge *jorfs*, mountains in themselves, rise up on either side of the wády-bed, and show that it is only cut through the deep alluvial deposit of which the plain is formed. The valley

reminded us of Wády Muweileh, but is on a much more gigantic scale. It is broad and level, broken, however, by various rolling hills and mounds; and, the rocks being of limestone and not relieved by any verdure, produce a glare that is most distressing to the eyes. Descending the pass, we went for about half an hour along the valley to the west, after which we turned up a wády called Emka'ab, and camped in a small branch of it, near some water, which, by-the-way, was very salt and filthy to the taste. Here we met one of the 'Azázimeh Arabs, and arranged with him to guide us to 'Abdeh, and afterward through Jebel Magráh to Wády Jeráfeh, making first a *détour* to Jebel Maderah. He came with the understanding that we were not to require him to go into the 'Arabah, as he was afraid of the Kerek Arabs, between whom and his tribe there is a long-standing blood-feud; as we wished to go through the mountains, this exactly suited our views.

In the middle of the night we were awakened by the report of a gun, and immediately the whole camp was up in arms and a brilliant fire lighted. It seems that an 'Azzámí Arab had skulked up to the tent, seeking what he might devour, but a dog, by which he was accompanied, attracted the attention of 'Alí, one of our camel-drivers, who straightway fired at the intruder. The latter made off, and the excitement was caused by all our men rushing about after him. In the morning the sheik of the 'Azázimeh, with a select company of friends, came to the camp, much incensed at our intrusion, and swore that no one should go up to the ruins without payment of an exorbitant *bakhshísh*; but, getting only curt answers, they went off in high dudgeon, declaring that they would prevent us from ascending the pass. However, we determined not to have our journey for nothing, and immediately after breakfast we took our sketch-books, surveying and photographic instruments, and started off, in spite of their threats. Proceeding up to the head of the valley (Wády Emka'ab), we found a very steep and difficult pass, to the top of which our opponents were hastening; when they saw us coming after them they

got into a terrible rage, and bade us get back and be off out of their country as soon as possible, if we valued our lives. As we still kept on, they waxed more and more excited. A little boy, at this point, came upon the scene, and hearing the sounds of war, and seeing the martial appearance presented by our own party, he thought that his last hour was come, and, crying bitterly, besought us not to kill him. We quieted his fears, and gave him a small coin, for which and for his life he seemed extremely grateful.

Now, we knew that Arabs are never anxious to commence a fight, and bring upon themselves the dread consequence of the blood-feud, so we sat down, and, holding our guns in readiness, smoked our pipes complacently, and answered all their threats with quiet chaff.

But the disturbance continued; every moment we heard the loud reports of guns firing above us, and in clear, determined tones the Arab war-song rang in our ears. Still we plodded steadily on, but, as we commenced the ascent, a dozen armed Arabs suddenly rushed forward, and, nimbly scaling the mountain side, took possession of the pass; and while some began throwing stones over the edge, others presented their guns at us, and the sheik, with his bare arm raised in a tragic attitude, treated us to a grandiloquent address, and threatened us with summary annihilation. "Get back, O Bedawín!" said he; "if you come a step farther it is at the peril of your lives; for by the living God, if any one sets foot here we will roll him over as we would an ibex." So poor Selámeh, who had been sent up to offer terms of reconciliation, had to come back, and 'Own, our other man, went up with an offer of thirty piastres. His approach with Selámeh, who again tried his luck, was the signal for a fresh outbreak; he was met with drawn swords, and literally thrust down the pass, closely followed by a large stone.

Matters were now getting serious; the Arabs lit a beacon-fire on the top of the pass, screamed out in frantic tones, "*Hallat el gom!*" "War is proclaimed!" as a signal for their neighbors and friends to rush up to the attack.

It was time to interfere, so I made them a pretty speech, telling them that our intentions were quite peaceful, and expressing my surprise at being treated in such a manner by people whose guests we had become. A long altercation ensued, and peace was ultimately concluded on condition of our paying the sum of eight shillings, they on their part undertaking to conduct us over the ruins, carry our instruments, and lend us all the assistance we might require. Upon this we were allowed to ascend, and were received with due ceremony on the top; then, attended by the whole assemblage, besides our own two men, we walked on toward the ruins.

The road lay over a broad terrace, up another steep hill-side, and across a plateau in which was a very precipitous ravine (like those at Sarábít el Khádim, but having water and a few dwarf palms at the bottom). Crossing another line of hills, we at last reached the ruins, and, after resting for a few minutes, began to sketch and work. 'Abdeh is situated in the hills at the head of Wády Marreh, on a promontory which juts out into the valley much in the same manner as those upon which El 'Aujeh and El Meshrifeh stand; the west end of this is sheer and precipitous, and commands a fine view over the vast plateau, which is seen to be intersected by deep wádies, and broken up here and there by ridges of low mountains. In those to the west, which form the highest point of the prospect, Wády el Abyadh takes its rise, and Sebaita is situated (though, of course, concealed from view) just where that wády flows out into the plain. The precipitous end of the plateau, of which I have just spoken, is escarped, and the face furnished with an arrangement of chambers, similar to those described as existing at Meshrifeh. The ruins lie east and west, and are not very imposing in appearance, although they cover a considerable extent of ground. They consist of a sort of *casbah*, or fort, adjoining which is a small collection of dwellings and out-buildings; these are also encompassed by a wall, and form a second inclosure attached to the fort, with which it communicates by a