

variety of people there, many begging and many trying to sell you relics. The country is without fences. There are a good many spots where there is an opportunity for the Bedouins to come along and scratch the ground with a kind of shovel plough they have, hitch some calves or very small cattle, and raise some barley. We purchased barley all the time for feeding our animals.

At the place which we supposed is called in Scripture the wilderness, or the border of the wilderness next to the Dead Sea, where John the Baptist commenced his preaching, is an immense convent. It was founded by a man named Saba. "Mar" in the Syrian language means saint, and when we speak of Mar Saba, it means saint Saba. This is the name of the convent. This man lived to be some ninety-four years old. He concealed himself from his enemies a considerable time in caves, but his power increased with the number of his friends, for he gathered around him a good many thousand monks, and they built this immense convent, which was strongly fortified for those times. They allow no women to enter, and no person can go into their building without a permit from the Greek Patriarch at Jerusalem. We had a permit to enter that convent, but sister Snow and sister Little, of course, had to go to the camp. It would probably have been considered an outrage for them to have come in sight of the gates. Having sent up our permit, we were admitted and passed through the building. There were sixty-five monks there, some of whom had been there thirty-seven years. A man has to be exceedingly holy to be permitted to go there. I looked at them, and wondered what could induce men to adopt such a life. They showed us one room filled with skulls.

They said there were fifteen hundred of them, and they were the skulls of their brethren who had been killed by the Saracens at different times. They had taken great pains to preserve the skulls, with their names and registers. They have a spring of water which has a miraculous history, and they have one palm tree growing, which they say was planted by Saint Saba himself. They seem to have an eye to business. They had canes for sale, made from willows which they get the Arabs to bring from the Jordan. None of them are allowed to go out, and they are compelled to have everything brought to them. They had a number of fancy articles of their own manufacture for sale. I bought a small string of shells, which they said were brought from the Dead Sea. They gather a few francs from every party of travelers in this way. There was another party of Americans nearby who wanted to visit the monastery, but they had no permit; and a message was sent to us by them, saying, that if we would delay a little while we could all pass in with our permit. We had met the party and knew them to be nice, intelligent gentlemen. We stayed about an hour to accommodate these friends, and they passed in with us, otherwise they would have had to go clear back to Jerusalem for a permit. These persons—four gentlemen and two ladies—finding that we were going down to the Dead Sea, went along with us, and made the journey safe and pleasant. We went down to the Dead Sea the day following our visit to the monastery. I have seen a good many rough roads in Utah in the mountains, but of all the rough horseback riding I ever did see, I think that Palestine has the premium. Being pretty heavy, it was difficult for me to get on and off my horse, but