

the conquest of Algeria by the French. This vast plain, whose superficies has been valued by Humboldt at upwards of 6,000,000,000 square yards—and, more accurately, by other geographers, at about 760,000 square miles, including its oases—is subdivided into several basins. As these distinctions have been established after the names of the nomadic tribes inhabiting the different regions of the Sahara, they appear somewhat uncertain, and we shall refrain from adopting

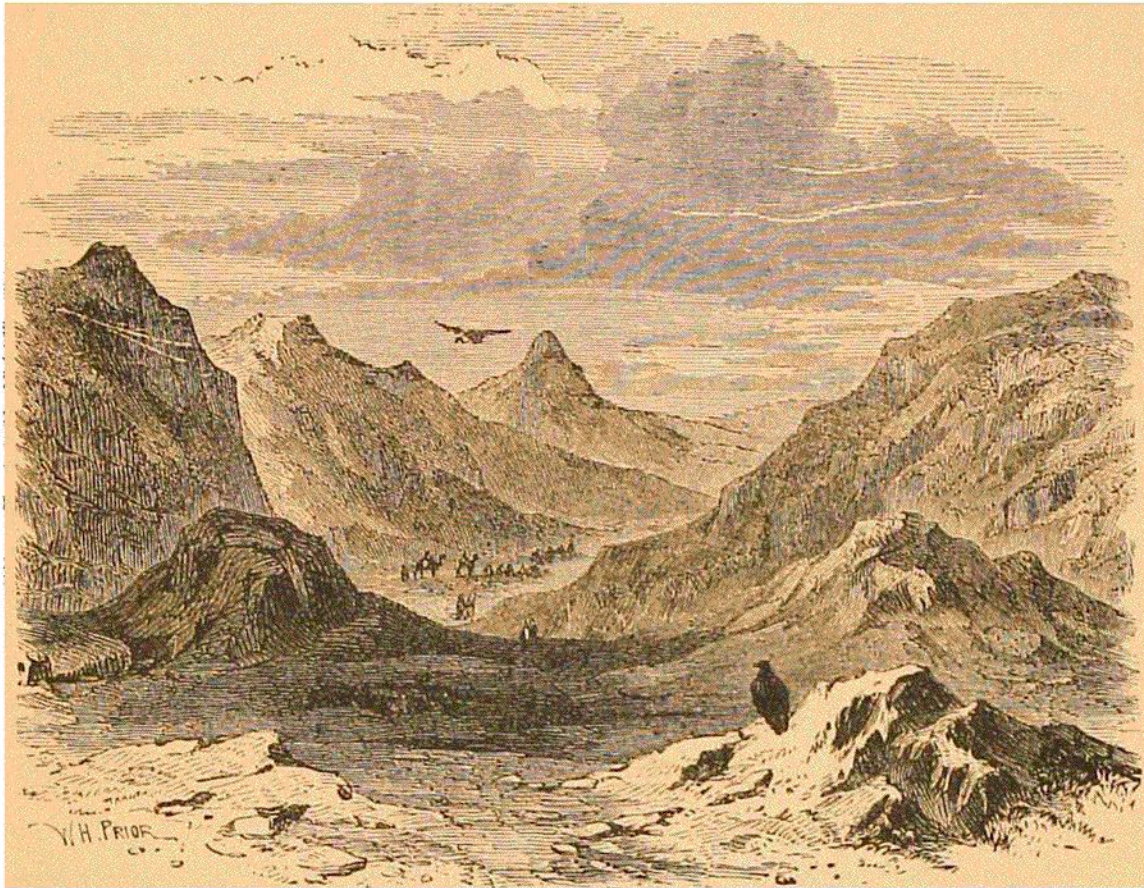


FIG. 85.—A GORGE IN THE DESERT.

them. The eastern district of the Sahara, lying beyond Fezzan, is called the *Libyan Desert*.

The level of the Sahara is very irregular: owing to this circumstance the mean altitude attributed to it varies, according to the different authorities, from 150 up to 1300 feet. Fournel represents the elevation of the interior at about 480 feet. In the vicinity of Biskra it does not exceed 200 to 220 feet; while, in the north, several tracks occur whose level is actually below that of the Mediterranean.