

CHAPTER XVI.

BAALBEC.

—He saw the Sun go down
On that great Temple, once his own,
Whose lofty columns stand sublime,
 Flinging their shadows from on high,
Like dials which the wizard Time
Had raised to count his ages by.

MOORE.

I WAS obliged to wait at Damascus until the English monthly mail arrived; so I sent my servants forward early in the morning to wait for me at Zebdani. About three in the afternoon, after a parting cup with the jolly friars, and many warnings of my danger in going alone at such an hour, I started.

I pressed up the steep and burning side of the mountain, along the edge of an extraordinary ravine, through which the Barada, the ancient Pharphar, rushes from the highlands to the plains; thence, across a dreary, blasted-looking, mountainous country, in which not a blade of grass, of heath, or the vilest weed was to be seen. Naked red or grey rocks appeared everywhere, giving back the burning rays of the sun with interest, and shining upward into the eyes. But, in the narrow glen, through which the river flowed, all was beauty, richness, and verdure; a long waving line of poplars marked the course of the stream, as far as the eye could reach; these minaret-like trees, and the dome-like masses of the sycamore's heavy foliage, relieved against the evening sky, resembled a strip of some Oriental city. Beneath ran the bright river in a channel of emerald green, with here a foam-flecked mill, and there a vine-sheltered khan upon its banks.

Mills and Khans, however, and every other sign of social life, soon ceased, and I found myself traversing alone a wide, desolate