

ORIGINAL TEXT

It is difficult to form a correct idea of a desert
without having been in one;

it is an endless plain of sand and stones,
sometimes intermixed with mountains of all
sizes and heights,
without roads or shelter,
without any sort of produce for food.

The few scattered trees and shrubs of thorns,
that only appear
when the rainy season leaves some moisture,
barely serve to feed wild animals,
and a few birds.

Every thing is left to nature;
the wandering inhabitants
do not care to cultivate
even these few plants,
and when there is no more of them in one place,
they go to another.

When the trees become old,
and lose their vegetation
in such climates as these,
the sun, which constantly beams upon them,
burns and reduces them to ashes.

I have seen many of them entirely burnt.

The other smaller plants have no sooner risen
out of the earth than they are dried up,
and all take the colour of straw,
with the exception of the plant *harack*;
this falls off before it is dry.

Speaking in general of a desert,
there are few springs of water,
some of them at the distance
of four, six, and eight days' journey
from one another,
and not all of sweet water;

on the contrary,
it is generally salt or bitter,
so that if the thirsty traveller drinks of it,
it increases his thirst,
and he suffers more than before....

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