

VIEW FROM THE SERBAL.

65

Nothing on the world's surface could be more desolate than the vast region that floated in the scorching haze beneath us, from east to west, from north to south; mountains, plain, valley, and sea, formed by the slow abrasions and dispositions of countless ages, and then fractured and upheaved, by the agency of fire, or protruded in molten masses through fissures thus created, seemed stamped by nature with eternal barrenness, as unfit for human habitation; no sign of living water, of woody hill, or fertile valley, nothing save rock and sand was visible throughout the wide circumference of the lonely expanse. One dark-green speck nearly under us, peeping between two sterile peaks, revealed where my tent lay "perdu" among the palm-groves of Feiran; and to me at that moment it had an unspeakable charm, though I almost doubted if I should get there with unbroken limbs or neck. After all, even at some risk, and with great toil, it was something grand to brood like the eagle from these all but inaccessible cliffs, over a region to which Biblical history has imparted a sublime interest, and to see, outspread like a map, the chief part of the "great and terrible wilderness," which entombed an entire generation of the Israelites; to be able to trace their route almost from the hills of Marah and Elim, and the Desert of Shur, visible beyond the openings through the defile of Feiran, into the heart of these mountains, and to behold, far-stretched-out, almost to the borders of the promised land, that great central plateau, through which their allotted period of wandering must subsequently have led them.

I am uncertain whether the peak which we had scaled is that climbed by Burckhardt, and upon which he found the Sinaitic character—as Ruppell also did upon that he ascended, being the second from the west of the five principal peaks: but I believe it is the same from which a path leads up from the ruined convent of Wady Daghadé, on the south-west of the mountain. This existence of the Sinaitic writings on more than one peak, seems rather to bear out Dr. Lepsius's view of their being the work of the shepherds who were accustomed to roam over the mountains. The Serbal is 6342 feet above the Red Sea, which is at no great distance; and though it

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