

said nebscht. do you know the plant asked the poet. it grows here in many places; here it is. only smell how sweet it is if you bruise the fleshy stem and leaves. my little verse is simple enough; it occurred to me like many other songs of which you know all the best. they all praise the same goddess, said nebscht laughing. but let us have the verses, said bent anat. the poet repeated in a low voice: how often in the desert i have seen the small herb, beytharan, in modest green in every tiny leaf and gland and hair sweet perfume is distilled, and scents the air. how is it that in barren sandy ground this little plant so sweet a gift has found and that in me, in this vast desert plain, the sleeping gift of song awakes again do you not ascribe to the desert what is due to love said nefert. i owe it to both; but i must acknowledge that the desert is a wonderful physician for a sick soul. we take refuge from the monotony that surrounds us in our own reflections; the senses are at rest; and here, undisturbed and uninfluenced from without, it is given to the mind to think out every train of thought to the end, to examine and exhaust every feeling to its finest shades. in the city, one is always a mere particle in a great whole, on which one is dependent, to which one must contribute, and from which one must accept something. the solitary wanderer in the desert stands quite alone; he is in a manner freed from the ties which bind him to any great human community; he must fill up the void by his own identity, and seek in it that which may give his existence significance and consistency. here, where the present retires into the background, the thoughtful spirit finds no limits however remote. yes; one can think down of this world, and spur our dull souls to the high hopes of a better anxiety on these matters mrs. buller had none. as to mrs. minchin, she would not have known what it meant if it had been put in print for her to read. matildas irritability was certainly repressed in public by school discipline, and from eleanors companionship our interests were varied and enlarged. but in spite of these advantages her health rapidly declined. and this without its seeming to attract miss mulberrys notice. indeed, she meddled very little in the matter of our health. she kept a stock of family pills, which she distributed from time to time amongst us. they cured her headaches, she said; and she seemed rather aggrieved that they did not cure matildas. but poor matildas headaches brought more than their own pain to her. they seemed to stupefy her, and make her quite incapable of work. her complexion took a deadly, pasty hue, one eye was almost entirely closed, and to a superficial observer she perhaps did look what madame always pronounced her sulky. then, no matter how fully any lesson was at her fingers ends, she stumbled through a series of childish blunders to utter downfall; and madames wrath was only equalled by her irony. to do matilda justice, she often used almost incredible courage in her efforts to learn a task in spite of herself. now and then she was successful in defying pain; but by some odd revenge of nature, what she learned in such circumstances was afterwards wiped as completely from her memory as an old sum is sponged from a slate. to headache and backache, to vain cravings for more fresh air, and to an inequality of spirits and temper to which eleanor and i patiently submitted, he gave himself up to scientific considerations; but he became more and more agitated by anxiety for the paraschites, and by the exciting vicinity of uarda. for hours he had been alone with her, for her father and grandmother could no longer stop away from their occupations. the former must go to escort prisoners of war to hermonthis, and the old woman, since her granddaughter had been old enough to undertake the small duties of the household, had been one of the wailing women, who, with hair all dishevelled, accompanied the corpse on its way to the grave, weeping, and lamenting, and casting Nile mud on their forehead and breast. uarda still lay, when the sun was sinking, in front of the hut. she looked weary and pale. her long hair had come undone, and once more got entangled with the straw of her humble couch. if nebscht went near her to feel her pulse or to speak to her she carefully turned her face from him. nevertheless when the sun disappeared behind the rocks he bent over her once more, and said: it is growing cool; shall i carry you indoors let me alone, she said crossly. i am hot, keep farther away. i am no longer ill, and could go indoors by myself if i wished; but grandmother will be here directly. nebscht rose, and sat down on a hen coop that was some paces from uarda, and asked