AN ARTIST IN EGYPT

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PREFACE

I ENDEAVOURED, in a former book on Egypt, to give my first impressions while the glamour of the East had not been dimmed by familiarity; and the kind reception of that, my first literary attempt, has encouraged me to write again after spending some years in the Nile Valley. Though first impressions may have a charm which familiarity lacks, it would be astonishing if a country so full of beauty, and of such varied interests as is Egypt, had caused familiarity to breed contempt. I may safely say that it has not had that result. A lengthened stay has certainly added to my experiences as well as to my stock of drawings, and I trust it has also given me some insight into the character of the people amidst whom I dwelt.

Mediæval Cairo is doubtless year by year the poorer by many picturesque 'bits' which have vanished. But Cairo is a large city, and happily many years may elapse before artists will cease to go there for material. What is still untouched by the jerry builder, or has not been allowed to fall into ruin, is probably more beautiful than anything other oriental cities can show. Less

change is seen in the smaller towns, and the villages are much the same in aspect as when the Saracen invaders first occupied the valley of the Nile.

Every season adds to the knowledge of Ancient Egypt, and gives us something which for centuries lay hid beneath the desert sands. It was my good fortune to spend some winters at Thebes while some of the most interesting of recent discoveries were made, and through the courtesy of Mr. Weigall, the Chief Inspector of Upper Egypt, I was enabled to dwell and do my work in these congenial surroundings. I have also to thank him for the unique opportunities which our desert journey, from the Nile to the Red Sea, offered; of all my experiences in Egypt, none has given me more pleasure in recalling.

HASLEMERE, 1912.

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CHAPTER I

CAIRO REVISITED

AFTER a lapse of some years, I returned to Cairo to attempt once again to paint its ancient buildings, as well as the picturesque incidents seen in the shadows they cast or bathed in light against their sunlit walls.

I made an early start on the first morning after my arrival, partly to look for a subject, and more particularly to see whether the pictorial side of the old quarters of the city would still impress me as it did on my first visit. It was a fateful morning, for had what I saw failed to stir up my former enthusiasm, I was resolved to pack up my traps, and try my hand in Upper Egypt.

I hurried along the Mousky as fast as its usual crowd of people would allow, and turned down the Khordagiyeh to see if an old favourite subject of mine had not been 'improved away.'

Needless to say, it was a brilliant morning, for the occasional grey days of midwinter were still a long way off. Great awnings hung across the street, and on one side the shopmen were lowering blinds or rigging up matting, in anticipation of the sun which would shortly be streaming down on them. Everything still had its summer look, though October was far spent ;—

and Cairo, let me say, is much more beautiful in hot weather than during the comparatively chill days of winter.

The particular houses I had gone in search of were happily untouched; but had they been restored out of all shape or allowed to fall down for want of repair, I should hardly have had room for a depressing thought.

From the crowd of country folk and the heavily laden camels and donkeys, it was evident that a market was being held in the open space in front of the Beit-el-Kadi. Locomotion was difficult till the Nahasseen or coppersmith street was reached, for here the road widens out at the Muristân. This handsome building, together with the mosques of Kalaûn, en-Nasir, and of Barkûk, formed a magnificent group, massed as they then were in a luminous shade. It was a meeting of old friends, and old friends looking their best. The dark awnings stretched across the road gave this pile of masonry a light and ethereal look, though they were dark in contrast to the azure above, save where the sun tipped the domes and a face of the minarets.

The crowd allowed but little time for contemplation; I had to move with it, and reaching the short street which leads to the Beit-el-Kadi, a converging stream of people carried us along till we arrived at the market square. I picked my way through the heaps of fruit and vegetables which littered the ground, passed behind a group of camels, and worked my way to the steps of the court-house, which gives its name to the market. From this point of vantage I was enabled to make some rough studies of the animated scene before me.

The sun had now risen high enough to flood the larger part of the square in light. Bits of matting, sail-cloth, or anything which can cast a shadow, were rigged up to protect the more perishable goods, and the early comers had taken advantage of the shade of the acacia trees at the further end of the market.

The general impression is one of light, colour, noise and movement. The detail is full of human as well as pictorial interest. Various combinations of colour —some beautiful, some inharmonious—leave ample scope to the painter to arrange his scheme. A pile of oranges and lemons, with the black and deep purple dress of the fellaha saleswoman, make a striking note in the foreground; the stacks of pitchers brought down from Balliana, in Upper Egypt, give a variety in buffs and greys, and the blue garments of the buyers are sufficiently faded not to contrast too violently. It is also a great study of types and characters. The noisy Cairene is chaffering with the quieter Shami from far Damascus for some pomegranates which are heaped before him; the Maghraby hawks a bundle of yellow slippers; Jew and Greek are trying to outdo each other in a deal over a spavined horse.

Through the motley crowd passes the brightly garmented lemonade-seller, tinkling his brass cups; his rival, who retails licorice-water, seems more in demand; one, carrying a heavy pitcher with a long brass spout, invites the thirsty ones to partake of the charity offered them in the name of God. 'Sebeel Alháh yá atchan,' he drones out at stated periods. He is less often met at markets than at religious festivals, and he is paid by

some visitor to the tomb of a saint to distribute the water as a thank-offering.

A young camel about to be slaughtered is being led about and sold piecemeal, intending purchasers chalking on the hide of the beast the joint they wish to secure.

The cheap-jack, with his usual flow of language, tempts the fellaheen to buy his European shoddy; Karakush, the Egyptian Polichinelli, is here, and also the quack doctor.

The effect is now rapidly changing as Bibar's ancient palace ceases to cast its shadow over the further part of the market, and my vantage-ground becomes untenable as the sun creeps round to the steps of the court-house. I work my way to the archway at the eastern side of the square, and find another picture here well worth going to Cairo to paint, for from this point I get a view of the Muristân and the domes and minarets of its adjacent mosques, now in the full noonday sun. A stately background to the busy scene before me.

The studies I had made of the market, though far from satisfying me, left me too tired to do more than make a few notes and a promise to come here again on a future occasion.

It is a relief, after the glare and noise of a similar subject, to turn down the narrow dark lanes which are found in the residential parts of Old Cairo. The one entered from the archway winds through the Hasaneyn quarter and ends at the eastern entrance of the Khan Khalil.

These lanes where the old houses are still intact

are even more characteristic of Cairo than are the busy streets, for something similar to the latter can be seen in most eastern cities. The projecting latticed windows, which relieve the plane surfaces of the backs of the houses, are a distinct feature of this city. Known generally as *mushrbiyeh*, they were originally small bays in which the water-bottles were placed to cool. The word is derived from the root of the Arabic *shirib*, to drink, from which we also get our word sherbet.

The bays were gradually enlarged so as to allow two or three people to sit in them and see up and down the street without being seen themselves. What corresponds to a glass pane in Europe is here replaced by a wooden grating. Each joint is turned, and so arranged as to make a pretty pattern. This grating is much closer in the apartments of the *hareem*, and though it freely admits the air and a sufficiency of light, it effectually screens the inmates from those outside.

From the enlarged bays one or more smaller ones often project in which the earthen bottles are now placed. There are also small windows in the lower panels, through which I have often seen things hauled up in small baskets from the street. Sellers of fruit or sweetstuffs are often met in these lonely lanes, and a stranger might wonder where they expect to find custom. Presently a little grating will open and a face will nearly fill the opening. Should the stranger have been seen through the lattice-work, the face will be partly veiled unless it be that of a child, and after some bargaining with the hawker, a small basket containing

a coin will be lowered. The coin having been carefully examined, the purchased article is placed in the basket and they are hauled up to the window. 'Ma's salama, ya sitt,' 'ya bint,' or 'ya Amma,' according to the degree of the purchaser, is usually the farewell salutation of the hawker. But should the purchase not prove on further examination to be up to expectations, a lively altercation is sure to ensue, and voices from unseen parties behind the grating may also be heard.

It is sad to see how much of this *mushrbiyeh* is disappearing; it is seldom now repaired and is often replaced by cheap sashes or is roughly boarded up. There are several causes for this: it is expensive, and the owners of the larger houses have mostly gone to live in the modern quarters and have let out their old homes in tenements to the poorer people. Much also has been destroyed by fire. The houses usually project over the lane as each story is reached, so that the upper windows often nearly meet the ones of the opposite houses. It is easily imagined how a fire will spread with so inflammable a material for it to feed on. The cheap imported petroleum lamps, which are replacing the earlier form of lighting, have much to account for. Many of the best examples of *mushrbiyeh* have been bought up by dealers to be made into screens or re-used in the modern suburbs.

As seen from the lane, the houses have a gloomy appearance; but it should be remembered that the Cairene dwelling was not built to make an outward display,—its beauty is seen from its inner courts or garden. When he views them from the narrow sunless lane, the

visitor wonders how people can live in such unhealthy surroundings. Should he be fortunate enough to have the *entrée* to a house which is still inhabited by a prosperous owner, he will probably come to the conclusion that no more suitable plan could have been adopted in a country where the summer lasts for three-quarters of the year.

I shall attempt to describe a visit to a beautiful dwelling later on; at present let us wander through the Hasaneyn quarter, thankful that the rays of the sun are so carefully excluded.

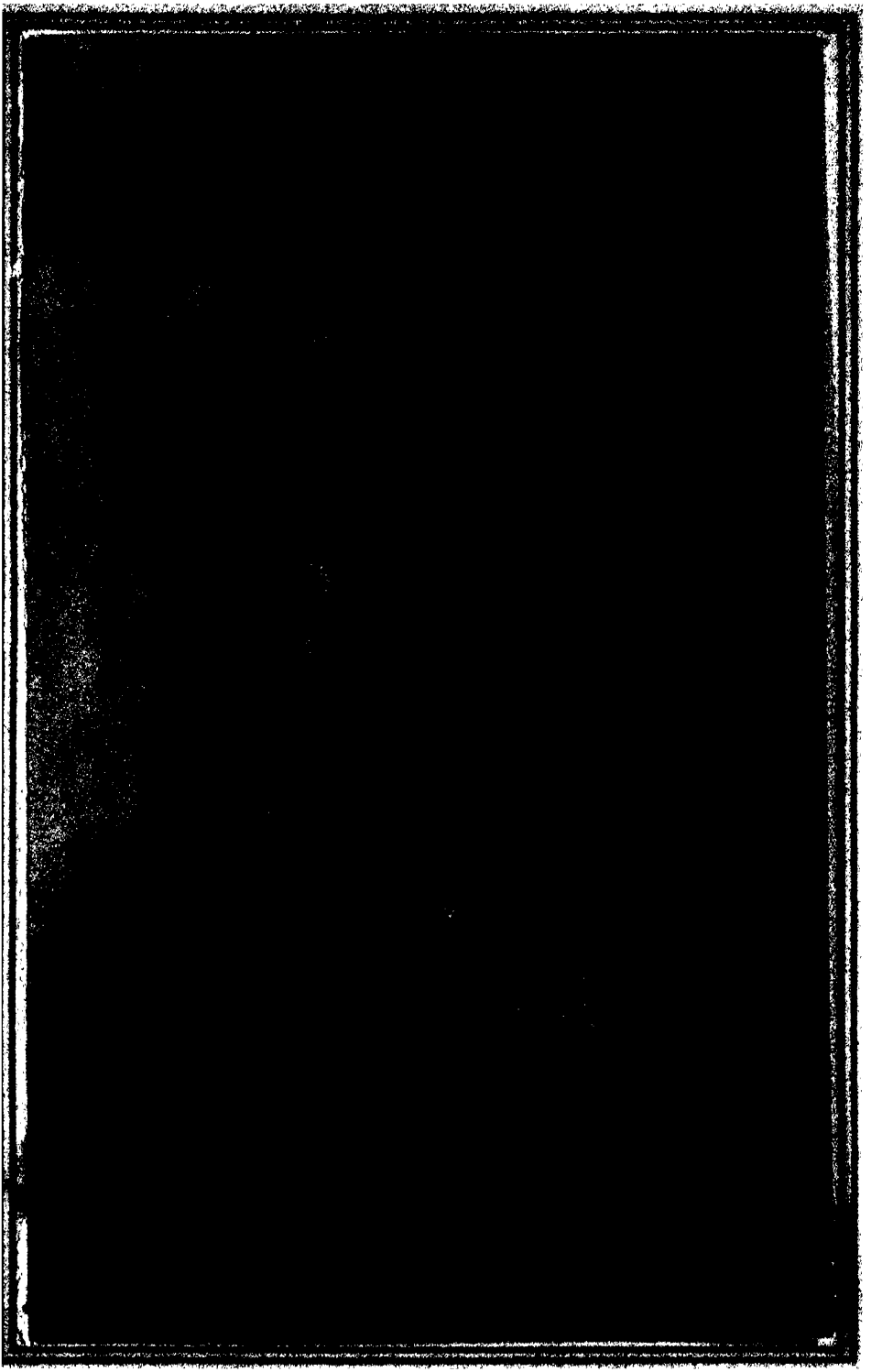
Reaching the wider thoroughfare, where stands the mosque which gives the district its name, the difference in the temperature is immediately felt. We carefully keep to the shady side of the road till we arrive at the entrance of the Khan Khalil.

This Khan, more commonly called the Turkish Bazaar, is one of the few which every tourist is taken to see; it is in reality a series of bazaars, the most conspicuous being that of the metal workers. Passing through a massive doorway we enter a lane, roofed in overhead with long rafters and matting; the warm light, which filters through this, harmonises the various-coloured silks and stuffs which are piled up in every little shop or hung out to attract a customer. Each shop is little more than a square cupboard, but as carriages do not enter here the owners have been allowed to retain the *mastaba*, or raised seat, on a level with their floors and projecting two feet or more into the roadway. This was characteristic of every shop in Cairo, until carriages began to replace the litter and the

ass as a means of locomotion. The merchant drops his slippers as he enters his place of business, while the customer can sit on the *mastaba* and keep his slippered feet in the street.

An old acquaintance recognises me and invites us to sit down; he claps his hands, and the boy from the coffee shop runs across to take his orders. When it is decided whether we shall have coffee or green tea, cigarettes are produced and a series of courteous inquiries then follow. I in return ask after his health and that of his children, but am not sufficiently intimate to allude to his wife. 'Allah be praised, all are well.' I ask how his business is, and he tells me that it is Allah's will that things are not what they used to be. 'Large rival stores now exist in the modern parts of Cairo and are injuring the trade of the Khan Khalil.' He might have added that prices are more fixed in these new stores and that visitors have not the time to spend hours over a purchase. He asks me when I am coming to sit in his shop, again to paint that of Seleem, his opposite neighbour. He calls out to Seleem and asks him if he has forgotten the *ghawaga* who painted him and his wares. 'Ya salaam!' says Seleem, and crosses over to join in the conversation. When the greetings are over it is time to begin the leave-taking, and with a promise to come again and possibly bring a customer we continue our way.

I am glad to find that both men still retain the *kuftân* and ample turban, and have not adopted trousers and the ugly red *tarbouch*, as most of the metal workers have done.



Descending some steps we come to the handsome gateway built by Garkas el-Khalíly in 1400; innumerable lamps, copied from those which used formerly to adorn the mosques, are exposed here for sale; brass finger-bowls, salvers and ewers cover the counters, and tall damascened lamp-stands fill up every available place on the floor.

The original colouring of the gateway seems to have worn itself down to making a quiet and harmonious background to this sparkling mass of metal work.

I am soon recognised by the owner of one of the stalls, from whose shop I had also painted a part of this bazaar, and am again invited to sit down to coffee and a cigarette. As some seven or eight seasons had passed since my last visit to Cairo, and considering the thousands of foreigners who must have passed through these bazaars during that time, it is astonishing that he should have remembered my face. There is, however, no time now to accept of the good man's hospitality, but 'In-sháa-lláh,' I shall return before many days.

Each turning gives us a fresh scheme of colour and the interest of another handicraft. The carpet bazaar leads out of that of the metal workers. The small cupboard-shaped shop is here replaced by one or two important show-rooms, and here and there a beautiful old Persian rug makes one regret the crude colouring of the aniline-dyed modern ones which are replacing them. Be the colours ever so glaring, the subdued warm light which passes through the awnings makes them part of one harmonious whole.

A mass of red and yellow is what catches our eyes

as we look down the slipper market, at a right angle from the carpet bazaar. Festoons of slippers hang from shop to shop, they are piled in stacks on the counters, and large skins, both red and yellow, are being cut up and hammered about as if the supply was not yet equal to the demand.

We have them on our right, and pass through a double row of stalls where we are pestered to buy strings of beads, amber mouthpieces, cut and uncut stones, 'Nice bangles for your lady,' besides many other things we are equally not in want of. Here we take our leave of the Khan Khalil, and I also of the imaginary reader whom I have attempted to conduct through it.

I am fortunate enough to find an *arabeyeh*, the Cairene cab, and can ponder over my morning while returning to the hotel.

Yes, Cairo is good enough for a second visit, and, please God, a good many more. My second impressions were perhaps pleasanter than my first ones, for I had not now that bewildering sense of how I should set to work, and also if it were possible to give anything like a pictorial presentment of these scenes. The physical inconveniences of working in crowded streets and amongst a strange people appalled me; but I did not then realise, as I do now, how much a tactful guide can do to make this work a possibility.

CHAPTER II

RENEWAL OF MY ACQUAINTANCE WITH MOHAMMED BROWN AND SOME REFLECTIONS ON MÂTRIMONY

NOW the first thing to do was to look up my former servant, Mohammed el-Asmar, now a dragoman known as Mohammed Brown, the surname being the English interpretation of Asmar. I have described him fully in *Below the Cataracts*, a previous book I have written when Egypt was much newer to me than at present.

I went to that haunt of the dragomans, the pavement outside the terrace of Shepheard's hotel, late enough to have allowed for the post-prandial nap. I found one or two hanging about on the chance of some tourist who might be taking Cairo on his way home from yet hotter climates.

They had not seen Mohammed lately and did not know to what part of Cairo he had moved ; but one of them knew a relation of his and promised that he should be made to know that I was in Cairo.

That same evening Mohammed was awaiting me in the hall of the hotel.

After the first greetings I remarked on what a swell he had become, and asked him why he should have an English covert-coat over his becoming oriental dress, on so hot an evening as it was. Instead of the old red slippers,

he wore European tanned-leather boots, and the turban was replaced by the hideous *tarbouch*. He had forgotten my dislike for this half-and-half get-up, and he told me it was now quite 'the thing' amongst the better-class dragomans.

I was glad, however, to find that the seven seasons during which he had been preying on the tourists had not, apart from these changes in his garments, altered him much for the worse.

'Well, how is the baby?' I asked him. 'Oh, he is getting a big boy now.' 'And the wife?' I ventured this time. A rather crestfallen look prepared me that something was wrong. 'Which wife, sir, do you mean?' 'You must be doing uncommonly well if you can afford two wives,' I said; 'most of us who have to earn our living in England find one as much as we can manage; besides, Mohammed, you used to agree with me that it was a very foolish thing for any one to have more than one.' He certainly seemed to agree with me now, for it was evident that trouble began when number two made her appearance.

'It came about like this,' he went on. 'You remember I told you that my first wife, the mother of our Hassan, was very pretty, and that I loved her very much.' 'Yes, I remember she was very pretty, for you know I caught sight of her that day my wife and I dined at your house.' He smiled, but shook his head, as much as to say that he, a Moslem, ought not to have allowed his wife to be seen unveiled. As I, however, was not a Moslem myself, he tried to console himself that he had not transgressed Mohammedan law.

'A pretty face, sir, she still has, but her tongue gets worse and worse.'

I asked the foolish young man if he expected to improve her tongue by introducing her to a second wife. 'I have been a great fool,' was his mournful reply; and after a pause, 'I think I shall have to divorce her; but I love her very much in spite of her temper.'

'Well, now, about number two?' I asked. 'It came about like this,' he began again. 'You must remember Ahmed Abd-er-Rahman, the old dragoman that used to come here.' 'I don't remember him, but no matter.' 'Well, I asked his advice about curing a wife's temper, but got little encouragement from him. The few remedies he suggested, and which I tried, only made matters worse.

'One day he said to me: "Mohammed, I have always loved you as if you were a son of mine, and as I have still an unmarried daughter, it would add to my happiness as well as to yours if you became my son-in-law. I shall only ask a small dowry of you, whereas if I were to marry her to the one-eyed Mustâpha, he could and would give a much larger one. She is young and beautiful, and has the sweetest disposition; and while I kept you waiting in the *hôsh* the other day, it was but to give her an opportunity of gazing on you through the *mushrbiyeh*. You can divorce your Rasheeda and live happily with my Fâtimah."

'This sounded very well, and I tried to get the old man to fix the sum I should have to pay as the dowry. He kept telling me of the price one-eyed Mustâpha was prepared to pay; but I wanted to know nothing about

Mustâpha, and have since found out that this was all lies. After many days he agreed to content himself with ten pounds, and I paid him half that sum, the other half, as you know, to be paid when the marriage had taken place.

'I had done well that season, and spent much of my earnings on the wedding; when I left my friends below to go to the *hareem*, I gave my bride a handsome present as "the price of the uncovering of the face," and when I threw back the shawl, and saw her for the first time, I nearly fainted.'

It was as much as I could do not to laugh, but the poor fellow seemed so overcome in recalling his bad bargain that I tried to look sympathetic.

'I thought of divorcing her there and then,' he went on, 'but I had not the heart to pronounce those terrible words on the day of the poor creature's wedding. She was ugly and old—at least thirty—and had as brown a face as I have.'

After a pause he went on. 'Her father—may Allah blacken his face!—did not lie as regards her temper; but even the best of tempers could not withstand the jeering and scoffing to which Rasheeda used to treat her. My mother used to take her part, and we had more rows between Rasheeda and my mother. When I could stand it no longer, I went with two witnesses to the Kadi's court and had her written a *nashizeh*, and she returned to her own people. Fâtimah tried to mother our little Hassan, but she could not console him. He got ill, and I was afraid we might lose him. I then took a room near Saida Zenab, and fetched Rasheeda away from her people, and she and the

child are now living there. My life has been more peaceful since then, but the cost of two households makes me a very poor man. I assure you, Mr. Tyndale, that though I did very well last season, I hardly know where to turn for a piastre.'

It would be two months or more before the next season would be in full swing, so we arranged that he would accompany me during that time, and would procure me some one else while he was engaged with the tourists. He promised to be in good time the next morning, and took his departure.

Probably nothing has tended more to separate the East from the West than their differing views as to the relation of the sexes. Such education as there is has until quite recently been entirely confined to the sons of the more well-to-do, and even at present the instances of a girl being taught to read or write are very rare. It therefore follows that as only one parent has had any mental training, the offspring has less mental capacity to inherit than where both parents will have had some form of schooling. The religious instruction which forms so large a part of a Moslem's training is almost entirely withheld from the girls, which accounts no doubt for the erroneous idea held by Europeans that Mohammedans believe women to have no souls. Religious text-books give pages as to a child's duty to its father, and they sum up in a couple of lines the duty to the mother. Educated Egyptians will often complain that their wives are no companions to them, but what can they expect when their womenkind are brought up in a manner so distinctly inferior?

Polygamy is less common than is generally supposed, but a man can divorce his wife so easily that he has not the necessity of keeping more than one at a time. It is true that a father will hesitate to give his daughter to a man who has often used the divorce court, and that he will also advise his son to keep to one wife if he possibly can.

A young doctor, who appeared to be happily married, told me of the advice his father gave him previous to the wedding. 'Don't be foolish enough, O my son, ever to take a second wife; for if you do, trouble is sure to begin. Should you tire of Zenab, get her another dress; women are all much the same, it is the clothes which make the difference.' I asked if this plan had succeeded. 'Yes, only too well,' said my friend, 'for she is continually encouraging me to get her a new dress.' He also told me that previous to his wedding he had not even seen his wife veiled, though they were brought up in the same town. His sisters had described her so well to him that when he saw her for the first time, she was very much like what he had anticipated.

I have described more fully elsewhere a marriage to which my wife and I were invited as guests, and as such full details of the ceremonial are given in Lane's *Modern Egyptians* I shall not dwell on it here. Lane's argument to those who severely condemn Islamic marriage laws is this: 'As Moses allowed God's chosen people, for the hardness of their hearts, to put away their wives, and forbade neither polygamy nor concubinage, he who believes that Moses was divinely

inspired to enact the best laws for his people, must hold the permission of these practices to be less injurious to morality than their prohibition, among a people similar to the ancient Jews.' This sounds fairly plausible, but we must not forget that Mohammedans accept Christ as a prophet as well as Moses, and also avow that each prophet taught them something higher than the preceding one had done, and there is certainly no licence as to polygamy or concubinage allowed in the teaching of our Lord. Their last prophet, and according to them their greatest, Mohammed, had overlooked this, and probably only codified what had more or less become a common practice in his day.

As the modern Jews now hold to one wife just as do the people amongst whom they live, so it is possible that in time the Moslems may also modify their marriage customs. Supply and demand has already had its effect, for with the restrictions on slavery, concubinage has of necessity lessened and respect for the husband of one wife is increasing amongst the better educated classes.

I started on a subject on the following morning, of an old house built alongside and overhanging an entrance to a mosque. A little coffee-shop under an archway, on the opposite side of the street, made an excellent point of vantage from which I could do my work without attracting too much attention. Mohammed, who accompanied me, made arrangements with the owner of the stall for my accommodation, and sat on the high bench near me, so as to keep off the more inquisitive. An ideal post for him, for he could smoke a *nârgeeleh*, sip

coffee, and chat with the other clients as much as he pleased. He would brush away the flies with one end of his whisp, and poke with the other end any small boy who ventured too near me. 'If one comes it may not matter, but if one stays fifty others will come also,' he would say, as the stick of the whisp and a boy's head came in contact.

It was also in the interest of the owner of the coffee-shop,—as Mohammed was careful to explain to him,—to make things comfortable for me, as I should spend many mornings here if I were not molested in my work. Besides my subject, which was a very beautiful one in itself, this was a useful perch from which to make studies of the people and animals which passed. It was in the Nahasseen, one of the busiest thoroughfares of Cairo, and scarcely an hour would go by without hearing the *zaghareet*, the shrill cries of joy which told of the approach of a bridal procession, or the doleful chorus, 'Lá iláha illa-lláh,' would prepare one for the passing of a funeral.

It has happened that the *zaghareet* was not always the accompaniment of the more cheerful procession, for these shrill cries of joy replace those of lamentation when a *welee*, a person of great sanctity, is carried to his last resting-place. The idea conveyed is that the joys now awaiting him more than compensate those he has left behind for his loss. There is a curious superstition, or maybe some other cause which we cannot explain, that if these cries of joy cease for more than a minute the bearers of the corpse cannot proceed. It is also maintained that a *welee* is able to direct the steps of his

bearers to a particular spot where he may wish to be buried. Lane tells the following anecdote, describing an ingenious mode of puzzling a dead saint of this kind. 'Some men were lately bearing the corpse of a *welee* to a tomb prepared for it in the great cemetery on the north of the metropolis; but on arriving at the gate called Bab-en-Nasr, which leads to this cemetery, they found themselves unable to proceed further from the cause above-mentioned. "It seems," said one of the bearers, "that the sheykh is determined not to be buried in the cemetery of Bab-en-Nasr; and what shall we do?" They were all much perplexed; but being as obstinate as the saint himself, they did not immediately yield to his caprice. Retreating a few paces, and then advancing with a quick step, they thought by such an impetus to force the corpse through the gateway; but their efforts were unsuccessful; and the same experiment they repeated in vain several times. They then placed the bier on the ground, to rest and consult; and one of them beckoning away his comrades to a distance, beyond the hearing of the dead saint, said to them, "Let us take up the bier again, and turn it round quickly several times till the sheykh becomes giddy; he then will not know in what direction we are going, and we may take him easily through the gate." This they did; the saint was puzzled, as they expected, and quietly buried in the place he had striven to avoid.'

I witnessed a similar thing in Japan, a year or two ago; but in that case it was an idol which showed a similar obstinacy. It was at the 'Gion Matsuri,' which annually takes place at Kyôto, when the Shinto god

Susa-no-o is carried to his O Tabisho—that is, his sojourn in the country with his goddess.

No sooner had the god been placed on his portable throne than the wildest excitement was manifested by his bearers; some wished to carry him one way and some another, while others seemed rooted to the ground. A Japanese gentleman, who was with me, explained that until all the bearers felt drawn to pull one way, it was not known by which route the god had decided to go.

It is singular that a similar superstition should obtain with people differing as much as the Egyptians do to the Japanese.

The constant funerals which passed between me and my subject seemed little heeded by Mohammed and the other frequenters of the café, except when the chorus mentioned the name of the prophet, some would murmur, 'God bless and save him'—'Salla-lláhu-'aleyhi wasellem.'

The bridal procession, on the contrary, seemed to have a very depressing effect on my man, and he would hardly cheer up till a distant wail suggested another funeral.

On one occasion I recognised the camels with the magnificent trappings used when the holy carpet is conveyed to Mecca; they were doing duty as a kind of vanguard to a bride who followed in a litter swung between two other camels. It was a most picturesque sight, and one to take as many notes of as possible for reference to in a future picture. Fortunately the progress of the procession is slow, the traffic of the street compelling it frequently to stop. This would

enable me to get ahead of it and jot down some of the arrangements of colour. The heavy gold and crimson trappings of one camel, a combination of green and gold on a second, while the gold brocade of a third was in a purple setting; all this in a blaze of sunshine, yet subdued compared to the light caught by the brass kettle-drums. The background in some places, too cut up in violent patches of light and shade by the awnings over the shops or too intricate with the drawing of a saracenic mosque entrance, filled me with confusion as to how I could ever treat such a subject.

When the broad plain surfaces of Barkûk's and Kalaûn's shrines made a setting to this gorgeous procession, I felt that my task had become more hopeful.

The number of facts I had to crowd into my memory in a half-hour or so, I found more exhausting than a long morning's work on a subject such as the one I had left to pursue this one. To return to the little café where I had left Mohammed in charge of my painting materials, pack up my traps and go back to the hotel, was about as much as I was fit for during the rest of that morning.

CHAPTER III

THE MOSQUE OF MURISTÂN KALAÛN, MY EXPERIENCE WITH THE FAKÍR, AND A DIGRESSION ON THE SUBJECT OF DERVISHES

PASSING once more the mosque of Kalaûn, I was attracted to one of its windows; not on account of its particular interest as such, but of its possibilities as a point of vantage from which I might paint the opposite side of the road, and, unmolested, make studies of the interesting incidents which take place in it.

There was still time to go to the Wakfs ministry before it closed for the midday 'siesta.' 'El Wakfs' is the name of what we might term the Board of Religious Endowments. It is here where artists must apply for a pass to allow them to paint inside the mosques.

I fortunately found Herz Bey, the architect of the Wakfs, and he very kindly gave me what I required.

Apart from the window of Kalaûn's mosque which would be of great use to me, its interior is one of the finest and most ornate in the whole of Cairo. I had found several subjects there in former years, and I looked forward to finding a pleasant asylum in which I could restfully do some work after the fatigue of some days of street painting.

THE MOSQUE OF MURISTAN KALAUN

The mosque was falling into a ruinous state when I had last entered it. Originally most gorgeous, its colouring had then been softened down by more than six centuries since en-Nasir completed the dome which covers the tomb of his father.

I also looked forward to a cooler spot than my café, for Cairo has far from cooled down during the first days of November. Though the thermometer may not register so high as in June, the damp heat during the high Nile is more felt than the greater, but dryer, temperature of early summer.

I was prepared not to find the mosque as paintable as in the earlier days,

> 'Before Decay's effacing fingers
> Have swept the lines where beauty lingers';

yet I was hardly prepared to find it to all appearance a brand new building. It had been admirably restored, and restoration was necessary, I have no doubt, to prevent its falling into complete ruin, as so many other monuments have done. But, alas, its poetry was gone. Nor is this likely to return so long as it is kept as a show-place merely, and only visited by the tourist or student of Saracenic architecture. The hundred and one signs which suggested the worshippers who had gathered here during the six bygone centuries were all swept away; the worn praying mats were gone, and any of the movable furniture which is not now shelved and labelled in a museum may have found its way to some dealer's shop,—the place for which these things were designed knows them no more.

I started a large drawing, for in spite of all it is a

beautiful building, and looks now in all probability very much as it looked when Nasir's work-people left it. I worked hard at this drawing; spent whole mornings getting the intricate arabesque patterns into perspective and their relative tones; but the longer I worked the more my drawing became the lifeless perspective elevation plate of some book on architecture.

Some day, when my last impressions of the place may fade and I may remember more clearly the shrine retaining its human associations, I may possibly be able to take up this drawing again and infuse some life into it.

I did better from the window overlooking the Nahasseen.

The ruinous domed mosque—built before the one of Kalaûn—to shelter the remains of Ayyub es-Salih, has been heavily dealt with by 'decay's effacing fingers.' Copper-smiths have rigged up their stalls against its crumbling walls, and the mosque school still hangs together sufficiently to be used by the youths repeating their Koran. This and an ever-moving crowd of people had at all events a soul left in it.

My regrets at having lost so much time in producing an artistic failure decreased in proportion as the use I was able to make of this window increased.

Facing immediately the street leading to the Beit-el-Kadi, I was able to take notes, on a market day, of all the incidents mentioned in the last chapter, and at ordinary times there would always be more than enough subject-matter to furnish the foreground of the couple of drawings I made from here.

AN EXPERIENCE WITH A FAKIR

The mosque being now a 'sight' more than a place of worship, a fee is charged for admittance; and even this matter, which I was regretting before now, proved an advantage to me, for the attentions of the inquisitive are usually more marked while making figure studies than while painting some inanimate subject.

Small boys would occasionally crawl on to the sill and hang on to the grating to try and see what I was doing, till my man, whom I kept outside, would send them away.

A ragged fakir chose the bit of pavement just below my window to do a little basking in the sun. Mohammed whispered to me, through the grating, that he was a great saint, and squatted next to him in the full odour of his sanctity. A current of air would now and again bring some of this odour my way; but I restrained Mohammed from disturbing the fakir in his sleep. Others were not so considerate, for, in spite of the old man's saintly repute, a number of young hooligans soon surrounded him, and comments on his appearance provoked such laughter as to wake him up.

The fakir now seemed as one possessed of a devil; he laid about with his staff and cursed his tormentors with a fluency which only a long practice, during his unregenerate days, could have given him. A young woman at a safe distance called out to him that the *ghawaga*, that is I, was sketching him, whereupon he turned round and directed the flow of bad language in my direction. The grating was a protection from the old fellow's staff, and an unused-up lot of curses soon fell on the head of Mohammed, who moved him off.

Too much attention having been drawn to my window, I retired with my materials within the shades of the mosque interior.

I made inquiries about the old man. The term, fakir, is used in Egypt to denote a wandering dervish, and is also applied to any poor beggar. His rags were not simply the torn garments of a poor man, but a carefully made coat of many patches and of variously coloured stuffs, known as a 'dilk.' Shreds of coloured cloth were also fastened to the end of his staff. He wore no turban, and had supplemented his own hair with what I believe ladies call 'a front' made from a horse's tail.

I was told that he belonged to the Rifaiyeh order of dervishes, and was famous in his day for being able to pass swords through his body without leaving a wound; he would also charm serpents and scorpions away from a house, eat live coals and chew glass.

As I have seen many appear to do these wonders without necessarily being considered very holy men, there remained a more potent reason for his reputed sanctity. I tapped my forehead once or twice, suggesting that an excess of miracles must have made him mad. 'His mind is in heaven and only his body remains on earth,' was the answer to my suggested question.

A superstitious awe for persons whose intellect is affected obtains all over the Mohammedan world—the Cairo hooligan being apparently the exception.

The great majority of dervishes are men of some trade or another and take part in a *zikr* during the religious festivals; a few lead a tramp's life and beg their way from town to town where one of these festivals

may be taking place; while those who are mentally afflicted without being actually dangerous can generally find the wherewithal to live in the district to which they belong. The latter are now rarely met with in the European parts of Cairo, and as they seem generally bereft of all sense of decency, the police may have something to say in the matter.

I attended a *zikr* during my first visit to Egypt, when an evening with the Howling or Dancing dervishes was still looked upon as one of the 'sights.' These were often got up by the dragomans as an entertainment for the tourists. H. H. the Khedive has since forbidden these shows as liable to bring Islamism into disrepute. Some wit remarked of the dragomans, that they believed in Mohammed and his profits. The dervishes (or darweesh, as they are called in Egypt) were genuine ones, and argued that their religious exercises might be just as acceptable even if they resulted in some profit in the shape of a 'baksheesh' from the unbelievers.

The first part of the performance was the same as may be seen any evening, in any village, during the month of Ramadan.

About a dozen men sat in a double row facing each other, and, taking their time from a leader, began by slowly repeating the first words of the Moslem's confession of faith: 'Lá iláha illa-lláh,' which they accompanied with a swaying of their bodies backwards and forwards. Gradually they would increase the speed of the repetition and the movements, always taking their time from the leader. This got faster and faster till their chief shouted 'Alláh!' Then, repeating

this one word, the swaying of their bodies became so rapid that one or two fell down exhausted. The remainder kept it up as long as their physical endurance would allow; their mouths foaming, their faces livid, and a mad look in their eyes. Presently more would fall down, some lying still, and others to all appearance in their death agony. The cry of 'Allah' finally ceased when the leader fell forward, and, saving a gasp or a gurgle, all was still.

Some of us were preparing to leave when a sign from the conductor of our party kept us in our seats.

These bodies stretched on the floor—to all appearance dead or dying—looked ghastly in the light of the flickering torches.

We sat on some time wondering what the next move would be. A heavy breathing with alternate choking on the part of one of the performers directed our attention his way. After making several attempts to rise, he succeeded in getting into a sitting posture and stared vacantly at us. When he seemed conscious of where he was and what he was doing, he rose rapidly to his feet and spun round and round for several minutes; he next seized hold of a torch, continued his gyrations, and without stopping held the lighted torch under his one garment, allowing the flames to pass all over his body. It reminded me horribly of the straw fires with which peasants are wont to burn the bristles off a stuck pig.

A foreign princess who was of our party, and on whose behalf this *zikr* had been arranged, had now seen as much as she could stand, and she and her immediate suite went away.

The performers seemed quite unconscious of this disturbance; the man kept on spinning round, toasting his chest and then his back till he let fall the torch and sank down on the matting.

Another had in the meanwhile come to life again and begun to spin like a teetotum. He drew two knives from his girdle and, while continuing his motion, rested the points on his lower eyelids; he next hacked his face and forehead, and when the blood-letting had sufficiently cooled his frenzy he joined his companions on the floor.

The low muttered 'Alláh' from the other dervishes showed that they were awakening from the kind of cataleptic sleep they had fallen into.

A third one now arose and startled one of the spectators by rushing forward and seizing a tumbler near him; he bit off pieces of glass and crunched them in his teeth. He looked absolutely loathsome as he appeared to swallow the glass, with the blood streaming from his mouth. His craving for glass was not satisfied yet. The glass of an oil lamp near me caught his eye, and catching hold of it, hot as it was, he chewed it up as a half-starved dog would chew a bone.

I had now had more than enough, and slipped quietly off before a fourth began his 'turn.'

Mohammed followed me out. He was not very communicative about the unnatural orgy we had assisted at, and as he is a good Moslem, I fancy he seemed ashamed of the performance.

While walking down the Mousky on the following morning, a cabman seated on the box of his *arabeyeh*

greeted Mohammed with an unusually cheery 'Salaam Alêkum.' The answer, 'Alêkum es-Salaam, ya ibne Kelb,' with an accompanying shake of the finger, was surprising; that is, 'The peace be with you, O son of a dog.' The cabby laughed and drove on. Mohammed looked rather consciously at me, and seeing that I looked puzzled, he asked me if I did not recall that cabman's face. Yes, I had seen him before, but when or where I could not say. 'Why, he is the darweesh who ate all that broken glass last night.'

True enough, it was the very man! But no *première danseuse* seen with her tinsel and spangles behind the footlights, and afterwards met in everyday garb, could have shown as great a contrast as did this cabby and the wild dervish of the previous night. He was dressed in European clothes, except for the red tarbouch, and he seemed none the worse for his last night's glass supper.

CHAPTER IV

THE FESTIVAL OF THE 'HASANEYN' AND THE STORY OF THE PRINCESS ZOHRA

THE promise I had made to my acquaintances in the Khan Khalil, to come again, was soon fulfilled. This great bazaar attracts me most when the season in the modern quarters of Cairo is over or not begun. I have painted so many of its shops and corners, that I and my faithful servant must be as familiar to the stall-holders as they are to us.

An opportunity occurred to see it by night, for, except on the great festival of the 'Hasaneyn,' the gates of the Khan are closed before the evening prayer.

The mosque of Hoseyn stands opposite the east entrance, and it is the one most used by the shop-keepers of these bazaars.

It is a spacious building, but of little interest from an architectural point of view. Its great popularity is one cause of this, for money could always be found to restore it, and unhappily a great wave of enthusiasm for the shrine of the martyred sons of Ali obtained during a late period of debased Saracenic architecture, during which the mosque was almost entirely rebuilt.

Before the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt no Christian or Jew dared pass down the street in which it stands, and even at the present day, when foreigners

may visit the other mosques of Cairo, while the services are not being held, the actual shrine where the head of Hoseyn lies may only be entered by the faithful.

On the night in question it was possible to see as much as I wanted, as the doors stood wide open, and the interior was lighted with thousands of lamps. The whole street was roofed over with particoloured tent-cloth, which caught the light of the torches of the dervishes who filed in at the central doorway.

The noise of the cymbals, drums, and hautboys of the musicians mingled with the babel of voices which came from the mosque. Many inside were performing the *zikr*, and others were marching round and reciting the Fáthah, or a form of blessing on the prophet.

Every house was profusely decorated with flags, lamps, and festoons of coloured glass globes. The cafés were overflowing with customers, and high benches on the pavements outside were all occupied with listeners to the professional story-tellers who related the deeds of Hasan and Hoseyn.

It seemed strange to hear the names of these two brothers from the lips of so many orthodox Moslems, for at a previous festival in their honour, which I witnessed, only such as were under police protection dared shout 'Hasan, Hoseyn.' It was when the heretic Sheeas, mostly Persians, paraded the streets of Cairo—a gruesome sight it was—but at present we will confine ourselves to the doings of the orthodox Sunnees, to which sect the bulk of the Egyptians belong.

'Though those dogs of Sheeas,' an Egyptian will tell you, 'almost make gods of Hoseyn and also of his

father Ali, is that a reason why we should fail to honour his birthday? Was he not, after all, a grandson of the Prophet?' It is fortunate, however, that both sects do not keep the festival on the same day, or it would be more than the police could do to prevent them coming to blows.

How different the Khan looked, lighted up as it then was by hundreds of lamps in and around the shops! In places brilliantly coloured tent-cloths stretched across the lanes, and on every *mastaba* the store-keeper was entertaining his friends. The dark intervals were the shops kept by Christians or Jews, which were carefully shuttered up for the night.

The silk merchant, Mustâpha, and his opposite neighbour Seleem were both here, and I was not sorry to accept the former's kindly invitation to sit down. Being unused to smoking the *narǵeeleh* or the almost obsolete *shibook* which were offered me, he procured some cigarettes and clapped his hands to summon the boy from the coffee-stall. He regretted that the *mooled* of the Hasaneyn was not now as in former days, when hardly a shop in the whole Khan was not lighted up like as his and Seleem's. 'Jews, Nazarenes, Parsees, and what not else, were invading the stalls held by the faithful,' he said, pointing to the shutters of those unenlightened people.

'Allahu! Allahu!' from the street outside was clearly heard during the pauses in the conversation.

'Was it possible now for a Nazarene to enter the mosque and see the tomb where Hoseyn's head lay buried?' I asked, and also showed him the ticket I

had, allowing me to paint in the mosques of Cairo. He read the instructions, and pointed out a line which made an exception for that particular shrine as well as for two others. The talk then drifted to an instance when one of my countrymen, disguised as a Moslem, was accidentally discovered near the tomb while the *mooled* was being held; of how he was nearly killed by the infuriated mob and saved by the intervention of the princess Zohra.

The story is so full of dramatic interest that, instead of giving the garbled versions which obtain in the bazaars, I will try to tell it as Max Eyth tells it in '*Hinter Pflug und Schraubstock*.' Eyth was in Egypt during the lifetime of the princess and heard all the details from a former member of her household.

Zohra was the youngest living daughter of Mohammed Ali, Egypt's first viceroy. She was the idol of her father and partook of his character more than did any of her numerous brothers and sisters. Her childhood was spent in the same hareem as that of her nephew Abbas, who was the same age as herself. Self-willed children as they both were, quarrels were of frequent occurrence. When Abbas would taunt her that she was only a little girl, she would remind him that she was the great Ali's daughter, whereas he was only the son of her brother Tussûn. Words ending in blows one day, Abbas was packed off to a school and a governess was found for the young princess.

Wishing to have her taught both English and French, they engaged the services of a young Irish

lady, a Miss O'Donald, who had been brought up in Paris and spoke French as well as her own language.

Western ladies had hitherto been little seen in Egyptian hareems; the Mohammedan ladies disapproved of the greater liberty enjoyed by the newcomer and soon grew jealous of the great influence the governess held over her pupil.

As Zohra grew older, Miss O'Donald became more of a companion than a teacher, and she remained in the viceroy's service for eight years. Abbas had in the meantime left his school and had a hareem of his own in his grandfather's palace. He never forgave Zohra for having been the cause of his banishment, and awaited his time to wreak his vengeance.

Mohammed Ali had not yet found a husband for his daughter; he aspired to marrying her to a Sultan or to a son of the Khalif himself. It therefore happened that at the age of sixteen Zohra still remained single.

It was at a festival of the Hasaneyn that she met her fate. Accompanied by Miss O'Donald and two of the eunuchs, she went to visit the tomb of Hoseyn, for women at all times, says the narrator, are more attracted to the shrines of heroes than to even that of the Prophet himself. The mosque was so crowded with people that the dervishes could hardly find room in which to perform the *zikr*.

The eunuchs managed to force a way through the crowd so as to allow the princess to approach the tomb, and while she was saying her prayers at the shrine of the hero, she was disturbed by an uproar which arose not far off. Shouts of 'a Christian' resounded through

the building. Sticks were raised and knives unsheathed by an infuriated mob, who surrounded a tall, fair-haired man who, with his back to the wall, was hitting out right and left to keep his assailants at bay. His turban had fallen off, and his fair and unshaven head showed only too clearly that he was not a Moslem.

'It's my brother,' called out the governess, and appealed to those near her to go to his rescue. Zohra, who had now reached her side, first saw the blood-stained and handsome face of the young Irishman, and uttering a piercing scream, she ordered the assailants to desist. Seeing from her attendants that she belonged to the viceregal household, there was a slight pause, and those near her made way for her to reach the one they had been attacking. She took the young man by the hand and led him, through the murmuring crowd, into the street.

As they disappeared, loud cries of 'Allahu! Allahu!' resounded throughout the mosque. The princess threw her arms in the air and victoriously repeated the cry: 'Allahu! Allahu!'—Such was their first meeting.

Two young mamelukes of the household of Abbas also happened to have witnessed the scene, and repeated every detail of it to their master. The narrator goes on to say that 'Abbas was silent, like a serpent who coils itself in readiness for a spring.'

Spies were sent forth to find out who this man in truth might be. His name was O'Donald, and there was no doubt that he was the governess's brother. He had first come to Egypt in 1840, when, after the siege of

Beirut, Napier's troops lay outside Alexandria. Fortune had then forsaken Mohammed Ali. He could not prevent his enemies from drinking Nile water as much as they pleased, and as the Arabs say: 'He who has drunk Nile water will sooner or later return to the Nile.'

After the British troops had quitted Egypt, O'Donald resigned his commission and returned to Alexandria, where he had got a situation as manager to the overland route from that port to Suez. His sister had doubtless described his pupil to him, and had also entertained the princess with tales of his gallant deeds while serving in the army. Business matters had taken him to Cairo at the time of this festival, and his love of adventure had led to his disguising himself and entering a mosque forbidden to all save the believers.

Zohra, whose affections had so far been disengaged, was all too ready to fall in love with this handsome Irishman, whose praises she had so often heard from the lips of his sister. Beholding him for the first time bravely repelling the attack of the infuriated mob, he personified in her imagination the heroism of those who first spread the Mohammedan faith. To use the words of the narrator: 'She was taken as in a whirlwind. Love consumed her as a fire. She wept through the whole of that hot night. She implored one of her sisters to help her to meet her lover, and on her refusal she bit her in the cheek.'

Miss O'Donald was alarmed at the state of her pupil and also for the safety of her brother. She wrote and warned him to keep away from Cairo, and if possible

to get away from Egypt. Unfortunately the eyes of the young princess confirmed the glowing descriptions of her beauty which his sister had given, and the young Irishman seems to have been consumed with the same fire as that of his lady-love. Instead of keeping away from Cairo, he contrived to get his company to give him a post in that city.

On the third night of Bairam, when rich and poor, old and young, repair to the cemeteries to pray at the graves of their belongings, the young lovers seized on this opportunity to see each other once more. Zohra went with the women of her hareem to that great wilderness of tombs on the south-eastern outskirts of the city. She was not slow in recognising her lover in the apparently devout Moslem who came to pray at the tomb where she sat. The wailing of the women and the howling of the dervishes, performing the *zikr*, were a sufficient noise to prevent the words the two interchanged from being heard by Zohra's attendants, and before they parted a future means of meeting had been arranged.

'I believe,' goes on the story-teller, 'that she loved him as the heroes of our faith in the olden times loved the beautiful women whom Allah had given them as a foretaste of Paradise. He also must have loved her as one bereft of his senses, for he must have known that he moved amidst naked daggers or even worse.'

On the night previous to the 'Yóm Gebr el-Bahr,' which signifies 'the Breaking of the River' (and when the dam is cut to enable the Nile to replenish the canal which used to flow through Cairo), great festivities take

place. Tents are erected on each bank of the canal and also on the edge of the island of Rodah, which faces the canal's entrance. The river is crowded with boats lit up with numerous lanterns; fireworks are let off and guns are fired; yet they fail to drown the noise of the musical instruments and the eternal refrain of the singers. Cairo makes a night of it.

From the farther side of the island of Rodah our princess stepped on to her *dahabieh* which was moored at the river edge of the palace gardens. She was accompanied by the hareem, and she gave orders to let the barge drift down the river and to drop the anchor where the crowd of boats was not so great.

The ladies of the hareem, including Miss O'Donald, remained on the deck, from whence they obtained a good view of the fireworks and of the festivities taking place on the Nile. Zohra retired to her cabin, and might by the light of her candle have been seen by many of the folks outside, were these not too much occupied in merry-making. The candle was moved to and fro for a few seconds and then extinguished.

From the shadow of a clump of trees overhanging the edge of the river an English-built skiff issued into the main stream, then shot along the side of the *dahabieh* and came to a standstill. The lovers had met once again.

Skilfully as this had been managed, it had not been unobserved by Miss O'Donald, who, in a fever of anxiety, paced up and down the deck. The skiff could be seen by the lights of some boats which had drifted that far down the stream. The governess also

suspected that Abbas had spies amongst the women of the hareem; but she dared not breathe a word of warning to her brother below for fear of attracting attention.

Not only had he been seen, but from a neighbouring cabin an assignation had been overheard and in due time reported to Abbas. They were to meet the following night in the garden of the palace at Rodah. Zohra felt sure of the silence of the eunuchs and also of her female attendants; she had not, however, bribed some of the crew as highly as Abbas had done.

O'Donald, the next night, fastened his boat under the trees which project over the garden wall and picked his way along the edge of the river to the steps at the Nile entrance. He found the gates unlocked, and walked in. Instead of his lady-love four armed mamelukes issued from the shrubbery and rushed to attack him. The Irishman dropped two with his revolver, and the other two turned and bolted.

Abbas was awaiting events at the garden door of the hareem, which he had locked from outside. When he heard the firing and the howls of his mamelukes, he felt sure that events had not turned out quite as he had intended. Miserable creature as he was, Abbas was no coward, and his agents having failed him, he rushed down himself to attack the enemy.

A kick on his shin sent him sprawling into a flowerbed, and O'Donald made off to his skiff. He had, however, recognised whom it was that he had knocked over. But before he could take safety in flight he felt bound to send a warning to Zohra and also to get his sister away.

The story-teller goes on to say: 'In such moments one's reasoning becomes confused. Allah alone can help one. But why should Allah stretch forth a helping hand to the unbeliever whose audacious conduct well merited punishment?'

A French Jewess, known as Madame Ricochette, resided in Cairo at that time. She used to visit all the principal hareems to trade in Paris jewellery and bonbons. O'Donald went to see her early on the following morning, and with promises and flattery induced her to take a note to the princess and to bring back an answer. He was to meet Zohra in the garden for the last time, his sister was to come away with him in his boat, and they were to leave Cairo at once.

They never saw each other alive again. He was shot on the threshold of the hareem in Zohra's garden. Abbas had intercepted the letters and had apprised Mohammed Ali of the affair. Six Arnauts—good, dependable shots—were sent and were placed behind some bushes which the ill-fated man would pass on the way to his love. Six bullets ended his earthly career.

Abbas was a clever organiser. A mule was kept in readiness to carry the body away, and two of the Arnauts placed it on the beast while the others remained with the prince. The hareem door was thrown open and, as Zohra approached, Abbas laughingly welcomed her to her lover.

'Such women,' goes on the narrator, 'do not go off in a faint, as do yours in the West. She flew, as one possessed, to the corpse of her beloved, and steeped

her hands in his blood. She had to be dragged away and carried back to the hareem. When she had recovered from her stupefaction, she ordered two servants to see Miss O'Donald off to Alexandria, where friends would see her safely on board the first home-going steamer; the princess also provided her handsomely with the means to get back to her country.'

Worse is still to follow. The devil in Abbas had become more potent than ever. He had the body of the Irishman taken to Shubra and buried in an outlying field—upright, with the head below and the feet sticking out of the ground. Then spoke Abbas: 'Allah, do thou with him as thou wilt; but the dogs shall devour the feet which kicked me.'

The field was guarded during a week; no one dared enter by day, and at night the jackals and dogs did their work. There in that field, to this day, stands with head downwards a footless corpse!

The O'Donalds, we are told, had no influential relations to get this matter investigated, and the English company to which O'Donald belonged knew more than enough to keep them silent. The young Irishman had placed his life in the balance with his love and had lost.

'Alláhu! Alláhu! Alláh, láh, láh, láh,' came the ever-increasing cries from the mosque outside the Khan. The dervishes were working themselves up into a state of frenzy; and had my permit to work in the mosques not made an exception of the Hasaneyn, it would have taken a bolder man than myself to have entered then. I bade my kindly host good night and found my way back to the European quarter.

CHAPTER V

OF THE OLD AND THE NEW CAIRO, AND OF A VISIT TO THE SHEYKH AMMIN SAHEIME

IT is unfortunate that an artist, residing in Cairo for the purpose of painting its people and its buildings, cannot live in the city where his chief interests lie. For there are at present two Cairos: the one an old oriental city, the other a nondescript modern European town, placed, as it were by accident, between the Nile and its more venerable neighbour. The foreigner who speaks of Cairo alludes to the great blocks of buildings and the palatial hotels which form this modern town, and he usually terms those other parts which he has scarcely seen—the native quarters. The true Cairo, and the one of which we speak, lies in a rough parallelogram between the walls running from the Citadel to the Bab el-Futouh at the eastern extremity and the Khaleeg, or the old canal now filled in, on the west. The northern and southern extremities end at the mosques of Hakim and of Ibn Tulún respectively. Two outlying bits still remain north and south of the new quarters, and are known as Bulak and Old Cairo. There are remains here and there of a yet older Cairo, which stood on the south-west of the present city.

I should dearly love to live in that part spoken of as the native quarters, instead of having to live at some

distance and amongst surroundings which do not lend themselves to pictorial treatment. I had the opportunity to live in a beautiful old house which has been carefully restored under the superintendence of Herz Bey, and which stands in the very heart of the old town. The inconvenience of housekeeping, the putting in of necessary furniture, and, above all, the insanitary condition of its immediate neighbourhood, decided me not to avail myself of this opportunity. There would also have been the fear of fire. The beautiful *mushrbiyeh* work which encloses all the windows, and is as dry as touchwood, might at any moment be set on fire through the action of a careless servant. The house is a perfect specimen of an old Cairene dwelling, and it has been wisely repaired and is kept in order at the expense of the Wakfs administration. Possibly restrictions as to the lighting of fires would have been imposed on me, which would have necessitated a journey to the European quarters whenever I wished for a hot meal.

No, one cannot live here surrounded with what one loves to paint ; one may remain a lifetime in Cairo and not be of it.

The joy of having bright sunny weather in midwinter is very great, and it is also a pleasure to meet friends at the club or hotels, and for those inclined that way balls and parties can be attended on most evenings during the season. Personally I would forego most of these things to live more in touch with the life of the old city. As an illustration of how little the inhabitants of the European quarters are concerned with what takes place in Cairo proper, I will give the following :—

While I was painting in the Suk es-Selah, or the gun-makers' bazaar, an old house fell in not many paces from where I was sitting. As the house was inhabited, willing hands were soon on the spot to assist in excavating those who might be buried under the ruins. Help was also soon available from official quarters, and during the course of the day five dead bodies were unearthed. I did not expect this to be given as important a space in the newspapers—edited and circulating in the modern quarters—as an account of the last ball at Shepheard's would have received; but I thought a line describing an event which cost the lives of five people might have appeared amongst the smaller items of news. There was no mention of it in any of them. When I remarked on this to some European residents, I was casually told that a house falling down was of constant occurrence, and a lady remarked on hearing of the five Arabs who had been killed, 'Il en reste encore bien assez.' From the little interest shown, one might have supposed that this event had taken place somewhere in China, instead of within a couple of miles from the hotel we were in.

I witnessed the funeral procession of a noted Sheykh of Islam this last winter. The cortège was more than a mile in length, and thousands of people crowded the streets to pay their last respects to so eminent a coreligionist. A roar of voices, repeating the profession of the Mohammedan faith, rose from every quarter of the Arab city. I looked for some information in the Cairo papers, but not a mention of it did I find. The Arabic papers were doubtless full of the event; but as few Europeans, though they may speak the colloquial

language fluently, can read the written Arabic, the news of the old town rarely spreads to the new.

The older residents are seldom seen in the old parts of the city, and that is easy to understand, for familiarity with things eastern breeds an indifference with the majority, even if it does not descend to contempt. The surprise is that so few are met there of the thousands of people who flock to Egypt for a short season. A drive down the Mousky—one of Cairo's least interesting streets —a visit to the Khan Khalil, then a walk round three or four mosques and a view from the citadel. After this a feeling of satisfaction that the 'native quarters' have been thoroughly done. The fear of smells seems to haunt them, for the hands not carrying a kodak or fly-whisp often hold a handkerchief near their noses. Bad smells are to be found for those who seek them, though not as many as in most old European towns.

These might be removed to advantage. But how much would Cairo not lose of its charm if, deprived of the sense of smell, one wandered through its bazaars or loitered about its market-places? I cannot think of the coffee-stalls without their aroma of moka and of latakiyeh. The spice bazaar recalls the warm land breezes from some tropic isle. Would the colour of the fruit-stalls charm the eye equally, were the scent gone from their piles of russet and gold? Even the smell of tan seems to enhance the sight of the brilliantly hued skins in the leather-workers' bazaar.

Though each sense may occasionally be shocked, each plays its part in the enjoyment of all things. To any one keenly interested in this mediæval city, and who

has studied its buildings, the eye is unhappily more often now shocked than the nose. Uglinesses which are hardly noticeable in the European quarters are slowly invading the old parts of the city. I have seen many a beautiful latticed window replaced by ready-made imported sashes, or where the seclusion of the hareem is necessary, an ugly fretwork in lieu of the turned *mushrbiyeh* which gave so much character to the Cairene dwelling. Streets formerly covered in with rafters and matting are now exposed to the baking sun, so as to allow more light on the cheap European goods behind the plate-glass windows. The official mind is obsessed with the idea that official work needs trousers, and all aspirants to official billets don these ugly garments and abandon the graceful *kuftân* and the flowing *gibbeh*. The same thing has occurred in the government schools.

Trousered policemen tread their beat by day, while the night watch is allowed to go its rounds in the native costume; presumably because it is less seen. The metal *fanus* which swing before the mosque entrances are being replaced by ugly petroleum lamps. The water-carrier will disappear as each stand-pipe is erected; this doubtless has its hygienic advantages. But had the well-to-do still the same pride in their city as had their forefathers, the water would have been conducted to the beautiful fountains which are now allowed to fall into decay.

Fortunately Cairo is large, and some years may yet elapse before ugliness will have crept into its innermost recesses.

Round and about the Tumbakiyeh—where the

coarse Persian tobacco is retailed to the smokers of the *nârgeeleh* and the *sheesheh*—the old-world look seems still stern enough to frighten off any shoddy European accessories. Massive doors, nail-studded and heavily hinged, close in the *Wekâlehs* where the *tumbak* is stored. More or less dilapidated gateways lead into spacious Khans where formerly caravans from Syria and Arabia unloaded their merchandise. The convent mosque of Beybars, the Taster, dominates this district. From its pepper-box minaret one can look down on extensive warehouses now partitioned into tenements of the very poor; houses of erstwhile merchant princes are now falling into decay, and their gardens used as rope-walks or bleaching-grounds. The mueddin's call to prayer sounds like the funeral dirge of the departed glories of the Tumbakiyeh. The main street, known as the Gamalieh, has all the dignity of age; it is too poor a district, and too far from the present business centres, to be rejuvenated with the lack of taste which has ruined the Mousky.

Down a narrow lane leading out of the Gamalieh, a fine old doorway and some well-preserved oriel windows gave every promise that this was the back of a fine old Cairene house, still inhabited by its owner, and not allowed to fall into the ruinous state of most of its neighbours. My man Mohammed was with me when I made the discovery. I asked him to inquire to whom it belonged, and to try to find out if the interior was at all in keeping with what we saw from the lane.

Mohammed is a man of great resource. After considering his mode of procedure for a moment, he

pushed open the door, which stood ajar, and we could see the *bowab*, or doorkeeper, asleep on the stone seat at the angle of the passage. Mohammed stepped lightly along this passage, evidently in hopes of getting round the angle and obtaining a peep into the courtyard, without awaking the sleeper. Not succeeding in this, and being asked what he wanted, he started inquiries after an imaginary relative who surely was once a servant in this household. 'Is this not, then, the house of so-and-so?' giving the name of an imaginary owner. 'Then who does live here?' The real name of the owner was then given by the doorkeeper. By a few more leading questions, it was found out that the owner was in his country place, and would not return till the cooler weather set in. Mohammed had in the meanwhile got his peep into the court, and had seen quite enough to feel satisfied that here was what I wanted. As the hareem was in the country, there would be no objection to the *ghawaga* also having a peep into the court, especially as a *baksheesh* might follow on the peep.

I was then allowed in, and here was a court similar in plan to many ruinous ones I had seen; but in a perfect state of preservation, and suggesting many beautiful things in the house which overlooked it. I had never painted in the interior of a fine Cairene house, still kept up as in the days before Ismael Pasha uttered his boast—'L'Egypte fait partie de l'Europe.' I made inquiries amongst Egyptian as well as European friends regarding the owner, and whether it would be possible to get an introduction to him. I was told that he was

one of the old school, lived as his forebears had done, and did not frequent the modern quarters. The more inaccessible this gentleman seemed to be, the more I longed for an *entrée* into his house. Years went by, and this court remained in my memory as a beautiful picture which Lewis only could have adequately painted.

Towards the latter part of my last season in Cairo, I mentioned to my friend, Mr. Bowden Smith, how difficult it was to obtain permission to paint in the few, yet remaining, genuine old Cairene houses. His work, connected with the ministry of finance, had brought him in contact with many of the upper class Egyptians, and he named several houses he could take me to see. 'Have you seen the house of the Sheykh Saheime near the Gamalieh?' he asked, and described the very place which years since had made so lasting an impression on me.

We went there the very next day, and were fortunate in finding the Sheykh at home. We were received in the *takhtabosh*, a spacious recess opening on to the court, and under the principal guest-chamber, which latter is supported by a handsome granite column. A row of carved wooden benches line the three walls of the recess, and rest on a paved floor a few inches higher than the open court. Cushions were placed for our accommodation, and we were courteously asked to sit down. Here we took our coffee and conversed with our host.

I told him how glad I was to meet one who still had a pride in the beautiful things his country had pro-

duced, and who preferred keeping up the home of his ancestors to living *à l'Européenne* in the modern quarters. He could not foretell what his sons might do; but as far as he was concerned, he would keep to the dress of his forebears and end his days in the dwelling-places which they had built. 'Should I better myself,' he asked, 'if I left this house for one at Kasr-el-Aine, or in the Ismaelieh quarter?' A vision of the pretentious villas 'en style Arabe,' 'en style Egyptien,' or, worse yet, the Levantine's conception of 'l'art nouveau,' rose up before me, and by contrast made more beautiful the court we overlooked. The gentle cooing of the doves, and the sound of running water amidst the flowering shrubs, would never here ill-tune with the hooting of a motor. The roses, which garlanded the trellised windows, seemed more beautiful than those which try to hide the cast-iron balconies of modern Cairo. No sound from the outside world penetrated here till the solemn call to prayer from Beybar's mosque recalled the hour of day.

We made a move, thinking that our host might wish to attend the *Asr*. To our delight, however, he asked if we would care to go over the house with him. Nothing suiting us better, he conducted us across the court to a door and passage leading to the *mandarah* or guest-room. The anteroom we passed through suggested a good subject, and I threw out some hints that I should like to do a sketch of it. Whether our host understood what I was driving at or purposely passed on to another subject, I could not quite make out; but a wink from my friend that he would have

another try later on reassured me. The room was sparsely furnished, as is generally the case in oriental houses. High wooden benches lined the walls, and if we add to these a few cushions, some rugs, and one or two hanging lamps, we shall have described about all this anteroom contained. The light trickling through the latticed windows showed up the design of the *mushrbiyeh*, and it is not appreciable how decorative these turned wooden gratings are until they are seen from the inside. The wall surfaces were quite plain, and gave a value to the ornamentation surrounding the lintels of the three doors which opened into the room. On each lintel was a Koranic text in raised lettering and relieved on a blue ground.

The simplicity of the anteroom served to enhance the rich decoration of the guest-room itself. The *durkááh*, which is that part of the floor nearest to the entrance, had a beautiful tesselated pavement. In the centre stood a double-basined marble fountain sending up several jets of water, which were caught in a shallow well around its base. It is in the *durkááh* that the guest drops his slippers before ascending to the *liwán*, which is raised a few inches above the pavement and occupies about one-third of the apartment. Handsomely covered mattresses with heavy cushions line the three enclosing walls and form the *diwaan* or divan, as we call it. In this instance the ceiling of the *liwán* was several feet lower than the roof of the *durkááh*, and with its retaining arch bore much the same relation to the rest of the apartment as does that of the chancel to a one-aisled church. The intricate pattern of the

mushrbiyeh occupied the place of an east window. Cupboards with minute panels of varying arabesque designs, and shelves with bowls and dishes of Rhodian or Egyptian ware, furnished the walls above the divan. The geometrical patterns on the ceiling and the vivid colours with which they were defined would have been disturbing to the eye, were it not for the subdued light, in which the decoration was partially lost.

Everything was harmonious, all seemed exactly right. I would fain have lingered on the divan and heard our host relate of deeds which may have been done within these walls. But there was more to see. Leaving this beautiful guest-chamber and crossing the anteroom, we were taken up a winding staircase to the *hammám*. Our Turkish baths are modelled on a similar plan, but as this one was only for private use, it was on a smaller scale than a public one, and marble floors and seats here took the place of more ordinary materials. From thence we were taken through a corridor and into another guest-chamber.

A slight smile on the face of our host seemed to express a question as to what we should say about this room, having exhausted our terms of admiration on the one below. Here was the place where he wished us to linger and sip our coffee until the mueddin once more called to prayer at the close of the day.

Some of the features of the *mandarah*—as the guest-room below is called—were here: the two levels of the floor defining the limits of the *durkááh* and that of the *liwán*; the tesselated pavement and marble fountain in the one and the mattressed and cushioned divan of

the other; the *mushrbiyeh* also split up the light in a pattern suggesting the interlacing of strings of beads, and the panelling of the doors and ceiling were as rich in arabesque design as that which we had seen below. The one apartment was as truly Egyptian as the other, yet it left a distinctly different impression.

The more subdued light of the *mandarah*, as well as the chancel-like appearance of the *liwán*, had an impressiveness which was not here; but it might easily have appeared gloomy had we visited this lighter and more highly coloured room first.

We were now in what was probably the *Káá*, or principal apartment of the hareem of former days. I have learnt since that the Sheykh's family is a small one, so the rooms overlooking the garden and in a wing of the house—which we were of course not shown—would be amply sufficient for the women-folk of his household.

The hareem, or harem, as it is often miscalled in England, is also often misunderstood. Its true meaning is the 'prohibited,' that is 'sacred' to the master of the house. It is that portion of the house which is confined to the women and children, and is not necessarily a kind of luxurious prison for a number of wives, which many unacquainted with the East often suppose. The 'selamlik' is that part of the house used by the male portion of the household. As the great majority of Egyptians have only one wife at a time, the hareem generally occupies less of the house than the 'selamlik.' The term 'el hareem' also applies to women collectively.

It would not have been proper to ask if the beautiful apartment we were in had ever been used as the *Kád*, for one must be on very intimate terms with a Moslem before alluding in any way to what concerns his women-folk. A feminine touch of lightness absent in the selamlik convinced me that we were being entertained in what at one time formed a part of the hareem.

The chief attraction was the grand display of beautiful old tiles which covered the walls. The design showed a Persian influence, and was not confined to the geometrical patterns of the more orthodox Saracenic work, and pretty as this is, it is the colour which gives it its great charm. Blues tending to green played with blues of a violet shade, touches of puce and emerald green joined in the revelry of colour. No ornaments were hung or bracketed on these wall spaces, for were they not ornament sufficient in themselves? The mattresses and cushions of the divan had richer coverings, were more elegant in pattern, and less sombre in hue than those of the divan we had first seen.

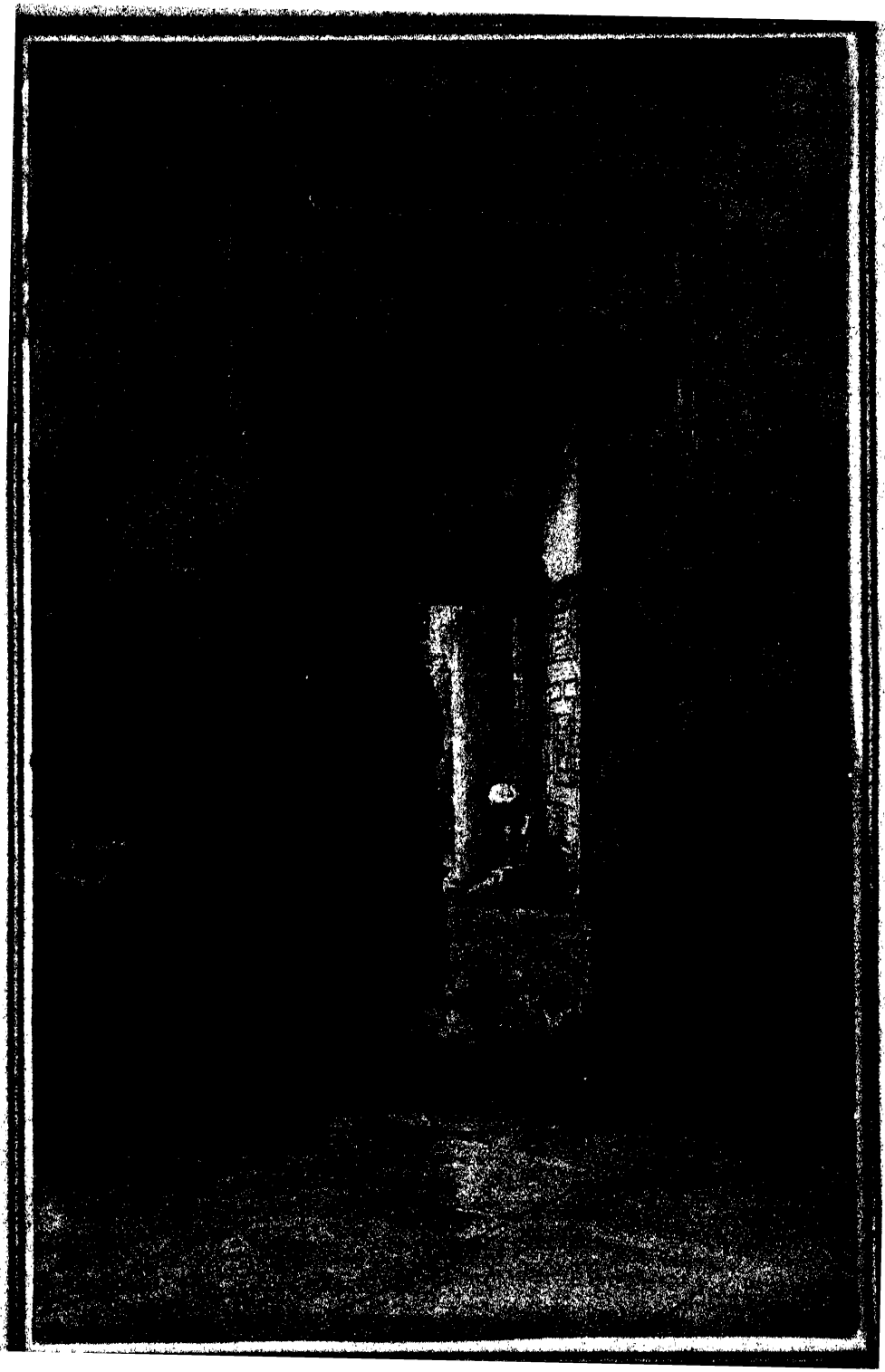
What a studio this would have made for any one desirous to paint eastern subjects! Better that it remain as it is — a dignified setting to a worthy Egyptian gentleman.

As the sun got more round to the west, the shadow of the *mushrbiyeh* patterned the floor, and gem-like touches of light crept slowly up the wall facing the great window. Above the turned wooden grating, which showed its design so beautifully in the shadow it cast, a second window admitted the light through

numerous pieces of coloured glass set in deep mouldings of old plaster work.

Mr. Bowden Smith chatted with the Sheykh about mutual acquaintances and of affairs pertaining to the present day; but whether it was my insufficient knowledge of Arabic or whether my surroundings had carried my thoughts elsewhere, I lost the thread of their conversation. When appealed to about some point, I had, before I could answer, to disentangle my thoughts from 'The story of the Humpback' which I had pictured Shahrazad rehearsing to her sister in anticipation of one of the thousand and one nights. The two daughters of the Vizir had hardly settled the point as to the working of this story into the one of 'Noor ed-Deen and Enees el Jelees,' when the deep wail 'Alláhu Akbar!' from Beybar's minaret announced the *maghrib*.

The patterned shadow had left the floor, and the touches of light from the stained glass, intensified in colour by the declining sun, crept from wall to ceiling as we rose to depart.



CHAPTER VI

MY SECOND VISIT TO THE SHEYKH AND MY EXPERIENCES WITH AN UNFAITHFUL SERVANT

MY friend explained to the Sheykh my desire to set up an easel in some parts of his house. A suspicious fear added to his wish to please gave me an uncomfortable feeling of having presumed on the good man's hospitality. It took some time to clear his mind of any prejudicial effects which might ensue on my working here. Picture painting is so foreign to the Moslem's education, and strictly speaking is a breach of Koranic law, that a slight hesitation in giving me permission is understandable. The likeness of nothing, which is in heaven above or in the earth beneath, hung on his walls to assist us in explaining the nature of my work ; and that veil which is ever in a degree between the western and the oriental mind seemed thickened for a while. The wish to please, however, predominated over the suspicious fears, and he bade us farewell with the assurance that his house was at my disposal.

It was days before I returned, as I wished to complete a street scene I was then engaged on. I had lost my guide, philosopher, and friend, Mohammed, whom I did not wish to do out of a lucrative job up the Nile, and I had in his stead one with a plausible exterior, but

possessing none of the virtues and all the vices which go to make up a dragoman. To work in the streets and bazaars in Cairo without a man to keep off the small boys is almost an impossibility, and much of one's comfort depends on the tact and willingness of the man one employs.

Mansoor (to give him an alias) spoke and read English remarkably well, and having learnt like a parrot some sentences concerning the Pyramids and some of the chief monuments of Cairo, he was in hopes of soon obtaining a dragoman's licence. Without this licence, happily, none may guide the tourist, and as an examination of sorts is now required, and also a character from some previous employer as to the good behaviour of the applicant, the tourist may run less risk in future of being hopelessly swindled than he did in earlier days. But acting merely as my servant, such licence was not a necessity. He had an irritating way of giving me uncalled-for information. The parrot-like sentences he had stored in his memory were repeated each time we passed a monument the tourist is taken to see. These might have been amusing had I not heard them *ad nauseam* before. I did not check him at first, and I even tried to supplement some facts absent from the little book which he had learnt by heart. His usual answer, 'This is all the dragomans say,' discouraged me from trying to teach him anything.

The Khan Khalil was the school in which the true tricks of his trade were to be studied. While I worked there, Mansoor would crawl about listening to the prices paid for the various purchases, and probably

passed sleepless nights till he had found out about the commission the guides had obtained for bringing a customer. His smart clothes and his fluent English must have imposed on many a stall-holder that he was either a licensed dragoman or was shortly to become one. Coffee and cigarettes were pressed on him at whatever *mastaba* he deigned to sit.

While I worked in a mosque not far from this bazaar he would sit at the window and watch for tourists. Several times he had an uncle to bury. He would explain that there was only just time for him to pay his last respects to his deceased relative, and if I would let him go he would be sure to be back by the time I was prepared to leave. I would tell him to go and bury his relative, and had he asked to bury himself, I was prepared by this time to give him my full permission.

The last time he left me on his sorrowful errand, I mounted on to the window-sill where he was wont to watch for the prey as yet withheld from him. I saw a party of tourists just disappearing into an alley leading into the Khan Khalil, while Mansoor was questioning the driver of one of the cabs which they had left, and then he also was lost in the shadow of the selfsame alley. He returned some time after I was ready to start for my hotel, and I told him that as he had taken so long in burying his uncle, he should attend no more funerals while he was in my service. To be told a lie is seldom pleasant; but a very stupid lie reflects on the intelligence of the hearer, and this may partly have accounted for my growing dislike of this man.

I had unfortunately not found another to take his

place when I went to the house of the Sheykh Saheime to start a drawing. I was most courteously received, and was told to ask for anything which I might require. I began a drawing from the anteroom of the *mandara* looking into the court and through the passage, which also led to the stairs of the former hareem. I did not wish to begin a too elaborate subject till I felt more sure that repeated visits were not inconvenient to my host. Mansoor joined the doorkeeper and the eunuch on their bench at the front entrance, where he doubtless enhanced his own importance by lying about my riches and relationship to the various high English officials in Cairo. The inconvenience of such lies is that a tip proportionate to such imagined wealth is looked forward to. He came presently as the bearer of a message from the Sheykh, that had the latter known I was coming that day, he would have prepared a dinner for me; but that he hoped I would return on the following morning and would honour him with my presence at the midday meal. I was grateful for his kind intentions, and yet sorry that I might be putting him to some trouble and inconvenience. I wished to come here often, and would only feel comfortable about doing so if I felt sure that I was not disturbing him.

Not feeling sure as to my intentions, he came himself, and was not satisfied till I had promised to dine with him the next day. Mansoor was later cross-questioned as to whether I liked such and such a dish. Did I always eat with a knife and fork? He supposed I sat on a chair while I fed, and could Christians get through a meal without strong drink? Such questions were

duly repeated to me, so I sent my man back to the Sheykh with a message that the more the dinner was as he was accustomed to have it, the more I should appreciate his hospitality.

I was there early on the following morning, as I wished to complete my drawing before the meal took place. I had a good long paint with no other company but a weasel, which is often seen in Egyptian houses to keep off the mice and rats, or whatever one chooses to call that creature which is too large for the former and too small for the latter. I know of but one name for either of these pests, and *firán* does duty for both. Cats are also household pets, but are less adaptable for spying out the secret places where the *firán* are wont to nest their young.

A message came from the Sheykh to know if I wanted my dinner at twelve or at one o'clock. I sent Mansoor to find out what his usual hour was, and being told that it was just after the midday prayer, I sent word that no other time would suit me better.

About half-past twelve the Sheykh appeared, followed by a gentleman in European clothes and a 'tarbouch.' I was introduced, and informed that this was a cousin and a judge of a native tribunal. I was relieved to find that the judge spoke French fluently, for my Arabic is liable to fail me if put to too severe a test. They seemed interested in my drawing, and held it close to their eyes to enable them to decipher the text engraved on the lintel of the door. It is a never-failing surprise to Easterns if they can read any lettering which one may have introduced in a drawing. 'The *ghawaga*

says he can't write Arabic; then how is it that we can read what he has here written?' My explanation that I had merely copied the strokes and dots which I saw before my nose seldom satisfied these inquiries, and generally left a suspicion of something uncanny. Needless to say here that the lady now shown in the illustration was non-existent at that time, and not being of the *beau sexe* myself, the privilege of seeing one at any time in this house was not to be expected. There are still some things left which the painter may do and which are still beyond the power of the camera.

Now, a word of warning to any one who may be about to dine for the first time with one of the Near East. To put it crudely: Come with an empty stomach and eat as sparingly of the first dishes as you can. They may be very good; but our powers of absorption may fail us, and we might have to pass several subsequent courses untouched, which might be taken as a slight to the quality of the fare. I was prepared for this, and had made a very light breakfast. The grace, repeated in a low voice by the master, is always impressive: 'Bi-smi-lláhi-r-raḥmani-r-raḥeem' (In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful), and the smell of the savoury dish which had been placed before us made the 'Tafaddal' or invitation to sit down doubly welcome. Chairs had been borrowed, as a concession doubtless to the requirements of the *Ferangi*, and a plate, knife, and fork were also placed before me. I dismissed the latter articles as only being necessary to cut up the tougher food of Europeans, and as quite useless with the tenderer dishes of the

Muslemeen. The Sheykh seemed pleased at this and, as is the custom, first tasted of the dish.

When I tore a piece off the thin flat loaf placed before me and, doubling it, I hooked a piece of meat out of the dish, he exclaimed that I had eaten in Arab fashion before. The judge agreed with me that with Arab dishes he did not see where a knife and fork came in. Not partaking so freely of the *yachnee* as to satisfy our host, he took a delicate morsel out of the stew and handed it to me.

The manner of eating with the fingers seems strange at first; but it is astonishing how soon one gets accustomed to it, and also how much more delicate it seems than when described to those who may never have witnessed it. The right hand should always be used if possible, and should a fowl be served, it is polite to catch hold of one leg, so as to enable the master to dismember the bird without having to use his left hand. It may take as long to learn the etiquette pertaining to the Arab mode of eating as for an Arab to acquire all the niceties observed at an English table. Should a stranger, however, from want of experience do something contrary to the usages of the country, an oriental will pretend not to notice it, as a well-bred Englishman would do if the cases were reversed.

Dish followed on dish; when some sweetstuffs were placed on the table my hopes revived, till they were replaced by yet another stew. My powers of absorption had about reached their limit. I appealed to my host to consider the limited dimensions of my lower waist, and that that only prevented me from doing full

justice to his generous fare. This had some effect, and I was let off with a tit-bit which he politely handed to me in his fingers. 'El-ḥamdu li-lláh!' (Praise be to God) from the judge, who rose up and continued the conversation while washing his hands, was the abrupt sign that our feast was at an end.

A servant held a brass basin while a second poured the water from a ewer over my hands, and, our ablutions at an end, we were conducted to the *takhtabosh* to sip our coffee and smoke. I was asked where I had dined before in Arab fashion, and my host was interested to hear about some dishes peculiar to Morocco, also how I had fared with the Druses in the Lebanon. An Arab meal, in fact, was not in itself a novelty to me; but, as I explained to the Sheykh, I had never dined in such beautiful surroundings. We got on to the subject of Japan, where the mode of eating is much more difficult to acquire than that of the Near East. My hearers showed a much greater interest in things Japanese than I expected, for as a rule a Moslem's sympathies rarely extend to countries beyond the sway of Islam. How I had got on without meat, bread, milk or butter surprised them, and settled any possible doubts as to whether they might wish to go there themselves. I am told that during the Russo-Japanese war events were followed with keen interest in Egypt. Every victory of the Japanese was construed into a victory of a non-Christian people over a Christian power—of the Asiatic over the European. When a book I had written on my experiences in Japan appeared at the Cairo booksellers', I was interviewed by the editor of an Arabic paper

MY SECON

to give him a

to give him as many particulars as I could concerning Japan.

I avoided all talk as to the present régime in Egypt. Though one of my hearers had a safe billet, and the Sheykh probably felt a greater security for the property he holds than he would if our occupation of Egypt ceased, nevertheless the sting of being governed by the unbelievers is always there, let the unbeliever's yoke be ever so light a one.

A suspicion that I might be hindering the afternoon nap induced me to bid farewell to my host and the judge.

Mansoor had been having a good time feasting with the servants, and when he joined me I asked him to divide a *riyal* between those who had served me. I watched him present the money to one of them and in the presence of the others, for I had reason to suspect his honesty. I could not hear the talk which followed, but saw the money passed on to a boy, who was told to go to a shop and change it. I saw no object in waiting any longer, so left the house. Mansoor wished to stay behind, and as I did not see why he should get any of the tip, I made him come with me. In the main street I hailed a passing cab. Mansoor now seemed rather disturbed and asked if he could go back. 'The boy will not know where to bring the change of the *riyal*.' 'Did you not tell the boy to give the changed money to be divided among the servants?' I asked. 'No, I did not say it was for the servants,' he answered, with the look of a detected thief; 'I told him to bring the change back to you, sir. Please

allow me to return to the house and I will tell them what your intentions were.' I could not return myself to see the matter through, as I remembered an appointment I had to keep, and I let the man go. It dawned on me as I drove to my hotel that Mansoor's object in hanging behind was to intercept the boy returning with the change and to pocket the lot himself.

Explaining the circumstances to one who had had a long experience of native servants, I was assured that my suspicions were not unfounded. This villain, who had been well entertained by the servants of the house, had conceived this ingenious manner of robbing them of their gratuity.

When he turned up the next morning I told him I should want him no longer. Seeming to question the reason of his sudden dismissal, I suggested a police inquiry as to the disposal of the *riyal*. He wished to hear no more, and vanished like the ghost who was asked for a subscription.

Now this is a type of man who, but for the salutary regulation as to granting licences, would have become a dragoman, and have reaped a good harvest, during the short season, by robbing the tourist by day, and conducting others by night to witness every kind of abomination.

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH I GET ANOTHER SERVANT AND HUNT FOR A CROCODILE; ALSO A CONTINUATION OF THE STORY OF PRINCESS ZOHRA

I FOUND a man, who was used to attending artists on their rounds, sooner than I had hoped for. He was a rougher type of man than my last one, but one to whom I took much more readily. He spoke no English, which was in his favour, for though this might sometimes be inconvenient, it suited my purpose better to practise my Arabic than to have him airing his English on me.

Mahmood Hanafy is his name. I give it with pleasure, and in hopes that possibly these lines may be read by some one who might be glad of his services. No two men of the same nationality could have been a greater contrast than this Mahmood and the disgraced Mansoor. The more traps Mahmood had to carry, the more he seemed to like it; when I suggested taking a cab, he would say the place was no distance, and cabs were very dear—he had evidently been well trained by former brother-brushes. Mansoor, on the other hand, always had a cab near the hotel when we started, and would place my sketching things on the box in hopes I would take it. Distances were always enormous with him, and when I took a cab, he would declare that the doubled

fare asked was none too much. The extra squeeze he could then get out of the cabby harmonised with his natural laziness. Mahmood was a plucky fellow, and ready to clear a street of people if he thought they were in my way; while Mansoor's bravery never went further than slapping a child if the parents were not present, whereas, if some hooligans promised to be a nuisance, he generally slipped away.

Mahmood had one drawback which his predecessor had not, and that was a loud voice. Now, as no pillow was ever thick enough to prevent my hearing my watch ticking, a huge volume of sound was not necessary when he answered my questions. If he thought I did not understand him, he evidently took it for hardness of hearing, and his answers would be loud enough to startle the street. I could not correct him of this, though he tried to mend. Trained as a donkey-boy, this voice had doubtless been of use both in directing his beast and in the altercations which often end a ride. Possibly the deafest donkeys were placed in his care. He was now the owner of many donkeys, he told me, and he let them out by the month instead of running after one himself. He was always ready, however, to run after one if I should require it. His dress was more humble than that of Mansoor, but he never pleaded poverty to try and get something over his wage. He told me he had all he wanted, and should I not wish to use him for a few days, he would willingly rest till his services would be required.

The other man, though smartly dressed, had always some tale of poverty handy when I gave him his wage,

and always begged for an advance on his future pay. Had he not a number of people dependent on him? and the cost of food, had it not risen so much? I found out afterwards that he had no dependants, and that he sponged on his sisters when he was out of work. He had the appearance of one addicted to hashsheesh, and probably only smoked this of an evening, for I could never detect the smell.

This drug is happily now forbidden to enter the country, and strong measures are taken to prevent its use. A certain amount does, however, get smuggled in, and the *ḥashshash* or victim to the drug can still procure it if he can pay for its enhanced price. The smell of its fumes was much more familiar formerly in the humbler coffee-shops; but it is not quite absent now. It is often mixed with *tumbák*, a kind of Persian tobacco, and is smoked in the *gózeh*, a pipe made of a cocoanut-shell, which has a long cane stem. One who indulges slightly in the habit would not be termed a *ḥashshash* any more than a moderate drinker in England would be termed a drunkard. The opprobrium attached to the term is much increased through its association with the *Ḥashshashseyn* of the time of the Crusades, whom we know as the Assassins—the subjects of the 'Sultan of the Castles and Fortresses,' more commonly called 'the old man of the mountain.' They were said to indulge freely in hashsheesh when sent on some murderous errand by their chief. Rowdy or riotous people are often termed 'Hashshasheen' whether they be addicted to the drug or not.

Seeing an excitable crowd quite recently, in one of

the principal squares of Cairo, I approached to see what was the matter. A brutal-looking man was struggling with a couple of policemen who were taking him off to jail, while others were placing on a stretcher a youth who was terribly hacked about his face and head. On inquiry I heard that the man in charge of the police was employed at the public slaughter-house, that he was given to hashsheesh, and that in a fit of madness he had just assaulted with his butcher's knife the wounded youth. The term *hashshash*, which was freely used by the crowd, had a particularly gruesome sound on that occasion.

Loud and furious were the comments of Mahmood, and had he not been carrying my materials he would have joined in the struggle with the butcher.

As this took place just within the limits of the European quarter, it was fully reported in the foreign Cairo papers. The youth succumbed to his wounds, and the *hashshash* paid the death penalty.

I was on my way to the Khaleeg to look for a subject which had attracted me on a former visit, and before this canal had been filled in by the tramway company. A change for the better, possibly, from a hygienic point of view, and also as a means of communication ; but a sad loss to the picturesque. Many historic buildings which backed on to the canal have been pulled down, and commonplace frontages will soon blot out all remembrance of them.

The tramway having come to stay, it is as well to make the best of it, and to use its cars along the couple of miles which bisect the city from north to south.

From this route many a peep into some old courtyard, or the back of a mosque or palm-shaded shrine, may induce a descent from the cars and a tramp along the dusty road.

Just beyond the present governorat was an angle of the enclosure known as the 'guarded city.' This formed more or less of a square of rather more than half a mile each way, and its western wall stood on the east side of the present filled-in canal. The building of this enclosure marks such an important date in the mediæval history of Egypt that a few words here may not be amiss.

Stanley Lane Poole tells us, in the *Story of Cairo*, how in 959 Gawhar, the victorious general of el-Mo'izz (the first Khalif of the Fatimid dynasty), entered Masr, as the capital of Egypt was then called, and still is by its native inhabitants. Plague and famine had so reduced the population, that scarcely any resistance was offered to the troops which Gawhar had led from Tunis into the valley of the Nile. His first thought was to build a fortified place away from the plague-stricken city, and yet near enough to keep it in subjection. Beyond its northern extremity he pitched his camp on a sandy waste, unobstructed by any buildings save an old convent. The prevailing winds being from the north, hygienic reasons were also in favour of this site.

When the boundaries of the enclosure were marked out, astrologers were consulted as to an auspicious hour in which to start digging the foundations. From poles stuck in the ground ropes were stretched, from which bells were hung, and thousands of men stood ready

with shovel and pick to dig out the trenches as soon as the astrologers shook the poles, and by the tinkling of the bells announced the auspicious moment. The intentions of the astrologers were, however, forestalled by a raven who, alighting on a rope, set the bells aringing, and every spade was instantly stuck into the soil. It was during the hour when the planet Mars (el-Káhir) was in the ascendant—an evil omen for the future peace of the place. 'Masr el-Káhira' thus became the name, not only of the fortified enclosure, but also of the adjacent city. 'El-Káhira,' or the Martial, is that from which we get our Cairo. The omen was turned to good account by the astrologers. Messengers were sent to Mo'izz to announce that the foundations of a triumphant Masr had been laid; the name of the last of the Abbasid Khalifs was no more heard in the prayers which were offered up in the mosque of Amr, and Mo'izz was proclaimed the ruler of Egypt. His conquests now extended from the Atlantic to the Arabian desert, and for two centuries the Fatimid dynasty ruled the country.

Walls, described as being thick enough to allow four horses to be driven abreast on them, were built round the enclosure; the foundations of a vast palace worthy of the great Khalif were laid; and buildings were planned to accommodate his court, and those who would guard his sacred person. The common folk were not admitted within the gates of the enclosure after the Khalif had taken up his residence. It was then designated 'Kahira-el-Mahrusa,' or the guarded city.

The Sheea heresy which Mo'izz had fostered, whether from conviction or from policy, had a far-reaching influence on the destiny of the country.

In the mosques orthodox Moslems were replaced by sheykhs of the favoured sect. Christians and Jews were tolerated and often put in high positions. What civilisation gained here it more than lost by cutting off Cairo from the great centres of Saracenic learning, and though bent on destroying the power of the Sunnee or orthodox Moslems, there is no reason to suppose that leanings of Mo'izz were towards Christianity. To remedy this he built the university mosque of el-Azhar, proudly called 'The Resplendent.' He endowed it liberally, and gave the students every opportunity to study the Sheea teaching which had caused the rift in the Mohammedan world. A great impetus was given to art by the removal of the prohibition to copy any natural objects; and birds and beasts, flowers and foliage were freely made use of in design during the Fatimid period. Unfortunately little remains of this, for, when the orthodox party gained the ascendant during the rule of the House of Salahedin, these decorations were 'a mark of the beast' and were in most cases destroyed.

Vivid descriptions exist of the splendour of Mo'izz and the great 'East Palace' which he built. But nothing of all this now remains except the Azhar, which justly is still one of the most famous monuments of Cairo.

Parallel to the canal runs a narrow street called 'Beyn-es-Sureyn' or 'Between the walls,' and this conducts into another called 'sharia el-Benât,' which means

the street of the sisters. It is here I have come to make a study of a doorway of little architectural pretensions; it leads into a house built in the middle of the nineteenth century and which backed into the canal. A terrific-looking crocodile used to hang over the door, and this one as well as others had caught my attention during former visits as being a characteristic ornament of a Nile city. Stories, I have since heard, refer to this crocodile, and made me wish to make a drawing of it. Children used to pass it and speak with bated breath; for it was said that it had grown to its size from feeding on the children, the parents of whom the master of the house had slain in Sennaar.

The house was built by the awe-inspiring Defterdar Ahmed, whom Mohammed Ali had sent to the Sudan to avenge the murder of one of his sons, and so terrible were his acts of retribution that he is since known as the 'Tiger of Sennaar.' His chief interest, however, for the present is, that, partly as a reward for his valour, the great Pasha gave him one of his daughters in marriage. Mohammed Ali is reported to have said that the Tiger would be a fitting mate to his Tigress.

If my readers have not forgotten the fate of O'Donald, the young Irish officer, they may recognise in this Tigress the lady of his undoing.

It is related that the princess Zohra, after the murder of her lover, was for many days as one bereft of her senses. The first conscious act we hear of her is when she stole from the palace in the dead of night and found her way to the field where O'Donald was buried. The jackals and dogs had left no trace visible of where the

unfortunate man was placed,—they had done their work as well as Abbas could have wished. The poor woman was found at break of day, grubbing with her hands in the soil to find the body of her beloved one. She was forcibly led back to the palace and the matter was reported to her father. The servants were severely punished for allowing her to escape from the hareem, and Zohra was kept in strict confinement.

When the Defterdar returned soon after, from his campaign in the Sudan, Ali wished to honour him as highly as he could. He saw also in him one who had strength of will sufficient to be a match for his wilful daughter. Ahmed was proud of the alliance, and built and furnished a palace here in the 'sharia el-Benât,' worthy to be the home of his exalted bride. Whether the Defterdar's life was a happy one we are not told. But it was a short one:—his death was due to a stroke, said the court physicians; poison, whispered the neighbours; and poison, said Abbas, whose hatred of his aunt and former playmate grew as time went on.

Little was seen or heard of the widowed princess for some time after. Few ladies from the different hareems were bold enough to call on her, and the huge crocodile seemed more like a bogey to frighten people off than an emblem of luck to the house which he adorned.

The mysterious disappearance of one or two young men became the talk of the neighbourhood, and this increased as the absence of others was observed. The body of one was found in the canal close to the watergate of Zohra's palace, and shortly after this a second one

was seen there. No one dared voice their suspicions; but when the public story-tellers (the *shoara*) told of Kattalet-esh-Shugan, the Arabian Messalina, knowing looks were passed amongst the audience. The tragedies were repeated from time to time, and every mother of a handsome son trembled lest he should be caught in the toils of one she hardly dared name, but whose name was in the thoughts of all.

Abbas kept himself well informed as to what went on in Zohra's palace, but he abided his time until Mohammed Ali should return from the wars, or until fortune should favour his accession to the viceregal throne. In 1841 the firmân of investiture, as it is called, brought the wars, which Mohammed Ali had waged with varying success, to a close. The hereditary sovereignty of Egypt had been secured to the family of the great Pasha and, except for the annual tribute to be paid to the Porte, Egypt had become an independent state.

Prince Abbas now informed his grandfather of the goings-on in his daughter's palace. Gentle persuasion was never a characteristic of the old gentleman, and the manner in which he put a stop to these scandals reads like a story in the *Arabian Nights*. It is related that thirty masons and twenty-five donkeys laden with bricks were immediately despatched to wall up, during that very day, every outside window and door except the one surmounted by the crocodile. A company of soldiers were also sent to see that these orders were strictly carried out. Before sundown Zohra's palace had become a veritable prison.

A modest house immediately facing the crocodile was inhabited by a Coptic scribe. This innocent man and his family were bundled out with all their belongings, and his house was turned into a guard-room. A watch was kept here day and night to see that no one, or nothing but what was necessary to the upkeep of the household, should pass through the one access to the palace.

We are not told how the princess passed the next few years in her prison. Mohammed Ali sank into his dotage, and the reins of government were taken over by his adopted son Ibrahim. Prince Abbas had not to wait long before the legitimate succession came to him, for Ibrahim Pasha died within a year of his viceroyalty and shortly before the demented Mohammed Ali's decease. Abbas then became the ruler of Egypt.

Zohra now realised her danger in remaining in Cairo. In spite of the guard set to watch her movements she succeeded in escaping from the canal side of her palace, and she crossed into Syria before her flight became known to her nephew. From Syria she repaired to Constantinople, where she sought and obtained the protection of the Sultan of Turkey.

We will leave her there for the present, and perhaps we may refer to her doings later on.

The crocodile I was in search of had disappeared, and nothing remained whereby I could exactly locate the palace. The story of Zohra, though of so recent a date, seems now to take its place with the tragedies enacted within Mo'izz's 'guarded city.'

CHAPTER VIII

OF A CAIRO CAFÉ AND OTHER MATTERS

I HAD not far to go along the filled-in canal before a partly pulled down housefront enabled me to see the court of a once important dwelling. It was similar in plan to many I have seen; but it was the only instance I have met of a vaulted *takhtabosh*. A wooden screen partly shut it off from the yard, and an opening in one of the panels served as a doorway. Whether this screen belonged to the original building I cannot say; but it certainly added greatly to its picturesque appearance. The recess was now converted into a coffee-shop, while the rest of the house was let out in tenements to poor people.

It is never safe to leave a good subject to a later period, if it can possibly be helped. Some arrangement of line or colour, often hard to define, may be just what gives the subject its charm. Something may have disturbed this, or some touch of colour may have gone, before a second visit, and it leaves the painter wondering as to what he could have seen in the place to have made him wish to paint it. I started sketching in the café at once, hoping that some customers might arrive to suggest a grouping of figures. Should these customers be queer ones, I could trust to Mahmood to keep them from disturbing me at my work.

I had not long to wait before a half-dozen men

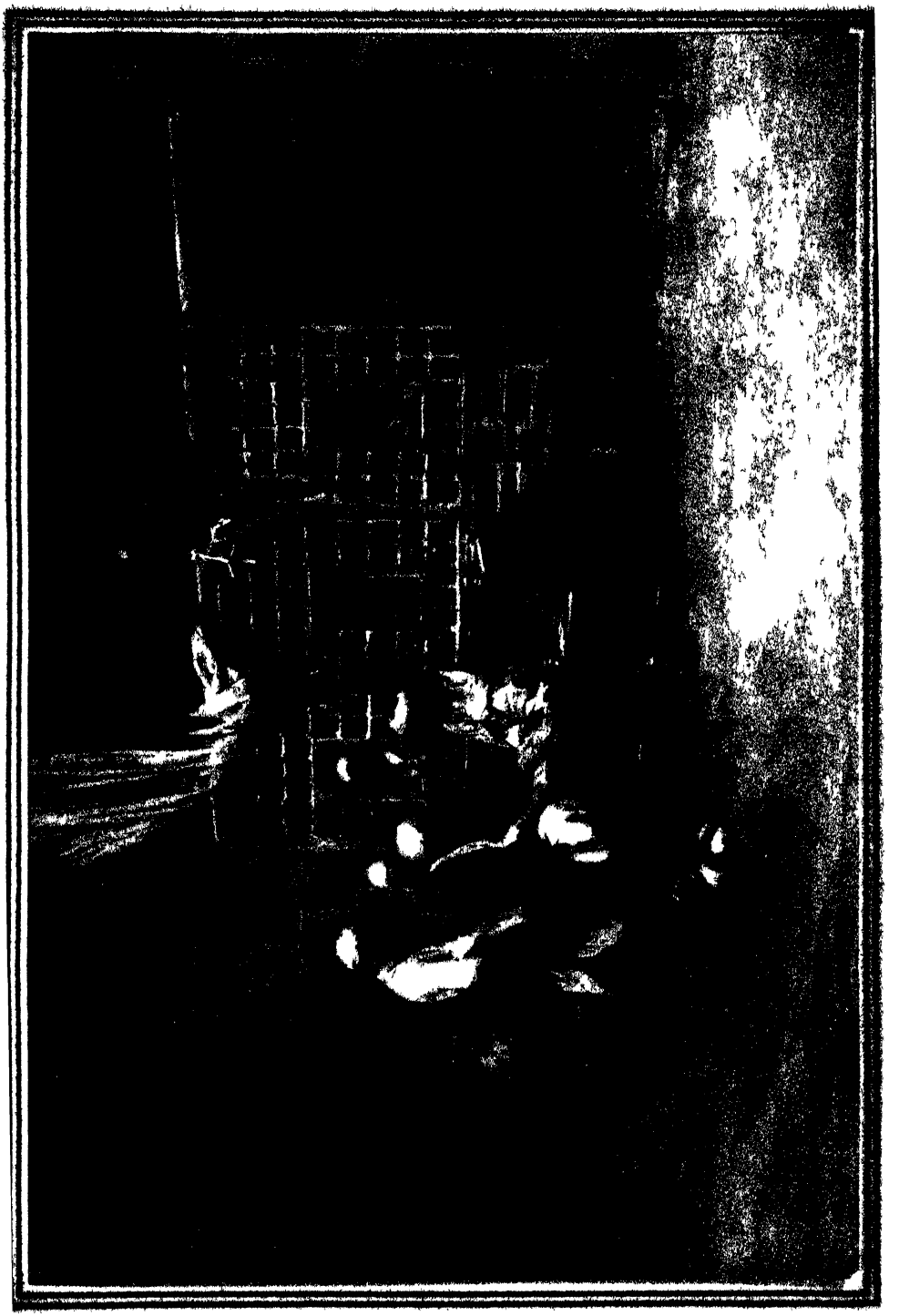
came in. They seemed sufficiently interested in something not to take much notice of me. They squatted down on their heels, forming a ring, and two of them each pulled a game-cock from under their cloaks and pitched them on to the ground. The Cairene is usually very noisy during his entertainments; but in this case few words were spoken, though the men watched the varying success of their birds with intense interest. I was too occupied in taking notes of the men and the action of the cocks to feel any interest in the sport, and by the time one of the birds was at its last gasp, and lay bleeding on the ground, I felt a sufficient disgust for the whole thing to decide me not to make it the subject of a picture.

I saw them refer to Mahmood as to who I might be, for Koranic law forbids all betting, and I believe cock-fighting is contrary to police regulations. They seemed satisfied that I was harmless enough, and they departed as quietly as they had come.

The sport must be a very popular one, for these birds, with their combs closely cut and with plucked necks, may be seen in almost any street in the poorer parts of the town. Whether the ancient Egyptians indulged in cock-fighting, I have never been able to ascertain. I can recall no wall inscriptions depicting the sport, neither does Wilkinson refer to it in his *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*. It was probably introduced into Egypt during the Ptolemies or, at the latest, during the Roman occupation. Quail-fighting is common in Upper Egypt, though I have personally never witnessed it.

The sun soon made my place untenable, so I decided to return in the afternoon, when I might also expect to find more customers to suggest some figure arrangement suitable to my picture. It was a grand place for Mahmood—cups of coffee at two for a penny. I could treat him to as many as he liked, and please the *Kahwegee* at the same time. I confess to a good many cups myself, for coffee made in Turkish fashion is most seductive. The cups are very small, and there is only a sip of liquid before reaching the grounds, which are allowed to settle at the bottom. But it is a delicious sip, and it is also very stimulating. The habit of afternoon tea acquired in England is hard to break, and to make a journey into the modern quarters to indulge it would have cut seriously into my work, and I found in one of these little cups of coffee an excellent substitute. Paint where one wishes, a coffee-shop is sure to be within easy reach, and the *Kahwegee* will always for a trifle bring coffee, a chair, and a glass of water, and place them next to one's easel. Now that the native quarters are supplied with pure water, one can drink the latter with safety. Coffee drinking is often carried to excess in Egypt, with deleterious effects to nerves and digestion; but its victims are less objectionable neighbours to the sketcher than the fuddled European, who may bore him with questions and breathe on him the odour of his complaint.

It is said that drunkenness is on the increase amongst the natives, and it is true that tipsy men are occasionally seen. They are chiefly the loafers who hang about the European quarters, where modest coffee-shops hardly



exist, and where nearly every other house retails some or other intoxicant. Beer or spirits are hardly obtainable in the purely native parts of Cairo.

Towards evening this quaint little café would liven up. The wooden bench which served as a *mastaba* might seat an *álim* (as any one who can read is often called), who would drone out the news from the daily paper to a group of listeners, and the sound of the chequers slammed on a backgammon-board would make an accompanying click, click, from inside the recess. This game has been borrowed from the *Firangi*, and is still called by its French name of 'tric-trac.' It is immensely popular amongst the effendi class, and is gradually being adopted by those of a humbler station. The more primitive *mankaleh* is still played in Cairo, and is still universal in the villages where tric-trac has not yet found its way. I have been shown how to play it, but space will not allow of a lengthy description of its details. It is played on an oblong board with twelve hollows in two rows of six each, each row forming an opposing camp. There are seventy-two cowries, or, failing these, small pebbles, and it is according to the manner in which these are distributed into the hollows that makes the game. An elaborate account of the various modes of playing it is given in Lane's *Modern Egyptians*. It is reported as having obtained in Pharaonic times, but this has never been satisfactorily confirmed.

Turkish draughts is also a popular game, and to my thinking much more amusing than the way we play it in England. That this game was known (or a form of it) amongst the ancients is certain, and most visitors

to Medinet Habú will have been shown the presentment of Rameses III. playing it with his queen.

Games of chance, as well as betting, are forbidden by the Koran. A point is, however, usually stretched in allowing the loser to pay for the cups of coffee. In *mankaleh* the player backs his skill more than his luck, whereas in backgammon the throw of the dice brings in a large element of chance. A strict Mohammedan will therefore abstain from the latter game.

As the day declined, more customers would drop in, and by the time the lamps were lit I often regretted that my hotel *table d'hôte* called me away to the Ismaeliyeh quarter.

The light from the primitive lamps piercing a blue atmosphere of smoke, and falling on the groups of figures intent on their games, left a picture in my mind which I hoped might not be dimmed by the more commonplace aspect of an up-to-date hotel.

Perhaps, after all, it is as well that circumstances oblige me to reside away from that part which I regard as the true Cairo. Putting aside matters of health, it is a loss to be cut off from one's countrymen, or those of other countries whose mode of life resembles one's own. Unless a man can take his wife with him, he may pass months without seeing a woman's face, or exchanging a word with one of his opposite sex. This has been my experience in Upper Egypt and while camping in the desert, where the woman will hide away from a strange man, and where her voice will never be heard except she be screaming at one of her children, or in altercation with a neighbour. The servants are

always males, and the food bought in the villages is always sent by a man or a boy. If I strolled in to see the Omdeh or the village sheykh, I should have to wait till his women-folk were well out of the way. Their conversation might not have been edifying; but was that of the men always so? Life in a purely Mohammedan country, if separated from wife and family, is a one-sex existence.

I have met cultured men in the Near East, who for long periods had had little intercourse with those of their own nationality, and I noticed how ill at ease they seemed when brought in contact with European ladies and gentlemen. Life was strange enough away from the European settlements in Japan, but it was a more complete life. Though I might not understand a word spoken by the *Okosan* or the *mousume*, their smiles of welcome were perfectly understandable.

The hotel Villa Victoria, which I have of late made my headquarters in Cairo, is out of the general rush of tourists, and is frequented by many who are at times engaged in excavating, or are in some way connected with the Antiquities Department. There are also permanent guests in various Government Offices, as well as others whose business brings them in contact with things Egyptian. I was here long enough for acquaintance with my fellow-lodgers to ripen into friendship, and besides the pleasure of their company, I was enabled to pick up a good deal of information. I could also stay here at any time of the year, whereas most of the huge caravansaries put up their shutters when the tourist season is over.

There were also ladies here who had the *entrée* into the hareems of the principal houses, and though they were careful not to give away what is not intended for general discussion, I was yet able to get some idea of the life which is led in the 'prohibited places.' The interior of a princely home in Cairo at present must resemble that of a large Parisian or London house, much more than that of the Sheykh Saheime which I attempted to describe in a former chapter. The picture which a reception-room in the hareem conjures up in the western mind—of love-sick Zuleikas sprawling on cushioned floors, sighing for their Selims and sucking sweets—may be safely dismissed. Diaphanous divided skirts no more conceal their lower limbs, nor do gold-braided corsets set off the symmetry of their figures. The Parisian modiste 'a changé tout cela.' To us poor males, who only catch a sight of them as they drive by in their broughams, they look still as oriental as ever. The black silk *habarah* entirely covers the 'creation' from Paris, and the coiffeur's art is hid beneath its folds. The white muslin *burko* veils the face except the eyes, and whether these veils be thinner than formerly I cannot say. But they are not sufficiently thick to hide completely an often very pretty outline of cheek and chin.

My informant went there to read, or hear read, the French classics, and though some of the ladies may have felt bored with extracts from Corneille, I was told that many were intelligently interested. For fear lest my readers might take Zohra as a fair specimen of an Egyptian princess, I hasten to assure them that she was

as great an exception among the women as was her illustrious father amongst the men of his time.

There was much in common between father and daughter. The great Pasha let nothing stand between himself and his ambitions; any means were good enough to remove those who obstructed his plans. He was a brave man and a great soldier, and yet he could stoop to treacherously murdering the mameluke Beys and their followers, when he considered his rule in Egypt was safer without them. His young daughter was prepared to sacrifice any one who might thwart her in her misplaced love; and the form of madness which followed on her unsatisfied desires had its parallel in the loss of reason by her father, when his ambitions to found a great empire were not realised. He is reported to have had eighty-five children, and strange it is that, with a family of such dimensions, the succession of the present Khedive should have come through an adopted son. Therefore, as far as we know, there is no blood relationship between the actual members of the ruling house and Mohammed Ali and his descendants.

It is pleasant to turn from Zohra to the mistress of a princely hareem, who is now a great lady in Cairo. Though having children of her own, she still finds room in her affections, as well as in her palace, to mother many little girls who have either lost or have been abandoned by their parents. She not only gives them a good education, but, as children by adoption, she keeps them until suitable husbands are provided for them. A kinder form of charity is hard to conceive.

Entertainments and visits from lady friends are of

constant occurrence in the wealthier hareems in Cairo, though the life of Egyptian ladies in a general way must, from a European standpoint, be exceedingly dull. Girl schools are on the increase as well as home instruction; but taking the whole female population of Egypt, it is barely one per cent. as yet who can either read or write. The percentage among men is low enough—about five in a hundred; but as the enormous majority of Egyptians are peasants, five per cent. may cover those who are above the status of labouring men.

I have heard the complaint from educated Moslems that their wives were poor companions, and that they therefore spent but little of their time in their company. I don't know what else they could expect. The fellaha woman may at times be overworked, but her existence seems a happier one than that of many of her wealthier sisters in their enforced idleness.

A fashionable French modiste was for a while a guest at the Villa Victoria. She spent her time running from one hareem to another, getting orders for the latest things in hats. As some of these hats, at the time of which I am writing, were about half the size of a billiard table, we would see her driving to her clients nearly lost amongst colossal bandboxes. For convenience she wore her *chef-d'œuvre*, that is the biggest, on her own head, and she would sometimes return crowned with a smaller one, having, as she told us, disposed of the masterpiece in one of the hareems. We were curious to know when and where her clients could wear them, for they never appeared in Cairo with a European hat on their heads. 'Oh! mais c'est pour

Paris ou Vienne,' she said, and assured us that they looked 'bien chics.'

Just think of it!—Zuleika in a Paris taxi balancing one of these shapeless masses of millinery on the top of her head!

To see things as others see them may often be the wish of most of us. I have never felt this wish stronger than when I have seen some old village sheykh asking his way about modernised Cairo. Some evil ginn must have raised these huge blocks of buildings which house the unbelievers. Strange things to help them on their road to perdition are exposed in the stores, and sheets of some invisible material which his eye can penetrate, but which resists the touch of his finger, hang before the accursed articles. Cars run along the streets with neither an ass nor a camel to draw them. Sparks which fly from beneath the wheels and overhead, accompanied by a crackling sound, must be sure evidence of the *afrit* who drives them. Naserene women talk in a strange language to men, and shamelessly expose their faces to all. He passes a large modern café, and sees coreligionists unturbaned and dressed as the Frank, partaking of forbidden drinks and disregarding the call of the mueddin, which alone brings a ray of hope to the poor sheykh. He hastens to the mosques—it is some way off, for mosques are few and far between in this godless part—he makes his prostrations, and he prays to Allah that the *Muslemeen* may come by their own again.

After he has rested in the native quarters, and he meditates on his well-watered fields, he may wish that some of his prayers be not too literally answered. He

may still remember the time when excessive taxation robbed his people of the fruits of their labour, and scars may yet remain on his back of the *Kurbág* which drove him to the forced labour.

I have much in sympathy with the old sheykh, though we may see things from opposite points of view. Were the old town not being slowly robbed of its beauty and oriental character, I might feel indifferent as to what was being done in the new, for my object in spending so many seasons in Egypt has never been to paint the modern city, which at its best could never equal that which I could find nearer home. The inconsistency of the old man's prayer, and the contemplations of his better watered fields, finds a parallel in my regrets that the old order gives place to the new; while I am certainly not indifferent to the creature comforts which a Europeanised hotel allows me to enjoy. The discomforts I have endured in native inns in the unfrequented places may not have left permanent scars; but they would recall some very unpleasant experiences had not the interest of what I was in search of given them a back seat in my memory. Apart from this selfish point of view, it is a joy to know that the thousands who dwell in the old city can now drink an unpolluted water, that their sick can have an enlightened medical treatment, and that the education of their young is at present adapted to a useful citizenship.

Our countrymen who are guiding the destinies of Egypt, and who are honestly working for the betterment of its people, are not primarily responsible for the unsuitable planning of the modern Cairo. Ismael Pasha's

boast, 'L'Egypte fait partie de l'Europe,' came after the remodelling of Alexandria, and since the time when Clot Bey drew the plans of a northern city to be built in a semi-tropical country.

From what I hear, this unfortunate example is being followed in Khartúm, which is well inside the tropics. The wide sun-baked streets may be pleasant to those who only visit it during the short winter ; but they who have to remain there during the long summer months may long for the shady lanes which wind amongst the habitations of the ancient parts of Cairo. The well-to-do in the mediæval city were not obliged to migrate to Europe during the hottest season, as the clients of our modiste feel now constrained to do.

CHAPTER IX

THE COPTIC CONVENTS OF WADI NATRUN

AMONGST the guests who halted at the Villa Victoria, it was my good fortune to make the acquaintance of Mr. Palmer-Jones, an enthusiastic architect who had measured up some of the early Coptic convents, and had also reconstructed on paper dynastic buildings of which little but the plan is at present traceable. He was making preparations for a journey to Wadi Natrun to continue his work at the old convents which are dotted about that valley.

During a stay in Professor Garstang's camp at Abydos, a few years ago, my interest in what concerns the Copts had been considerably excited, while I painted in the Coptic settlement which is a mile or two distant from Seti's temple. Although these convents are of recent date compared to far-off pharaonic times, a period of fifteen centuries has nevertheless elapsed since many of them have been built. They also have this, which gives them a human interest above the earlier shrines, and that is their preservation of the uses for which they were founded. Many are now no more than a heap of ruins; but there yet remains a good number still inhabited by monks, and where the Christian liturgy of the early centuries is still repeated in the chapels.

THE CONVENTS OF WADI NATRUN

When Mr. Jones kindly proposed that I should join him in his expedition, I was not long in making up my mind to do so. His preparations took longer than mine, for he had to procure a camp outfit for a stay in the desert, a good distance from the rest-house where he and I proposed to spend a week together. I could not afford the time to accompany him further afield, and a week of desert air I hoped would suffice to shake off the evil effects of a touch of influenza.

It took over a week to get an answer from the manager of the Salt and Soda Company, in whose rest-house we proposed to stay, although he wrote by return of post telling us we could come. The distance was within a hundred miles from Cairo; but postal arrangements are not expeditious in the desert.

The delay gave me time to paint the street which has been reproduced as an illustration to this book. The noise and dust, as well as the importunities of the inquisitive, made me long for the quiet and the fresh air of the desert. A change of work and of interests now and again is wholesome, and should but little work be the result of my expedition, the interest and the fresh air would compensate me for any loss of time.

We started at midday by a train which runs along the edge of the Libyan desert, just outside the cultivation area, and not far from the western bank of the Rosetta branch of the Nile. This is the Behera line, and if any one could be found with sufficient patience, he could reach Alexandria by one of its trains, and cover rather less ground than by the main route. After a crawl along the fringe of the desert for some seventy

miles in a north-westerly direction, the train strikes into the Delta, and joins the main line at Teh el-Barûd. Fortunately we could leave it after a thirty-mile crawl, at a station called el-Khatatbeh. We were met here by the agent of the Salt and Soda Company, and invited to wait in his house until the steam-tram would take us to the rest-house. This runs twice a week, and carries coal and other necessaries to the works. When the passenger carriage had been coupled on to the trucks, we started on this novel desert journey.

There seemed something sinister in the name of our destination—'The Valley of Natron.' It lay in the direction of the reddening sky, and seemed somehow to recall a valley with which Bunyan has made us familiar. The 'Lacus Asphaltites,' as classical atlases call the Dead Sea, is a name which in a similar way brought passages of the *Pilgrim's Progress* back to me, when years ago I took a journey to Jericho. The engine, which pluckily dragged us into the increasing darkness, breathed sparks of fire into the clouds of smoke. Was it the mystery of the desert that got hold of me? The fire and smoke which snorted from the funnel of the little engine brought Apollyon clearly back to my mind.

I have passed months on end in the desert, and yet that awe which it inspires at sundown never leaves me.

For three hours we continued our course through the dreary waste. A crescent moon revealed an interminable series of low sand-hills; broken flints caught its light and looked like the reflections of the stars on a billowy sea. Though our horizon was not a

distant one, the sense that we might have continued in our present direction for more than two thousand miles impressed us with the immensity of the great Sahara.

The quickened pace of our train told us that we had reached the depression where the series of natron lakes lies. Before we came to a standstill my illusions had vanished into thin air. A smell of caustic soda, and the sight of the works, of the coal trucks, the shunting cabin, and as we got nearer, that of the men in greasy overalls, carried me away from the Sahara, and set me down near some north-country manufacturing village.

We were met by the manager of the rest-house, and some natives (who might have hailed from Wednesbury from their get-up) shouldered our luggage while we picked our way to a long one-storied building we could see outlined against the starlit sky.

It had turned very cold, as it often does in the desert, even after a baking hot day. I blessed the whole of the Salt and Soda Company, Limited, for having provided a good stove in the rest-house sitting-room, and I poured more blessings on the Italian manager, who soon announced the dinner. What with our long fast and the keen desert air, we were able to do full justice to the padrone's efforts. We asked him if he could hire us donkeys to take us to the convents the following morning. 'Leave it to me,' he said, 'and you shall have them at whatever hour you like.' We decided on half-past seven, and were promised that they should be there to the minute. We were up with the lark, and ready to start at the appointed time ; but

we might scan the horizon and never a donkey could we see, and the padrone was as invisible as the donkeys he had promised. After waiting an hour, I proposed our walking down to the works to make inquiries. Amongst a number of natives, who all knew nothing about donkeys—never seemed to have heard of such things—I noticed a fellow-countryman. He was stirring a bubbling, oily-looking liquid in a huge caldron. 'Look out, sir,' he cried, 'a drop of this 'll burn right through your clothes, and if you step on it, your boots won't be worth sixpence.'

The pot being sufficiently stirred and the lid duly adjusted, the man stepped over to where I had retreated, and seemed pleased to be able to talk in his own language again. He was a genial fellow, and was prepared to tell me all I might wish to know about natron. I got on the subject of donkeys as soon as I could, and learnt from him that the only three donkeys (excluding the padrone) which the company possessed, were probably down at the salt-pits. I explained that I did not expect to use the Company's donkeys, but understood that we could hire some. I then learnt that there were none nearer than el-Khatatbeh.

Later on the manager of the works appeared, and I got Jones to introduce me to him. After thanking him for letting me use the rest-house, I told him my difficulties. All he could do, he kindly told us, would be to send the trolley to the rail-head, and from thence we should have to walk to the convents, as no donkeys were available that day. Ibrahim, my friend's servant, put our lunch and materials on to the trolley, and as

soon as the mule was harnessed, off we went to the rail-head.

A thin black line on my map of Northern Egypt is drawn from the great Sahara, through this part of the Libyan desert, till it reaches Cairo. It then winds along the valleys of the Arabian desert, and disappears out of the map just north of Suez. About the spot where our trolley now runs the map describes this line as *Derb el-Hagg el-Meghârbe*, that is, the 'Pilgrim's Way of the Westerns.' Within a space of twenty miles on this route stand four Christian convents, two of which we then saw outlined against the sky. They stood there before this desert tract was first used by Moslem pilgrims on their way to Mekka; and until the Behera railway was opened, this same track was followed by the monks on their journeyings to and from Cairo.

It was not an unfrequented route even before the early Christians settled here. The mineral alkali, which these marshes produce, was known and used while Memphis was the capital city of Egypt.

Salt, extracted from the poisonous-looking marshes below us, lay in hillocks on each side of the little tramway, as we neared its termination. During the first mile of our tramp to the nearest convent the ground looked as if it were covered with hoar-frost. It crackled under our feet as would thin ice, and I longed to reach the sandy plain on the higher level. The wintry appearance of this uninviting tract of land contrasted strangely with the hot sun which beat down on us. The sandy plain, when we reached it, may have been

pleasant to our eyes, but it was infinitely more troublesome to walk over. We sank ankle deep at every step we took, and I now realised why the 'Pilgrim's Way' ran through the plague-stricken-looking stretch which we had crossed.

As we neared our objective, the Dêr Amba-Bishai, it looked more and more like a mediæval fortress than a retreat for the religious. Its massive outer walls now masked the little domes seen from a greater distance. Hungry Moslem pilgrims journeying to Mekka might have proved unwelcome visitors to the handful of *Gubti* monks within, and some recent repairs of the walls were probably done more for security than from any sense of tidiness. The gateway was large and imposing; but the door itself was small and sufficiently recessed to be defended through the loopholes in the projecting jambs.

We were glad to rest in the shadow of the walls till we managed to get admitted into the convent. Repeated pulls at the bell-rope seemed to have no effect, though the noise broke violently the stillness of the desert. Ibrahim then picked up a big stone, and using it as a battering-ram against the door, explained that the sound would reach further than that of the bell which hung outside from the wall. His exertions finally had some effect. A shutter was slid back from an iron grating in the door, and a voice called out, 'Who 's there?'

We explained our errand to the man inside with the persuasiveness of those addressing one in an advantageous position. The stupid face at the grating had

no expression but that of suspicion; a slight look of intelligence showed itself when the word *baksheesh* was whispered, and we were told that the Prior must first be consulted.

The man returned after a while, and we heard him remove a heavy stone from behind the door. Heavy wooden bars had then to be unfastened, and after several attempts to unfasten the lock, the old door creaked back on its rusty hinges. An angular passage, through the square tower of the gateway, led us into a spacious court, in the centre of which stood the church and the monastic dwellings. Most of the latter were in a woeful state of disrepair, and in some cases they had completely fallen in. A well and a fig-tree, as well as some green vegetables, showed that this court might have been made into a garden. This was a proof of the lethargic state of the monks, for the Egyptians as a rule will turn any ground into a garden if only water be available.

We were received by the Prior in a bare and once whitewashed room, with a wooden bench round the walls. After the usual salutations, he ordered coffee, and even produced cigarettes; but argue as long as we liked, he would not give us permission to sketch in the convent. The permission my friend had got, from the Patriarch in Cairo, mentioned the other convents, and not the one we were in; we should be allowed to see the church, but no sketching was to be done.

As Jones had worked here during the previous winter with a permit from the Patriarch, and had required ladders and other help to do his measuring

up, he did not think it necessary to get an authorisation merely to make a few sketches at present. I suspected ill-will more than mere stickling about these formalities was the cause of this, so I proposed that we should have a look at the church, and then go off to the neighbouring convent.

The most aggravating part was that the little church was picturesque in the extreme. Its whitewashed walls and vaulted roof emphasised the rich colouring of the primitive altar. I have been in the inner sanctuaries of wellnigh every Egyptian temple, and have entered most of the mosques of Cairo; but never had I been more impressed with the sentiment of any than with that of this rude place of Christian worship. I longed to sit down and paint it; no 'treatment' would be required, for the composition was perfect. Should I go back and offer the Prior a *baksheesh*? I even meditated on how, 'to save his face,' I might pretend it was for the upkeep of the chapel. On Jones suggesting that the church in the other convent might suit my purpose as well, we decided to take our departure.

We were told that the coffee was now ready for us, and were asked to return to the parlour. My irritation at not being allowed to paint was increased by the fleas which had got at my ankles, and I neither wished to see the Prior again nor touch his coffee. Though Ibrahim had the Moslem's poor opinion of the Copts, he implored me not to refuse the coffee, as it would be such an insult to the whole convent. Ibrahim did not want to paint, and he was probably less sensitive than I to the fleas, so he could view the matter in a calmer frame

of mind. I saw, however, that he was right, so we went and sipped our coffee, made our salaams to the Prior, tipped the tatterdemalion of a lay-brother who had let us in, and were once more in the outside world.

While writing these lines, and missing the accompanying illustration of the chapel which might have fitted in so well here, I feel mean for having drunk that coffee.

It took us less time to gain admittance to the next convent, which was separated from its neighbour by about a quarter of a mile. Its outward appearance was much the same as the other, it having been built about the same period and under the same conditions. The dwellings and church also formed a group in the centre of the enclosure, and though somewhat different in plan, it had nevertheless much the same character. A spreading sycamore-tree, with a goat and one or two sheep lying in its shade, gave the place a less dead-alive look than had its neighbour, though the same signs of neglect and decay were visible everywhere.

As we turned the angle of the main building, an expression of disgust escaped my friend. What we saw was disgusting enough, but not quite sufficiently so to account for my friend's expression, as he is the least demonstrative of men. A new erection between two wings of the earlier work had been run up by some builder whose architectural taste was of the *café chantant* order. It was already in a state of disrepair, which failed to give it a look of respectable age, but was merely a sign of bad material and still worse workmanship.

I told Jones what a pity it was that they had not asked him to design something which would have been in keeping with the rest of the convent, and I was answered that not only had he done so, but that he had also gone carefully into the cost of the building, and had given them his services for nothing. What had been run up during the preceding summer must have cost more than if his designs had been carried out, for workmen must have been got from Cairo to do the tawdry ornamentation.

We were shown into this place, with a certain amount of pride, by the monk who conducted us. The Prior was having his post-prandial sleep, and we were asked to make ourselves at home till he came to receive us. We begged that he might not be disturbed just yet, and asked to be allowed to have our lunch in the meantime. It was now about two o'clock, and our breakfast in the early dawn seemed a long way off. We had a hen and a brood of chicks as company in this new reception-room. The hen seemed to appreciate the samples of our lunch which fell her way, and her clucking brought more poultry to join the company. The monk appeared quite indifferent to the mess they made, and he squatted on the floor and conversed with Ibrahim. He would not join us in our food, but he willingly helped us with a bottle of wine we had brought.

Before we had finished, a very old man shuffled into the room from a neighbouring apartment, and muttered some greeting. We rose to meet him and to explain our errand. Jones tried to recall to his mind the days

he had spent there during the previous winter; but whether the old man had any recollection of this or not his blank expression did not reveal. He wore a brown woollen habit, such as the first Christians who settled here would have worn, and a great rent in the garment showed that this was all he had on. He did not wish to see the Patriarch's authorisation for us to work here; all things pertaining to this world seemed indifferent to him. He gave a shiver as if he felt the air passing through the rent in his garment, and shuffled out to sit on the doorsteps in the sun.

I made signs to Ibrahim to get a spirit-flask from out the basket and offer some to the old man, who mechanically accepted it, and drank it down. This seemed to revive him a little, and he passed the cup to have it refilled. Ibrahim gave him a second dose, and asked him his age. Not getting an answer that we could understand, the second monk told us that he must be more than a hundred years old. The poor old man looked it, and that was probably the only data which the other monk had.

The church was very interesting, and a more important structure than the previous one; but so dimly lighted that we had to wait till our eyes got used to the gloom before we could distinguish anything. Two or three minute windows in the vaulting admitted the only light. As our eyes got used to the gloom, the dilapidated condition of everything became more noticeable; some grease marks on the floor, beneath the few hanging lamps, seemed all the evidence of the place having been used in recent times.

I started a drawing of an interesting subject, one which might have consoled me for my disappointment in the other convent had I been able to see more clearly what I was about. The *heykel*, which corresponds to a chancel, was not here divided from the nave by the wooden screen common to most Coptic churches, but by a wall reaching to the vaulted roof. A high doorway was in the centre surmounted by a wooden grating, through which we could trace the outlines of the Coptic cross, and a curtain, as is usual, hung in the place of the door itself. A massive dresser stood to the left of the doorway, and a lectern slightly to the right. Rude Byzantine paintings hung from the top of the dresser, and an ikon of the Virgin and Child was fixed above the curtain.

The afternoon being far advanced, I hoped I might do better, with more light, on the following morning. It was a long weary tramp we had back to the rest-house, for no trolley awaited us at the rail-head, in spite of the most solemn promises that it should be there. We were more fortunate the next day, as the donkeys were kindly lent us, and we were able to be back at the convent in fairly good time.

Though I was in the church nearly the whole day, I witnessed no service, and remarking on this to Jones, he told me that during the weeks he had worked there he could never remember one having taken place.

What on earth had the eight other monks who resided here to do? They were supplied with corn and beans by the charity of others, and all initiative to

do anything for themselves seemed to have left them during their lethargic existence. Possibly, when the dust of the old Prior will have returned to the dust of the desert around him, some one younger and more energetic may put some life into the Sleepy Hollow.

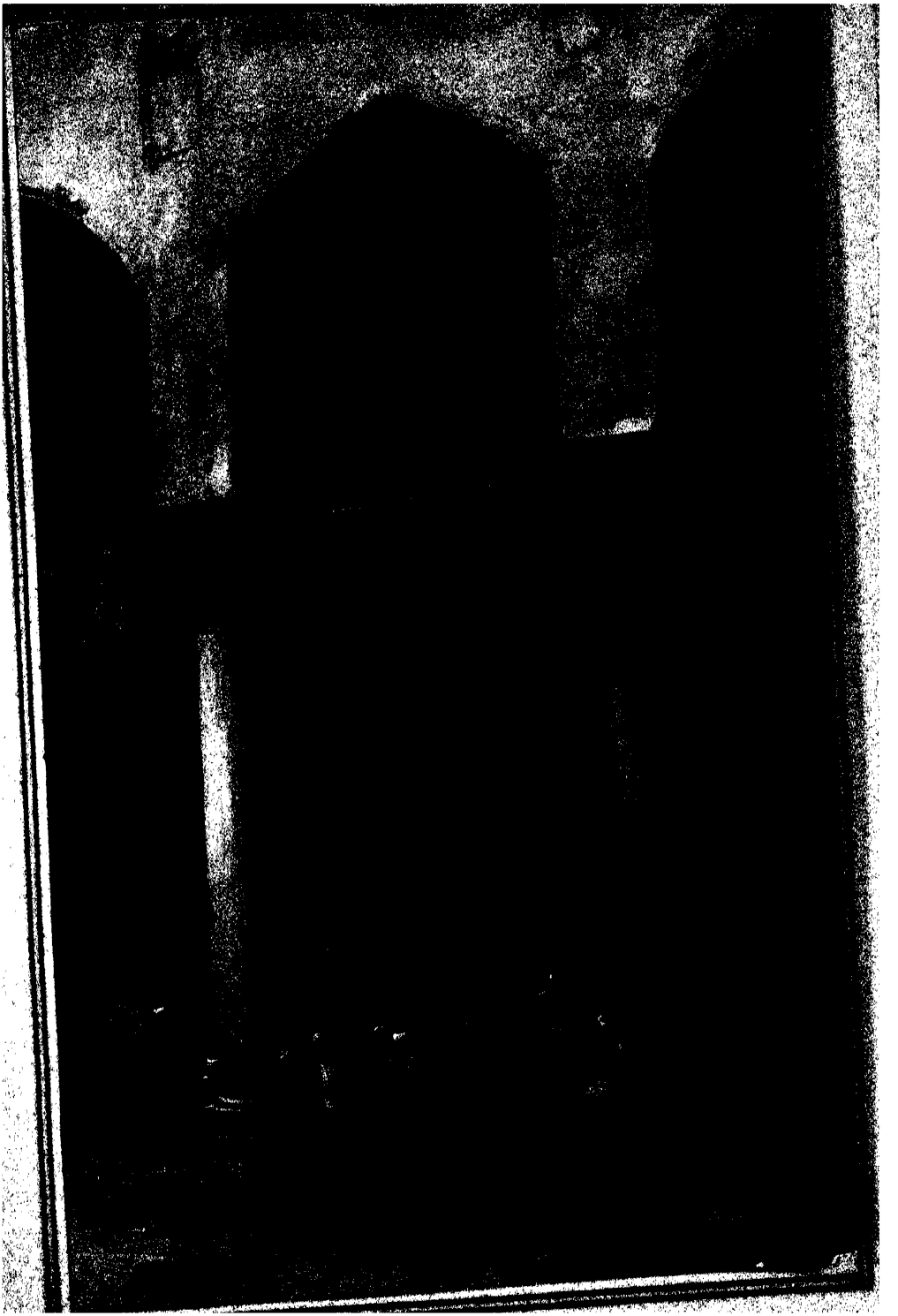
CHAPTER X

THE MOSQUE OF ES-SALIH TALAI

I RETURNED to Cairo little the richer in artistic material, but feeling much the better for the few days of desert air. Though Cairo stands on the fringe of a desert, the three-quarters of a million of its inhabitants are bound to vitiate its air, and they have certainly polluted its soil. No drainage system as yet carries off the sewage from the main part of the native city, where the dust is often laid by the slops emptied on the roadway. It is true that the *Tanzim* employs a large number of scavengers; but their efforts are chiefly confined to the modern quarters, where there is some hope of dealing with so difficult a task. The Arab's ideas as to road-cleaning, when he is left to himself, is to sweep the dust about rather than to clear it away; the scavenger is therefore the greatest nuisance of all the nuisances the sketcher has to contend with. When taken unawares, a sweep from one of these idiots' brooms may cover with dust your drawing and your pallet before you can stop him or get out of his way. Were it not for the sun, which sterilises this dust, a large population could never have existed here.

Cairo is unpaintable during the few grey days of midwinter, and perhaps this is just as well, for when

THE TOMB OF SHEYKH ABD-EL-DEYM



the Great Germicide does not shine, the place must be very unhealthy. An overcast sky often drove me into the mosques, where I could spend my time in drawing my subject, until the warm reflections from the sunlit court should make me feel instinctively for my pallet.

I flattered myself that few nooks and corners existed in the old city which I had not explored, till I turned up a narrow lane outside the Bab Zaweyla and found myself in the ruinous court of a delightful old mosque. It is extraordinary that I should have overlooked this during the many seasons I have spent in Cairo. The lane is called Haret es-Salih, and the mosque servant informed me that this was the mosque of Salih. Who this Salih might be was more than the servant could tell—he had not been there more than twenty years—should it be a mosque called after the founder of the mameluke dynasty, its date could not be earlier than the middle of the thirteenth century. There is much remaining which suggests an earlier period, both in the plan and in the construction of the arches; the foliated background, to the Kufic lettering which decorates these arches, seemed hardly in keeping with the work of the orthodox Moslems who succeeded the Fátimid dynasty.

I looked up all the Salihs who crop up in Stanley Lane-Poole's *Story of Cairo*—a handy little volume, published by Messrs. Dent and Co., which no visitor to Egypt should fail to get—and I succeeded in placing him as Talái ibn-Russik, who on his accession to power styled himself el-Melik es-Sâlih. He was the

last but one of the Fátimid khalifs, and he built this mosque in 1160, the sixth year of his reign.

There is little now remaining of all that was built in the enclosure which Gawhar pegged out as the site of el-Mo'izz's 'guarded city'; the small mosque, el-Akmar, happily still exists and enables students to study the less restricted forms of decoration which the Sheea heresy permits. The boundaries of el-Kahira were considerably extended during the two centuries of Fátimid rule; the three great gates and Hakim's mosque remain as specimens of the work of that period, and they also mark the limits of the extended city.

It was outside the walls of the Cairo of those days where Talái ibn-Russik built his mosque, and it remained for Saladin, who succeeded the Fátimid khalifs, to yet further enclose and bring this mosque well within the walls of his enlarged capital.

The entrance is through a gateway supporting the minaret, which latter is probably of a later period than the rest of the building. The colonnade, which surrounded three sides of the square court, has almost disappeared, as well as parts of the enclosing wall. The *liwán*, which is the subject of the accompanying illustration, is still intact. Kept sufficiently in repair so as to prevent its falling down, it has never suffered the hand of the renovator to sweep out every trace of the mellowing influence of near eight centuries of use.

An ugly wooden fence enclosed it from the court, but I was able to see enough through the palings to paint it as if this disfigurement were not there. The

court is on a higher level to the *liwán* owing to the accumulation of rubbish which has not been cleared away, and this accounts for the high horizon in the picture. It also enabled me to see less of the exasperating fence. Though still used as a place of worship on Fridays, it serves as a school during the rest of the week. The young students squatting on the matting and committing to memory verses of the Koran form picturesque groups, and the little crowd around the rostrum of the teacher centralises the subject.

The scenes are on a smaller scale than those which may be witnessed any day at the Azhar, or University Mosque. The latter has been so over-restored, and not always in a judicious manner, that I have never been tempted to paint there. The students here are mostly lads, and are either preparing for the university or are the children of parents who may not approve of the modernised form of instruction at the Khedivial schools. As in all purely Arab schools, the training is almost entirely confined to exercising the memory rather than the development of the reasoning faculties. It is often quite sufficient qualification for a teacher to know his Koran by heart, so that he can detect any mistakes in the verses which he hears his scholars repeat. As every lad repeats aloud what he tries to learn by heart, the noise is easily imagined. There seems little restraint; the lads nibble at their lunch or buy drinks from the lemonade-seller when it pleases them; those to whom the teacher's back is turned may indulge their liking for *mankalah* or any other games easily secreted under their cloaks; and had it not been for the powerful lungs of Mansoor,

most of the scholars would have taken up a position around my easel.

When the clouds dispersed and the further angle of the court formed a warm sun pocket, the greater number would leave the *liwán* and repeat their verses in the warmth. Mansoor's work of keeping the lads away from me then became more arduous. He found an ally in the mosque servant, and when gentle persuasion failed more drastic measures were used. The noise in the court did not in the least seem to disturb the good-natured teacher, and when he left his rostrum he would come and have a look at the work I was doing.

I came here many times, for not only did the drawing and detail of this subject take up several long mornings, but I had a second one on hand of which these lads in the sun made the foreground. That they should be curious to see what I had made of them was natural enough, so I gave them an opportunity of satisfying their curiosity before I packed up to go. In sketching a group of figures which is constantly on the move, the head of one may be suggested on the body of another who may have moved away. This seemed to perplex my spectators considerably. When Ahmed had identified his *kuftan* or *galabieh*, Seleem would point out the head as belonging to himself. A good stare at me to see if any signs of the evil one were visible would follow: if some *afrí't* had not assisted me in this uncanny work, how else was it to be explained.

As mornings begun in sunshine may turn to grey in winter, or the other way about, my having two good subjects in the same place was a great advantage, for

though a reflected sunlight improved my *liwán*, I could nevertheless find plenty of detail to draw while the sky was overcast. 'Good gracious!' it actually rained one morning, and with my drawings I joined in the rush for shelter under the arches. Volunteers to carry my belongings were numerous, but Mansoor would only allow some privileged youngster to carry my stool. The teacher would drone out the verses of the *Fáthah* quite regardless of the disturbance.

The profession of a *fikee* is, I am told, not a lucrative one. A half-piastre, *i.e.* five farthings, per week per pupil used to be his earnings, though this may have increased slightly with the general increase of wages. If we consider his intellectual equipment and compare it with that of a schoolmaster at home, it is possible that the pay of the *fikee* may compare very favourably. They often eke out this miserable pittance by reading a chapter of the Koran in the houses of the well-to-do. One recently 'killed two birds with one stone' by posing as a model to me, while he also repeated the *Fáthah*, outside the entrance to a hareem. I am afraid that some giggling, which I could hear through the *mushrbiyeh*, may have been caused by my attempt at portraiture. I turned my easel towards the wooden grating to satisfy a legitimate curiosity which might possibly have been excited in the 'prohibited place.' The giggles developed into loud laughter. I rather fancied my sketch, and, in spite of this unfavourable criticism, I still fail to see anything funny in it. The *fikee* turned out to be as big a fraud as most of the natives whom I have induced to pose to me. The value

of time becomes enormous to any loafer who poses for an hour, and, according to this *fikee*, it might have been as valuable as that of a Harley Street specialist. Some feminine jeers, heard through the *mushrbiyeh*, hastened his departure.

According to Lane the schoolmasters in Egypt are mostly persons of very little learning ; few are acquainted with any writings except the Koran and certain prayers, which, as well as the contents of the sacred volume, they are hired to recite on particular occasions. It is fair to say that the Egypt of Lane is the Egypt of full seventy years ago. Under the advisership of Mr. Dunlop and his staff of able school-inspectors, a sound education on enlightened lines is now obtainable even in the smallest towns for the children whose parents can or will afford the fees of the Khedivial schools. But the *kuttáb*, as the poorer and purely Mohammedan schools are called, seem to have drifted into a backwater, and are little influenced by the stream of enlightenment which flows past them.

The story Lane tells of a *fikee* of his time might still apply to present-day teachers in some of the villages, and may be worth repeating here : 'I was lately told of a man who could neither read nor write succeeding to the office of a schoolmaster in my neighbourhood. Being able to recite the whole of the Koran, he could hear the boys repeat their lessons ; to write them, he employed the *areef* (or head-boy and monitor of the school), pretending that his eyes are weak. A few days after he had taken upon himself this office, a poor woman brought a letter for him to read to her from her

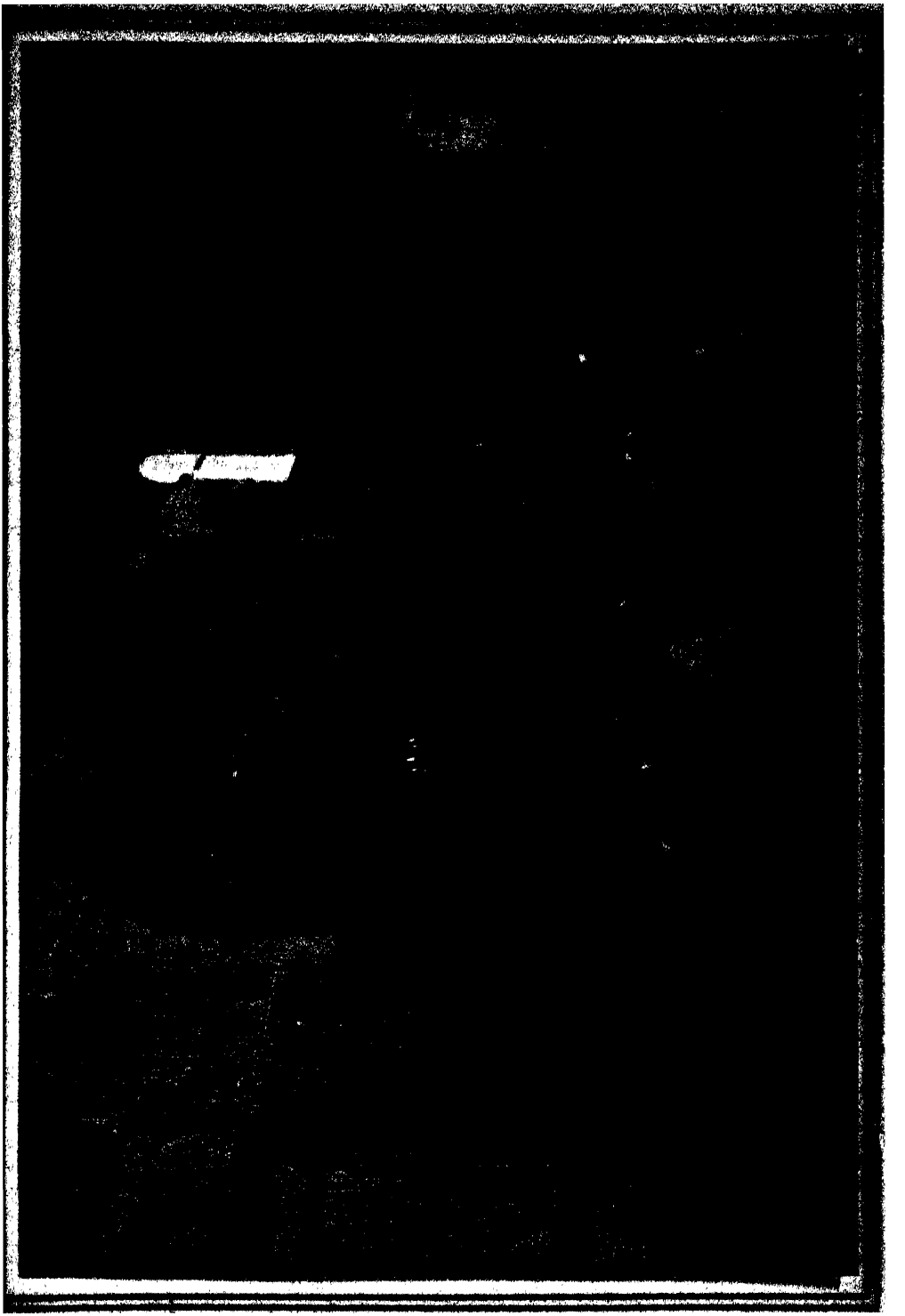
son, who had gone on pilgrimage. The *fikee* pretended to read it, but said nothing; and the woman, inferring from his silence that the letter contained bad news, said to him, "Shall I shriek?" He answered, "Yes." "Shall I tear my clothes?" she asked; he replied, "Yes." So the poor woman returned to her house, and with her assembled friends performed the lamentation and other ceremonies usual on the occasion of a death. Not many days after this her son arrived, and she asked him what he could mean by causing a letter to be written stating that he was dead? He explained the contents of the letter, and she went to the schoolmaster and begged him to inform her why he had told her to shriek and tear her clothes, since the letter was to inform her that her son was well, and he was now arrived at home. Not at all abashed, he said, "God knows futurity. How could I know that your son would arrive in safety? It is better that you should think him dead than to be led to expect to see him and perhaps be disappointed." Some persons who were sitting with him praised his wisdom, exclaiming, "Truly, our new *fikee* is a man of judgment!" and for a little while he found that he had raised his reputation by this blunder.'

I must refrain from quoting from that fund of knowledge, Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, for since it has been so ably edited by Mr. Ernest Rhys, it has been placed within the reach of every one by Messrs. Dent in the 'Everyman's Library' series.

As my view of the mosque is from the court, there

was no objection to my painting there during the *duhr* or midday service on Fridays. I was much tempted to make that my subject, but I refrained from doing so, as I have done that subject once or twice before. The ritual has become more familiar to me, and I was able to follow better what was going on.

The mosque servant, who often helped my man to keep off the boys during the week-days, increased in importance on Fridays (which, I need hardly inform my readers, correspond to our Sundays). Half an hour before noon the *mueddin* ascends the minaret and chants the *selám* from one of the balconies. This is not the *adán* or ordinary call to prayer, but a salutation to the Prophet, the *adán* being called a little after the noon. The worshippers soon arrive, for there are the ablutions to be performed before they take their seats in the *liwán*. A reader, in the meanwhile, ascends the rostrum facing the prayer-niche or *mirhab*, and begins reciting the 'Soorat el-Kahf,' which is one of the chapters in the Koran. Each worshipper drops his slippers before he steps on to the matting, and places them sole to sole next to where he sits down. He performs two prostrations and then sits patiently till the *adán* is called from the minaret, when the recitation of the *soorat* ceases. During this call the whole congregation, which faces the prayer-niche, kneels instead of sitting cross-legged as hitherto. On the last syllable of the *adán* every man rises and, holding his hands, palm outwards, close to his ears, he repeats the 'Allahu Akbar' which has descended from the minaret. He then makes the various prostrations of



the *rekah*, repeating the same words at each different posture, and concludes with the salutations to the Prophet.

The *murakkee* (who was no other than the mosque servant and my ally of the courtyard) then proceeded to open the folding-doors of the pulpit, and took a wooden sword from behind them, and holding it with its point to the ground, he also repeated the salutation. From a raised platform (known as the *dikkeh*, and standing at the entrance to the *liwán*) an officiant now chants the praises of Mohammed. The servant then recites each verse of the *adán*, and they are repeated in a sonorous voice by the man on the *dikkeh*. During this the *khateeb*, as the preacher is called, advances to the pulpit, and taking the sword from the *murakkee*, he slowly ascends the steps, and reaching the top one, he waits till the recital is concluded.

The preacher stands, holding the sword point downwards, and delivers his address in a solemn and effective manner to his congregation, who sit rapt in attention.

No special vestments are worn by those who officiate, and the ordinary robes of a sheykh seem perfectly appropriate. The sword, the only object used in the simple ritual, is to remind the hearers that Islam was spread by the sword and that by its power it should, if necessary, still be maintained. Little outward reverence is shown to the mosque, as such, at ordinary times, for I have seen it used as a convenient place to sleep in during the heat of the day, and the playing amongst its columns of lads during

the intervals of their tasks strikes no one as unseemly behaviour. But at the call to prayer the demeanour of all present is strikingly reverent.

I have worked in a great number of mosques and must have seen thousands of men attending the services, but I don't recall having seen half a dozen worshippers in any other but the native dress. Now that all the youth of the country, who attend the Khedivial schools or have of late years passed through their classes, adopt the European garb; that the numerous employees in the government and other offices have all forsaken the native dress—is it not strange that a trousered Moslem should hardly ever be seen inside a mosque unless he goes there merely as a spectator? The *effendi*, a title loosely given to every native in European dress and *tarbouch*, feels, I'm sure, ill at ease amongst his co-religionists when the services of his religion are being held. The devout Moslem views the western garb as 'a mark of the Beast.' This is felt so strongly in Morocco, that should a Moor appear in coat and trousers, his co-religionists would tear them off him.

The encouragement given in Egypt to the adoption of western clothes is a fatal mistake. The courteous manners of the oriental seem to leave him with his cast-off *kuftán*; his morals are distinctly worse when the ties of his creed are loosened; and the Christian missionary knows well enough that the westernised Egyptian is not a fertile soil for the Gospel seed. We must not flatter ourselves that our hold on Egypt is in any way strengthened by this silly fashion; we have only to attend a nationalist demonstration to see how the trousered effendi out-

numbers the robed Egyptian. Should the sword of the preacher unhappily be held aloft and a holy war proclaimed from every pulpit, this European veneer would vanish like smoke, and the effendi would revert to the garb of the sheykh.

During my first season in Egypt I painted a crowd of young students at the entrance of one of the Khedivial schools. The lads were all robed and turbaned, and whatever their social positions may have been, each individual looked a dignified young gentleman. When next I visited Cairo all this was changed. The *kuftán* and the *gibbeh* were replaced by sweated tailor goods from some Greek departmental stores. I felt a personal dislike to the whole education department, and especially to the British Adviser. I am glad to add that I have since learnt that our countrymen had nothing to do with it. It was the Egyptian officials who inaugurated the change. Education has made such advances since the British occupation, through the efforts of a hard-working and certainly not overpaid British staff, that I am glad to know that I was not justified in attributing to it so foolish a blunder.

CHAPTER XI

THE BLUE MOSQUE AND KASR-ESH-SHEMA

I HAVE never passed a season in Cairo without making a study of some sort in the Blue Mosque. There are many mosques of much greater architectural pretensions, as well as of more historical interest; but so long as artists continue to flock to Egypt in search of subjects, so long will the Blue Mosque serve them for material. On entering the blue-tiled *liwán* after a tramp through the glare and the dust of the open spaces around the citadel, something of the pleasure is experienced of him who, after a desert journey, first rests his eyes on the green of cultivation. The pleasure is as much a physical as an intellectual one, for the hot season draws one there far more than does the cold. The temperature would be no higher were the walls a scarlet, but I 'm sure it would be more felt; and this is not only so to those whose training inclines them to search out beautiful colour, for I have observed that more people come here to sleep through the heat of the day than to any other mosque.

The actual structure was raised by a certain Aksunkur during the middle of the fourteenth century, and many much finer mosques of that period are still remaining. It was restored more than three

centuries later by Ibrahim Agha, and, whatever the purist may have to say to the contrary, it is these restorations which give the charm to the place.

Blue tiles cover the whole wall of the vast *liwán*; from the matted pavement to the spring of the vaulting they spread around the prayer-niche till, high up, they reach the ribbing of the dome. This was a great undertaking of Ibrahim Agha, for though the tiles were not worth the fancy prices of the present day, it must have been a very costly affair even in his time. The domed chapel, containing the tomb of the founder, is more beautiful still, but it is almost too dark to make painting a possibility.

The look of neglect and gentle decay is not depressing, as in many a Cairene building which lies under the sentence of complete renovation or of a total collapse. Some structural repairs have lately been made, which were doubtless badly needed; but I hope it may stop at that. The Moslem has all he wants now for his frequent prayers or his midday nap, and no renovation of the mosque would ever compensate for the loss of its present charm.

The mosques of Cairo can be an endless source of instruction to any one interested in the builder's art, their number is so great (over four hundred) and they are so varied in character; they suit their surroundings as if they had grown into the spaces they occupy, and those who worship there look as if they had been grown for that purpose.

Interesting as are the temples of ancient Egypt, they have not the human interest of the Cairene mosques.

Old and decrepit as the latter may be, the beauty of life is still there; the temple at its best has but the beauty of a corpse. The restoration of the mosques, if well done, as happily is often the case here, may rob them of some temporary charm, but it preserves to the people a valuable heritage; whereas the restored temples will merely give future generations something to laugh at.

What temple is grander than Tulún's mosque? Or in which of them did the builder's art excel that of the Sultan Hassan? Yet how few visit these mosques compared with the crowds who are rushed through the temples of Upper Egypt. The one of all others which every tourist is taken to see is the mosque of Mohammed Ali, which crowns the citadel heights. It is imposing from its magnificent position; but who ever leaves it with any higher thought than of the money which has been lavished on it?

An appreciative guide to the mosques may now be found in Douglas Sladen's *Oriental Cairo*, and to do here inadequately what he has done so well is not the purpose of these pages.

If so much enjoyment is to be got out of the study of Saracenic structures, what about the early Christian churches? They provide less æsthetic entertainment than do the mosques, solely because their number is very much more restricted. But where in this wide world can any one interested in the dawn of Christianity find a spot to appeal more to his sympathies than in the seven Coptic churches which cluster round the old fortress of Babylon? Concealed as they are from public view, one enters their precincts with much the same feel-

ings as on entering the catacombs of Rome. Within the walls of this Christian settlement, dark and narrow passages lead to the unobtrusive interiors of the churches. The search for the doorkeeper, and when he is found, the primitive key with which he unbolts the ponderous lock, and the man's dress, which twelve centuries of Mohammedan rule has not altered, all tend to take one back to the days when in these hidden places the shrines of Abu-Sarga and of Kadisa-Barbára were raised.

The first of these two, which is more familiar to us as Saint Sergius, is usually visited before the others. It dates from the tenth century, when the more tolerant rule of the first Fátimid khalifs would allow of its construction; but it stands on the site of a church of a very much earlier date. The crypt of its predecessor still remains, and this takes one back to the times when Memphis stood where some rubbish hills now only mark its site on the western banks of the Nile; when Bab-li-On was in truth the southern gate of On, the 'City of the Sun,' of which nothing now is visible but the obelisk of Heliopolis.

A tree marks the spot where the Virgin and the child Jesus are said to have rested. It is about a mile this side of the obelisk, and some fifteen miles from the fortress of Babylon which the Romans built on the site of the gate of On, and whose name it retained. Tradition has it that near this tree the Virgin bathed her child in some brackish water, and this becoming sweet, the pilgrims to this day drink of that fountain. Tradition helps us to trace the journey of the Holy Family from this tree to the crypt below the church of

Abu-Sarga, for it tells us of another resting-place about midway, and that is Joseph's well on the citadel hill.

We are taken down some dilapidated steps to visit the crypt, which we are told was the Egyptian house of Joseph and Mary while they hid their child from Herod's wrath. Needless to say that the crypt is a Christian structure, and of a later date than the Roman fortress, which at its earliest is placed in the second century of our Lord. But there is no reason why this spot should not have been chosen by the Holy Family after their flight into Egypt. Some ruined shrine to a god of the decadent mythology may have stood here in which they may have made their home, as the early Christians oftentimes did some three centuries later. To build a church on so hallowed a spot would have been the first thought of these Christians, if any record still remained. When Babylon was besieged by the Mohammedan invaders, this church might have then been destroyed, or if it survived so long a siege, it would have disappeared after Merwán, the last of the Omayyad khalifs, had set fire to Fostat.

Be this as it may, it is quite probable that this pretty tradition has some foundation in fact.

There is little at present to see in the crypt by the light of the tallow dip which the Coptic servant holds in his fingers, but I should have regretted not to have seen that little. The tenth-century church above it is a little gem, and however much the dirt of those who attend it, and the formal ritual which few of the worshippers can understand, may prejudice one against the modern Copts, the fact remains that their faith has

withstood centuries of persecution. Stanley Lane-Poole wisely remarks that 'no one can stand unmoved in a Coptic church during the celebration of the Mass, or hear the worshippers shout with one voice, just as they did some fifteen hundred years ago, the loud response, "I believe this is the Truth," without emotion.'

The whole of the Coptic settlement here is built within the girdle-wall of the Roman castle of Babylon, or 'el-Kasr-esh-Shema,' as the natives still call it. This Arabic name, 'The Castle of the Sun,' emphasises the position it held in regard to ancient Heliopolis, of which it was a bulwark. We also hear mention of this esh-Shema in the prophecies of Jeremiah xliii. 13: 'He shall break also the images of Beth-shemesh, that is in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire.'

Perched up between two bastions of the Roman castle, and over its gate, is the Mu'állaka or the 'hanging' church. Less rich in traditions than its neighbour, with some of its romance destroyed by a modern approach, it gives the intelligent visitor even greater pleasure than Abu-Sarga which he has seen. He may confuse its plan with that of the neighbouring churches, and time may obliterate the construction of its piers and barrel-shaped roof, but never will he forget the little Byzantine pulpit standing on the fifteen slender Saracenic columns, and relieved against as rich a screen as ever closed in a sanctuary.

I have attempted to enter into more of the details of these Coptic churches in *Below the Cataracts*, also of the history of Fostat, the 'Town of the Tent,' which

Amr Ibn el-Âs built around the fortress of Babylon, and which during successive dynasties of khalifs was extended until it covered the space now occupied by the old city of Cairo. The topography and history has been admirably given to us by Stanley Lane-Poole; students of early Christian architecture can find all that is known of the Coptic churches in that scholarly work of Dr. A. J. Butler, *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt.*

I cannot, however, refrain from mentioning the 'hanging garden' which adjoins the Mu'állaka. The palms which grow there, high above the fertilising Nile, are watered by the faithful to perpetuate the tradition that the Virgin Mary, on arriving at her new abode, first broke her fast with some dates which she culled from a palm-tree growing near this spot.

Four more Coptic churches are within easy reach of this one, and as parts of them date back to the third century, there is much to occupy the time of the archæologist even if the artist does not always find what is best suited to his brush.

The fortress of Babylon and the Coptic settlement within its walls are two or three miles south-west of the main part of the city, and situated at the back of an old suburb, opposite the island of Rodah, known as Old Cairo. This name is misleading, for the present mediæval Cairo existed long before this suburb, which was built on land recovered from the Nile after Fostat had become a ruinous waste. It looks old enough now, but it does not require many generations to impart an ancient appearance to the poorer Arab dwellings.

The Kasr-esh-Shema, on the higher level, is that part which might justly be called Old, for it is the nucleus from which the present huge city developed.

There are also several Coptic churches in Cairo proper, and one in Beyn es-Sureen, near the Armenian Church, is said to be the oldest in Egypt, and consequently one of the earliest churches in Christendom. A portion of the Copts, who have joined communion with the Roman Catholics, have their church close by. I saw a great deal of their priest, and of some leading members of his community, while I spent a summer in a village on the Lebanon. They had gone there partly for their health and partly to escape the hottest months of the Egyptian summer. The priest was a very different type of man intellectually from the lethargic monks I met in the convents at Wadi el-Natrún. I am indebted to him for much information about the Catholic churches in the Near East. He had been prepared for Holy Orders in Rome, although he and his community are under allegiance to the Pope, and do not call themselves Roman Catholics, but members of the Coptic Catholic Church, while they are very tenacious of the privileges which they secured when they seceded from the main body of the Copts. The priests are allowed to marry, and also to say Mass in the obsolete Coptic language. My friend told me that though allowed to marry if he wished to do so, he had come to the conclusion that the Latin Church was right in enforcing celibacy on its clergy. 'No! no! no!' from the ladies who were present at our conversation, shows that my friend's views were not popular.

Similar privileges have been allowed to the other members of eastern Christian churches when they submitted to the Church of Rome. It is the exception when their priests go to a theological college at Rome, and the great majority evidently do not hold my friend's views on matrimony, for few remain single.

As only the Church of Rome repeats the Mass in Latin, it might have been expected that the eastern churches under her authority would have made use of languages understood by their congregations. But this is not so. No Copt can understand the Coptic liturgy which he hears repeated; only a few cultured Syrian Maronites can follow the Syriac Mass, and the Catholic Greeks, the Armenians, and the Chaldeans all hear the liturgy in languages long obsolete.

My friend could follow the meaning of the Coptic phrases he daily used; but apart from these, Coptic is a dead language to him. He kindly repeated the Lord's Prayer to me, and, with possibly an Arabic accent, his words must have sounded the same as those in use in the days of the Ptolemies. A few Coptic words have still survived and are in use amongst the peasantry of Upper Egypt, and possibly philologists may discover some in the colloquial Arabic of the Delta. It is in Upper Egypt that we still find the type portrayed in the ancient sculptures, amongst the Moslems as well as the Christians; but in the Delta the Copt shows his ancestry more conspicuously, as the Moslems amongst whom he dwells have there a greater admixture of Arab blood. I was very much struck with the resemblance a Coptic gentleman, who was staying at the same inn

as myself, bore to the celebrated 'Sheykh-el-Beled,' the fifth dynasty statue in the Cairo museum. He was younger and not as stout as the statue, but he might have passed for a younger brother. The broad nose and full lips, the rather prominent cheek-bones, and a slight upward inclination of the eyes from the nose, were all there as in his prototype of some sixty centuries ago. I remarked to him that while we were savages his forebears were the greatest people in the world. His answer was, 'Yes; and now you are the greatest people in the world, while we are the savages.' Lane remarks that the Egyptian, in answering a question, is more likely to say what he thinks may be agreeable to his hearer than to stick to the absolute truth. This looked rather like it.

I have heard our missionaries accused of deceiving the subscribers to the missions, by stating the numbers of their converts and not specifying whether these converts were from Islam or were merely Copts who had changed from one form of Christianity to another. If this is true, the subscribers might justly feel that they had been deceived. But I should like further proof of this accusation before accepting the truth of it; the tendency of Europeans in the East is to believe anything which may discredit the missionary. That Islam is a barrier which the missionary has so far failed to break through is true enough, and missionaries whom I have met have been the first to admit this. Can one wonder, then, that they turn from so barren a soil to sow their seed amongst the Copts, who have shown some tendency to receive it? The faith of the Copts

has sustained them through centuries of persecution; but it is amazing how stagnant a faith may sometimes hold a people together.

When I think of those lazy monks at Wadi el-Natrún; their neglected chapels; their barren gardens, though water was there had they the energy to draw it; I marvel how this people has ever risen to be a power in Egypt. That they are a power to be reckoned with we have lately seen. The common mistake of judging a people from a few specimens who are forced into one's notice is evident here. A very much larger proportion of them are literate compared with the Moslem Egyptians, and they fill, in consequence, a much larger proportion of situations where some instruction, other than that of the Koran, is necessary. The grievance they are ventilating is that they do not get their share of the highly salaried government posts, and as far as I could ascertain, they have a subject of complaint. Their numbers will probably increase largely, now that persecution no more drives their weaker brethren into the folds of Islam. They are fervent in business if they do not always serve the Lord, and some have accumulated great wealth.

The black and sometimes the blue turban, which distinguishes them from the Mohammedans, was originally forced on them with other and more vexatious enactments; they still wear it, however, though of course free to put on what they like. The women used to wear the face veil when out of doors, more as a protection than as an ordinance of their religion, and at present most of them have discarded it.

CHAPTER XII

THE SPHINX, AND A DISSERTATION ON TOMMY ATKINS

I WELL remember how sentiment was shocked when it was proposed to construct a tram-line to the Pyramids of Gizeh: I may also have turned up the whites of my eyes at the mere thought of such a desecration. It is now a well-established concern, and we may congratulate ourselves that neither the Pyramids nor the Sphinx seem much the worse for it. The line ends just below the plateau on which the Pyramids have been raised, and by the time these are reached the prosaic tram-cars are well out of sight. The Antiquities Department holds all the ground which contains anything here of interest, so we shall be spared the erection of anything tending to vulgarise it. The tram is in truth a great boon to many, and not the least to those who, like myself, spend much time in the bazaars and streets of the old city.

I can look back on nothing more pleasurable, during my last sojourn in Egypt, than the moonlit evenings quietly spent on the glorious Pyramid plateau. I put this off until the season was well on the wane and the first great heat had emptied Cairo of the bulk of its foreign sightseers. A forty minutes' run—and, my word, there is no dawdling here!—along the Gizeh

road, blows the heat and the bazaar stuffiness well out of one's system, and the pure dry air of the desert, when the higher level is reached, prepares one to enjoy everything to the uttermost. Familiarity may have lessened the excitement which a first gaze at the world's greatest wonder must produce, but familiarity has never robbed it of its awful impressiveness.

The rays of the declining sun or the light of the moon may glorify the most commonplace subjects; but that which is always grand here reaches the sublime on a fine moonlight night. Let us cross the broad shadow cast by Kheops' mighty tomb, and glance up that vast surface, rapidly receding and lessening, yet more and more clearly defined as it rises into the deepening background of the star-spangled blue. Its base is hardly definable from the pale golden sand on which it rests, and the distance to the further angle is hard to judge. To our left three shapeless masses stand out dark against the eastern horizon: they are the ruins of the small pyramids beneath which were laid the Pharaoh's daughters. Was Henwetsen young or fair when she found her resting-place beneath that heap of stones? Had no monument been raised to mark the spot, the sixty centuries since elapsed might not have disturbed her sleep.

Following a straightish course over the sand-buried necropolis, we soon see, rising from a hollow in the plateau, a mushroom-shaped rock, and we know that our objective is in sight. We skirt the depression in the soil till we are arrested by the huge human profile, which is now clearly defined against the sky. I leave

my companion to his contemplations; for the supreme moment, when I consider the Sphinx is to be at his best, has now arrived. I run round the edge of the hollow to compare a three-quarter view with his full face. He seems too sunk and dwarfed by the ground behind him, and I descend to the lower level till his shoulders just appear above the horizon. I feel I can't better this view, and I settle down to try and absorb as much as my memory will hold, with a dim hope of being able to record it on the following morning.

The moon shines so brightly in these latitudes, that I had looked forward to being able to paint by its light. That was in my earlier days, and the muddy-looking mess, which the next morning's light revealed, made me abandon any further attempts in that direction. To take all the notes one can, and to retain as much of the colour as one's memory can hold, is the only possible way to battle with this subject.

There are moments when uncalled-for information might almost justify homicide. I had flattered myself that, hid away as I was in the shadow of the shelving slope of the hollow, I might have remained unobserved by the Pyramid pests who look upon every stranger as their fair prey. Some broken stones sliding down the slope make me look up, and there to my horror I find one of these pests taking his seat just above me. 'Hi, mister, you take my donkey; Roosevelt best donkey in Egypt; take you to Mena House for two piastres.' I tell the man in Arabic to go away and not to disturb me. He is evidently disappointed in me when he finds I am not entirely new to the country; possibly this is

only a phrase I may have learnt in a guide-book, so he begins again : 'Yaas, Roosevelt best donkey in Egypt ; two piastres not much money ; you ride my . . .' I jump up on murder intent, though I am the most peaceable of mortals. The Arab jumps up also and, throwing himself on Roosevelt's back, moves off faster than he came. When my irritation has calmed down, I have to begin over again to try and impress on my mind the essentials of the grand subject before me.

I admit that the nuisance of the Pyramid Bedouins has been somewhat diminished of late ; but they are nevertheless a great nuisance still. The fault lies to a certain extent with the tourists, especially the ladies, who take far too much notice of them. If the ladies were aware of what these blackguards say of them, they would perhaps keep them at a better distance. They have lost all the virtues of the true Bedouins, and have acquired all the vices of the Fellaheen. They are a good-looking set of ruffians, which accounts for the way some visitors spoil them ; but this does not excuse the police from stopping their importunities.

I found on the following morning that a second visit was necessary, and allowing for the later rising of the moon, I went a second time accompanied by a sympathetic friend. We managed to shake off the Pyramid limpets, and my friend kept guard over me while enjoying his pipe. I think I got what notes I wanted before another distraction came. Some half-dozen British soldiers were having an evening out, and were also attracted to the moonlit Sphinx. Their

object was also to get a presentment of the 'Mysterious One,' though chiefly as a background to themselves. The conventional group, which may be seen here any day during the season, did not satisfy the Tommy with the camera. He was probably a corporal, for he directed his sitters as one accustomed to command. 'Crawl up on to his mug, can't yer,' to two or three who had found a safe seat on the shoulders. 'Right you are, Cocky,' came from an adventurous sitter, who proceeded to climb the neck and swarm up the wig till he reached a safe position in the Sphinx's ear. A more dangerous climb was that of one who worked his way round the cheek to find a foot-hold in a crack where the nose used to be. Another proceeded by a northern route and risked his neck to get on to the lip. Finding this an insecure place he appealed to the artist below. ''Ang on to 'is eyelid and put your foot into 'is norstril,' came the word of command, as well as plenty of advice from the Arab spectators. 'Now—ready—present—fire!' A dim light from a lucifer match was all the fire we saw, and loud jeers from the Arabs drowned what language was addressed to the defective flash-light.

An Arab who had some magnesium wire saw his opportunity to do a deal. 'I give you plenty light for one shilling.' 'One shilling, you blighter, for an 'aporth of wire!' came from the photographic artist, with comments from the sitters up aloft. The one safely fixed in the Sphinx's ear was for holding out, while the one hanging on to the eyelid proposed coming to terms. 'We 'll give ye three piastres

when ta job's feenished,' bawled out the latter in a strong North British accent. 'Me know what them piastres feel like,' from the Arab, who had not yet learnt that the word of a Briton is equal to his bond. A ready-money transaction was clearly indicated, and two piastres down was finally taken in preference to the promise of three from the Scot hanging on to the eyelid. A flash of white light and a 'Hip, hip, hip, hurrah!' from the Arab spectators, brought the *séance* to a close.

The British infantry, when quartered in the East, develop a passion for riding some beast or another. Donkey-boys fought for its custom, and the supply being greater than the demand, satisfactory terms were arranged. One Tommy declaring that the 'commisairy camuel' was the boy for him, camels were soon on the spot. ''Ands off, you measly son of the Proofit, or I'll give you a clip on the side of the ear,' was Tommy's warning to an over-zealous claimant for his custom. The driver moved off quickly to take his ear out of danger, and a less presumptuous rival got the fare. We heard, as might be expected, the well-worn jest about the camel having the hump when the beast showed a disinclination to rise, and soon after the merry party disappeared in the shades of the desert.

Times and oft have I heard our occupation of Egypt criticised, not by foreigners residing there, but by those who could easily clear out if things looked awkward. It is naturally also a reproach to the native that his people should not be considered fit to govern themselves, even when he doubts that fitness himself. But,

be this as it may, the conduct of the British soldier is rarely a cause of complaint. I will even go further and say that Tommy Atkins is popular with the very people whom he is called upon to hold in check. He spends his money—often injudiciously, I admit—more freely than does the Levantine, and the natives feel sure that the payment of a just debt can always be enforced. Besides this, he is a jolly fellow, and a bit of rough fun appeals to the lower orders in Cairo. British military police patrol the streets at night, and woe betide Tommy if he is caught in a broil.

How far Cairo is conducive to our soldier's morals is another matter; Cairo, however, may be more to blame in this than the men we send there. The military authorities do their utmost to ensure good behaviour, but they can't prevent the men from enjoying themselves in their own particular way when off duty. Should we be anxious to know the latest 'turn' of the London music-halls, we have but to walk down some of the streets north of the Esbekiyeh an hour or two before tattoo, and we will find Tommy giving the 'turn,' with suitable action, to an admiring crowd in the drink-shop. There is also generally one to play a piano accompaniment, and I have often wondered how and when this soldier could have found the opportunity to acquire a sufficient knowledge of his instrument. A concertina *obbligato* is also of frequent occurrence. When the Levantine landlord's raw spirits begin to tell, the songs do not of necessity become more uproarious, as might be expected; but a mawkish sentimentality is the chief characteristic. 'The sailor sighs' or 'The

soldier dropt a tear' is then more the type of song than the livelier ones with rollicking choruses. Donkey-boys hang about these drink-shops and other less reputable places, and manage somehow to get the carousers back to barracks before tattoo has sounded.

Unfortunately, it is those who spend their evenings in the least profitable manner who are most in evidence. The places where harmless recreation is provided for the soldiers are not in like manner open to the street, and the number who use them may well resent being judged by the samples who frequent the drink-shops.

Let us return to the Sphinx: the very thought of the gaslit streets near the Esbekiyeh makes the air seem purer and cooler; the expression of the 'Mysterious One' is no more ruffled by his late indignities than would be the face of a sheykh after having brushed off a few flies. I had taken the notes I wanted and my companion had been well entertained by the comic interlude the soldiers had provided. It was a glorious moonlight night, the Sphinx looked majestic despite his battered features, the pale warm colouring of the neck and shoulders harmonised beautifully with the desert shades in which it was partly lost, and the more sombre lines of the head were relieved against a low-toned blue of a quality as hopeless to attempt to describe as it seemed hopeless ever to match with the limitations of the pallet. One leaves such a scene with much the same sensations as after having witnessed some grand and solemn function. It is as well that these scenes are not of daily occurrence, lest the critical eye rob it of its solemnity.

The tram-cars run us back across the five miles of

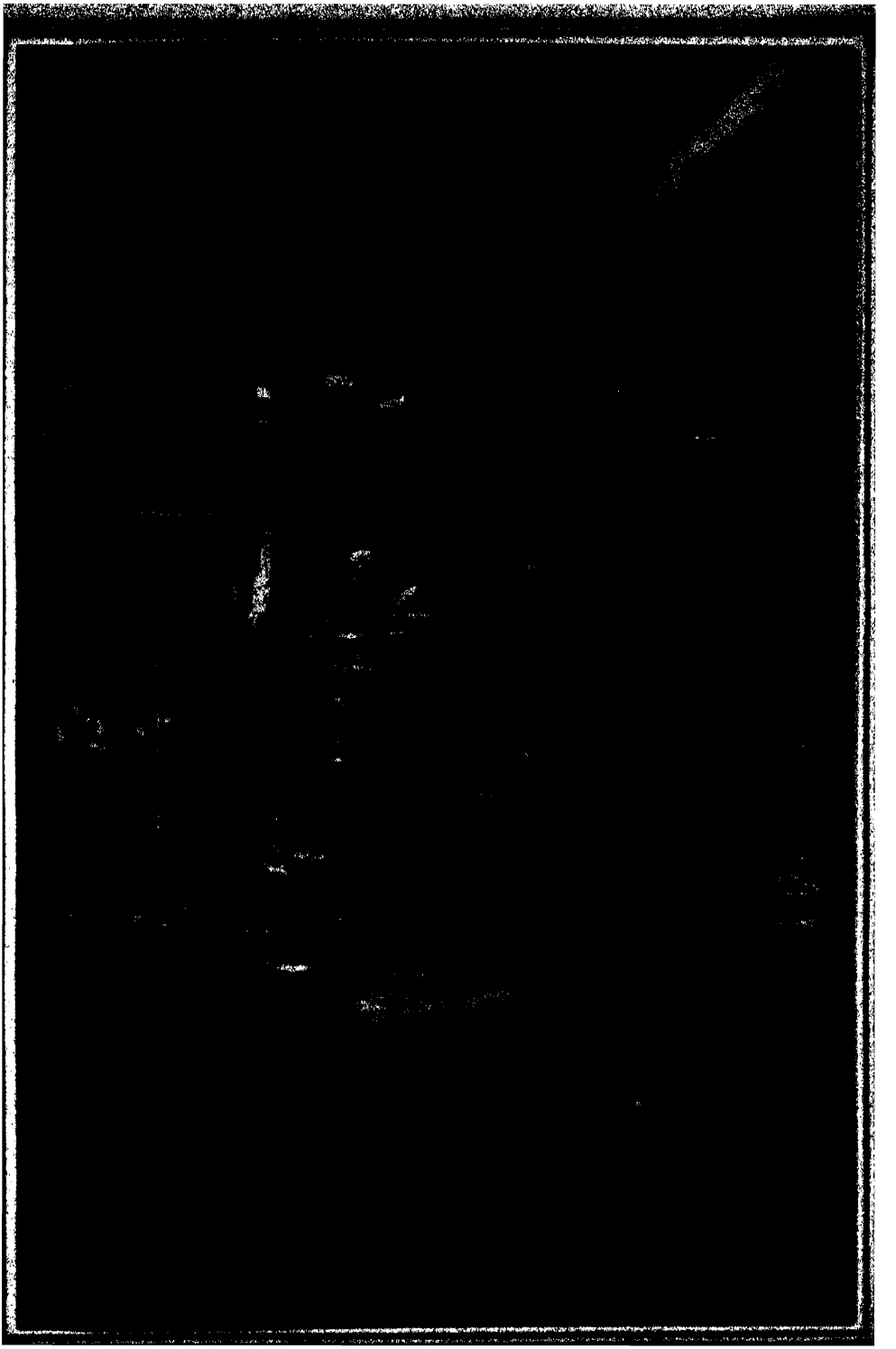
cultivation which separate the Pyramid plateau from the Nile ; they cross by the new bridge to the island of Rodah, and then, skirting Old Cairo, we are carried along the east bank of the river till we are put down in the heart of the modern quarters.

CHAPTER XIII

THE HAMSEEN, THE LAMP-SHOP, AND THE ACCESSION OF SAID PASHA

FROM the end of March, when the wind shifts to the south, we get a taste of summer's heat. The talk in the hotels is of home-returning steamers, and Cook's offices are besieged with visitors anxious to secure early bookings. The Hamseen, as this unpleasant wind is called, causes a rapid rise in the temperature, and while it lasts the whole aspect of northern Egypt changes. The sky partakes of the colour of the desert, and has something of the look of a slight London fog; the sun also reminds us of the pale orange sphere visible when Londoners remark on its being a fine day. Apart from these appearances the sensations felt are very different. Neither moisture nor smoke give that yellowish look here; it is the sand which the wind collects as it blows across the desert in its northern course. As the wind increases, so the temperature rises, and the extreme dryness of the air causes those unpleasant sensations felt with the first symptoms of fever.

Cairo becomes unpaintable, the sun hardly casts a shadow through the thickening clouds of dust, and such shadow as it is has none of that blue reflected light which gives the true shadow quality. Did not experi-



ence teach me that it is only a passing phase, my inclination would be to pack up and leave by the first available steamer and join the migration to the north. It is useless to hunt about the streets for subjects; for even if one were found sufficiently attractive, the dust would render the work an impossibility. Some subject of a still-life nature in the shelter of the bazaars or an interior must be found, unless one makes up one's mind to stay indoors until the wind sets in a more favourable quarter.

The word *hamseen* means fifty, and is given to this wind because of the fifty days during which spells of it may be expected. If street rows are more frequent, if irritability or headaches are complained of, the Cairene shrugs his shoulders and says '*Hamseen.*' It was a day of that kind that took me once more to the Khan Khalil. I had often been attracted by a lamp-shop there, but had put off painting it on account of the elaborate detail, and doubts whether the results would be proportionate to the work involved. A corner well sheltered from the wind and an obliging shopman induced me to set up my easel. Should the wind change, I could always leave it and return when the next *hamseen* would make work impossible elsewhere.

Every type of Egyptian lamp hung round the entrance, and lamps and lampstands lined the walls of the passage leading into the store beyond. There, in the deeper shades, the sparkle of polished metal suggested innumerable lamps of which the near ones were samples. Brass bowls and trays, teapots and candlesticks, filled up the spaces where lamps could not be

hung. With the buff-coloured stone of the building, this metal-work made a harmonious whole. To pull this together so as not to lose the breadth of effect would be no easy task. During the third day in this corner of the bazaar a ray of sunlight heralded a return of beautiful weather; a drop in the temperature and the feel of one's skin were enough to tell one that the wind blew no more from the south, and that once more the cool breezes from the sea ran counter to the flow of the Nile. The little sunlight which found its way between the awnings and matting which roof in this bazaar was enough to alter the whole effect of my subject. My drawing looked leathery and sodden compared to the rich glow which lit up the shop, and proved that even the nearest bit of still-life is better when the presence of the sun is felt. I sponged out more lamps in two minutes than I had put in in two days, and this corner knew me no more on *hamseen* days. It was, after all, only during beautiful days that I could complete the drawing which illustrates these pages.

Nassán is the proprietor of the shop, and Nassán seemed much exercised in his mind why I should have so ruthlessly made away with so many lamps, though they were only on paper. What did a ray of sunlight matter as long as the name of Nassán was conspicuous on the signboard which hung over the entrance? As new lamps replaced the old, Nassán's interest in my drawing reawakened, and overtures were even made for its acquisition. I told him I wished to take it to England, as I wanted illustrations for a book I was about

to write, and he, not wishing to lose a gratis advertisement, got me to promise to say that he was prepared to supply any one with as many lamps as they could possibly wish. He had recently furnished the Heliopolis hotel with three hundred metal ones, and his stock was not nearly exhausted.

I looked up Mustapha, the silk-merchant with whom I had spent an interesting evening during the Hasaneyn festival. While we sipped our coffee on the *mastaba* of his shop, we reverted to the tragic story of the Irishman O'Donald and his first meeting with the princess Zohra. Her history has been continued during this narrative, and my readers may remember that we last saw her settled down in Constantinople under the protection of the Sultan of Turkey. How her hatred of Abbas (the then ruling Viceroy) outlived her thwarted love for O'Donald will now be related. From the account given by the German engineer, Max Eyth, I was able to tell the silk-merchant more of what happened than he knew; for Eyth had the details from Halim Pasha, Zohra's own brother, who was an important actor in the drama. But nothing to incriminate his sister fell from Halim's lips; the part she played was related by the servant Ramés, from whom Eyth obtained most of her history. Why no English edition of Max Eyth's *Hinter Pflug und Schraubstock* should exist is a mystery to the present writer.

It will be remembered that when the great Mohammed Ali, towards the end of his reign, fell into a state of imbecility, the reins of government were seized by his famous general and adopted son Ibrahim, and that

the latter died within a year after becoming the ruler of Egypt. Mohammed's death occurred soon after, and the viceregal throne passed to his grandson, Abbas I., who reigned from 1849 to 1854. During these five years the Europeanisation of Egypt ceased. Abbas would have none of the Frankish innovations which his grandfather encouraged; European schools, western legal procedure and military instruction were banished, and the ulemas, dervishes, and fakirs came by their own once more. His country nevertheless prospered during his reign.

As in so many instances in the history of Egypt, this ruler was a terror to his numerous near relatives who might be able to establish a claim to the succession. Of the eighty-five children of Mohammed Ali but few were living, and this few were well alive to the danger of their august relationship. Even the princess Zohra, after she had fled to Constantinople, must be careful of what she ate or drank, and of the loyalty of those who served her. The Taster became once more an important personage in the various palaces, and not the least in that of Abbas himself. His two uncles, Said and Halim, were both much the same age as their nephew—a thing of constant occurrence in the hareem life in the East. They lived on tenterhooks, as being possible rivals to the succession of Abbas's only son, a delicate little boy called El Hami. Said Pasha lived at Alexandria when he was not enjoying himself in Paris. He was the minister of the Egyptian navy—not an arduous post, for most of the ships had been destroyed during the wars of his father and those of Ibrahim.

Halim Pasha lived in retirement in his mother's palace at Shubra.

Abbas and his large hareem divided their time at the palace at Abbasiyeh, at another which he built in the desert near Suez, and at a third on the banks of the Nile at Benha. The chief ulema of the Azhar who was tutor to El Hami, and Elfy Bey, the Governor of Cairo and Minister of War, became the leading men in the state. Rumours soon spread through the bazaars that a holy war might any day be proclaimed, and, if so, a general massacre of the Christians would follow. Later on it was reported that the day of the horse races at Alexandria was the day decided on for the rising. Said and Halim, who were both friendly to the Europeans, trembled at the consequences which might follow; for in a general rising opportunities are easily found to dispose of relations who may be thought in the way. The Minister of the Navy found an excuse for going to Marseilles about the purchase of a frigate, and he made preparations to sail the day before the races.

It was during the first days of the *hamseen* that these sinister rumours spread in the bazaars, and Abbas decided to migrate with his court to the palace at Benha, which is about a third of the way on the road from Cairo to Alexandria. It was also decided to send the young prince El Hami to Syria for the good of his health. From his stables at Benha the Viceroy would send his favourite horse, el Dogaan, to compete in the Alexandrian races.

The narrator goes on to say that 'man may propose, but God disposes.' Abbas and his court duly arrived at the palace at Benha; the *hamseen* increased in strength,

and with it the temper of Abbas, which at no time was a good one. It was an easy task for the ulemas and dervishes, who formed a part of his suite, to dispel any misgivings which the Pasha may have had as to the contemplated massacre. The court astrologer, Soliman el Habeshi, had fixed the auspicious hour on which to begin. The *hamseen* favoured their designs, for we are told that the wind increased in violence, and that el Habeshi had to make his calculations when no stars were visible, owing to the clouds of dust which hid them.

Rames, the servant of Halim Pasha, now relates to Eyth what followed. 'I had long been supplanted in my post of pipe-filler to Abbas, who at that time was my master, by two handsome young mamelukes called Hassan and Husseyn. They were twins, the same as were the heroes after whom they were named. They had been sent from Constantinople as a present from the Sultan to the ruler of Egypt. Abbas had every confidence in them and loaded them with marks of his favour, while I was relegated to the stables. I did not mind that, for I always loved horses, and el Dogaan was as the apple of my eye. As no one could ride this horse as I could, it was decided that I should do jockey in the coming races. I was in the seventh heaven, and was attending to my charge one night, when I was startled by the appearance in the stables of the astrologer. His wild looks and gestures were alarming. "Be silent, Rames!" he said, "the all-knowing God ordains what is right, but our Lord the Basha is in his bath! He bathes in his own blood!"

'The horror of this awful news gave way to a sense

of relief that I was at last freed from a lifelong tyranny. I ran to the palace and crept silently up the stairs and through the passages which led to the bathroom. A lamp hung outside the curtain at the entrance. I feared to pull this aside—I listened, and hearing no sound my curiosity overcame my fear. I pulled back the curtain, and a red ray from the hanging lamp fell on to the marble bath. A naked arm hung over the further edge and a head lay against the end wall. As if to make him look ridiculous, his assassins had slit the mouth till it nearly reached the ears, and a horrible grimace added to the awfulness of the scene. A gash in the throat showed how the Basha had met his death, and a dark red stream still trickled from this to colour the water in which the body lay.

'I still see, when I close my eyes, that bloodless face with its diabolical smile, lit by the red rays of the hanging lamp; though the Basha was dead, the evil spirit which possessed him still clung to its tenement. The costly marble bath, the gilded stalactites which hung from the dome-shaped roof, and all the luxury with which this room was fitted only added to the horror of the spectacle.

'I heard voices not far off, and knew the danger I ran if I were caught here. I slipped off as fast and as silently as I could and returned to my stables, where I saddled el Dogaan and led him along the footpath to the bank of the river. Huddled in a heap, there sat the astrologer, who trembled as the aspen leaf. I asked him what he was doing there, and, putting his fingers to his lips, he whispered, "Do you not know, O Rames,

that they seek to kill me? The court physician is already under lock and key, and all who know of this murder must die—you also—for the secret must on no account leak out until El Hami can be placed on the throne." "They must catch me first," I called out, and jumping into the saddle I stuck my spurs into el Dogaan and rode towards Shubra as fast as I could.

'Halim Basha had oft befriended me, and he would not forsake me now in my dire necessity. El Dogaan raced along the Cairo road as fast as if he took part in the Alexandrian meeting. In two hours he covered the ground between Benha and the Shubra palace, where we arrived before daybreak. Allah el Azeem! how he ran. I thought not only of my safety, but of the far-reaching effects my news might have.'

The prince Halim here continues the narrative: 'I was awakened when the first light of the rising sun was visible over the edge of the desert beyond the Abbasiyeh palace. They told me that a man had brought a message which had to be delivered at once. I descended to the courtyard and found Rames; but so covered with dust was he that I could hardly recognise him. After the greeting he whispered in my ear: "God is just! Your nephew lies dead in his bath at Benha." You may imagine the shock this news gave me. But was this mameluke to be trusted? Might it not be a ruse of Abbas to trap me with a word or gesture, which would have been my undoing? "God's will be done," I said, and ordered Rames to return at once to Benha and let no one know that I had knowledge of the crime.

'No time was to be lost in apprising my brother Said, as he was to have sailed that very day from Alexandria, and, unless Rames had lied, our country was now without a ruler. The lad El Hami was at Damietta on his way to Syria, and if that child were made Viceroy, Egypt and all of us would be at the tender mercies of Elfy Bey and the Ulema. The English had lately set up a telegraph office in Cairo; but how could I word this message so as to be only understood by my brother? The following at last suggested itself, and Said would not have been a son of his father had he misunderstood the meaning: "The house thou seekest in Cairo is empty. The door stands open. Walk in." Said understood.

'He told me later that my message was only just in time, for he was about to start for the steamer. He decided promptly to leave for Cairo instead, and he and his bodyguard were on the road before the steamer had disappeared beyond the horizon. They reached Damanhur that evening, and at an early hour next morning, when he arrived at Benha, he was informed that Abbas and his court had just left to return to Cairo. He questioned some of the notabilities of the town, only to hear with what pomp the Viceroy had set out on his journey. What was my brother to make of all this? Was this telegram a trap? or had he perhaps misunderstood its meaning? The palace was deserted, so he and his followers rested there till the following day, and then continued their journey to Cairo.

'I spent an anxious morning at Shubra,' continued Halim Pasha, 'but imagine my astonishment when a

runner in my employ arrived from Kalioub to inform me that Abbas had passed through that village, and would in all probability arrive at Shubra towards five o'clock that very afternoon. "That damned mameluke must have lied," said I to myself, and I had to make preparations, as the custom is, to welcome the Viceroy, or (should he not wish to break his journey) to greet him at the door of my palace. I had hardly put on my court dress when two messengers were announced, and they informed me that they had been sent ahead by His Highness, my nephew, to beg me not to stay his journey, as he was in great haste to reach his palace at Abbasiyeh that evening. In one of these messengers I recognised Rames, who hung back while the other spoke. He drooped his head and closed his eyes—was this a sign? And what could be the interpretation?

'Towards midnight of the following day Said and his guard arrived. We had to hide the latter as well as we could in the stables and outhouses, for it was a dangerous business. Some trusty servants whom I had sent into Cairo reported on the crowds of people who had gathered to witness the Viceroy's progress through the city, and declared that His Highness bowed in acknowledgment of the ovations he received. Our anxiety increased with each fresh report. My mother, however, did not share our misgivings. "Rames has not lied," she said; "I watched him carefully, and his actions told me clearly that Abbas was dead."

'We spent the following day here awaiting some report which might help to clear up the mystery. Towards evening some servants of mine brought in

the astrologer, Soliman, whom they had picked up more dead than alive on the road from Benha. I told them to feed the old blackguard, and when he had somewhat recovered I questioned him. He wished to tell me what the stars had revealed, but I soon was satisfied in my mind that Rames had not lied. There was still time to take action before the young prince El Hami could have reached Cairo from Damietta, and we could not anyhow have kept Said and his thirty retainers here without exciting suspicion. I sent word at once to the Commandant of the Citadel to open the gate at midnight and admit the ruler of Egypt.

'That very night my brother Said rode into the old fortress as Viceroy of this country. The artillery had orders to defend the place should the necessity arise. Before daybreak we learnt that El Hami had arrived from Damietta, and presently the Ulema rode up and demanded the gates to be opened to admit the Viceroy of Egypt. Said admitted the learned scribe into the audience-chamber and complimented him on his zeal in coming so early to greet his new master. The Ulema stared as one bereft of his senses. Said, my brother, was a good-hearted man, and did not seize on this opportunity to destroy the enemy whom fortune had delivered into his hands. He was fond of a little joke, and felt that now he could afford to indulge in one: a barber was summoned to cut off the Ulema's beard, and the poor man was sent off with a message to Elfy Bey to inform the latter that his game was up, and that he would be received by his new master as soon as he wished to present himself.

'Elfy, though a devout Moslem, was not the man to bow to the decrees of fate—a self-inflicted pistol-shot ended the career of the Governor of Cairo and Egypt's Minister of War. The Ulema did not long survive the loss of his beard, and the young prince El Hami was allowed to start once more for Syria for the good of his health.'

The reader may now be curious to learn how Abbas's progress from Benha to Cairo was accomplished, for when we left that prince in his blood-stained bath his earthly journey was doubtless over.

Rames now continues the narrative :—'By Allah, the compassionate, the merciful, how I rode back to Benha! What dangers I incurred in returning to that palace no one knew better than myself; but to serve my present master, Halim Basha, was my chief thought. It was barely ten o'clock, as you Franks reckon the time, when I and el Dogaan arrived. None of the horses in the stables had been attended to, and two of them were missing. I had hardly been ten minutes there when I was called and had to repair to the ante-room of the bath. The mamelukes who personally attended our late Basha had also been summoned there; but I noticed that of the twelve two were missing, namely Hassan and Husseyn. Their non-appearance was evidently accounted for and no one spoke of them. Presently Elfy Bey and the Ulema entered. They ordered us to repeat the profession of our faith, and each one had to take an oath that what we should now see should not be revealed to any living creature. We all solemnly swore that we would keep the secret, and then

Elfy Bey warned us that if a word escaped our lips, our tongues should be torn out and our flayed bodies would hang from the walls of Sultan Hassan's mosque. He then drew back the curtain, and by the light of day I again witnessed the terrible sight of the previous night.

'Six mamelukes were ordered to lift the body out of the bath and to dress the mortal remains in the garments used on state occasions. I and three others had to return to the stables to prepare the state coach and to harness six white horses. When this was brought round to the door of the hareem, as ordered, the body of Abbas was placed in a sitting posture on the back seat of the carriage, and the Ulema sat beside it to hold it in position. Elfy Bey and the favourite eunuch sat with their backs to the horses. A veil was wound round the corpse's turban, and an embroidered *litám* concealed the lower part of the face, as the fashion often is with the Bedouin, as a protection from the dust. Two sat on the box and two stood, as is the style of the Franks, on the backboard of the coach. Six cavaliers, of whom I was one, served as an escort.

'Such is the manner in which we started on that progress to the capital! The fellaheen greeted us as we passed through the villages. I heard some remark that our lord looked ill, and they committed him to the protection of Allah. As I rode el Dogaan, which is famous for his speed, I was fortunately sent ahead with the second messenger to announce the viceregal progress to Halim Basha. I dared not speak; but hoped that my signs would be understood. By nightfall we reached Cairo and, as was customary, we carried

lighted torches on each side of the coach. Thousands witnessed our progress through the streets; I heard again the remark that the Effendina looked ill, and there was also a silence amidst the onlookers which made me wonder whether any suspected the truth. When we had passed through the Bab en-Nasr and were crossing the tract of desert which separates that gate from the palace at Abbasiyeh, the Ulema praised God and let the corpse fall forward. Elfy Bey cursed the old man and lifted the body into position again.

'Once inside the palace there was nothing further to do than to await the return of El Hami from Damietta. It would then be time enough to announce the death of Abbas and to proclaim his young son as successor to the viceregal throne. Elfy would then have been the virtual ruler of Egypt. By the mercy of Allah his plans were frustrated and a bullet ended his earthly career. I was not long in seeking out my present master, and what services I may have rendered have been liberally rewarded.

'You may wish to know more of Hassan and Husseyn, whose disappearance after the murder I had noticed. I have since heard that they are now in the service of Princess Zohra, and, to tell you the truth, they were in her service before they ever set foot in Egypt.'

Zohra had at last avenged the death of her first love.

CHAPTER XIV

MOHAMMEDAN FESTIVALS: THE HOLY CARPET—THE FAST OF RAMADAN AND THE ASHURA

WOMAN so seldom figures in the history of the Mohammedan world that when she appears in the long records of the khalifs, the emirs and the vizirs, she is as welcome as a treble solo after a prolonged bass chorus. The story of the beautiful but unhappy Zohra may not be edifying in all its details, but it lifts for a moment the veil which conceals the hareem life, and gives us an insight into the tragic events occasionally enacted behind these closed doors. The curtain has but recently descended on the drama in which Zohra took a leading part. If we change the names and omit a few details referring to present times, it would be hard to believe that this was not some mediæval story such as the *shoara* recite in the market-places.

We have to go back to the thirteenth century to find the name of a woman who played an important part in the government of Egypt. There is something refreshing in her name, Sheger-ed-Durr, which means 'The Spray of Pearls,' coming as it does amongst the list of the blood-stained warriors of those stirring times. She was a slave who became the wife of the mameluke, Emir es-Salih, not of him who built the Fátimid mosque mentioned further back, but of the Salih who founded

the mameluke dynasty when he usurped the throne of the last of the house of Saladin. He was killed while fighting the Crusaders shortly after Sheger-ed-Durr had become his queen. The heir to the throne was a son of es-Salih by a former wife, and some time elapsed before he could be brought from the outlying province where he also was endeavouring to hold the Crusaders in check. The widowed queen undertook the management of affairs in the meanwhile, keeping the death of her husband a secret until the succession should be established. The new khalif, Turán-Shah ibn es-Salih, was not long on the throne before he met his death in a brawl, and Sheger-ed-Durr once more took up the reins of government. She sank her identity in that of her baby son, and ruled under the title of 'Mother of the victorious King Khalil.'

While this baby king's victories were confined to the nursery, his mother's generals were defeating the Crusaders in every part of his dominions. The battle of Mansúra decided the fate of the last Crusade, and Louis IX. was taken prisoner by the Emir Beybars. The mother of Khalil arranged the ransom which was paid to release the King of France; and, though not in name, she in fact governed the country during some seven or eight years. The baby king died, and Mohammedan prejudice could not brook a woman at the head of affairs. The khalif of Baghdád was appealed to, and a husband was chosen for her in the person of Aybek. It appears that she ruled her husband with as firm a hand as she ruled her country. But this rule was not of long duration. 'Like a true woman,'

says Stanley-Lane Poole, 'she could be jealous; she made him divorce another wife, and when Aybek ventured to propose a fresh marriage with a princess of Mosil, the queen gave way to a regrettable act of resentment; having lured him by fair words to the Citadel—the facts unhappily can't be softened—she had him murdered in his bath'—not unlike Zohra's vengeance of six centuries later. 'Her punishment was speedy and terrible. In three days all was over. The mamelukes shut her up in the Red Tower, where she vindictively pounded her jewels in a mortar that they might adorn no other woman, and then she was dragged before the wife whom she had made Aybek divorce, and there and then beaten to death with the women's clogs. For days her body lay in the Citadel ditch for the curs to worry, till some good Samaritan buried it. Her tomb may be seen beside the chapel of Sitta Néfisa, and a pious hand of these latter days has shrouded it with a cloth on which the Arabic name "Spray of Pearls" is worked in gold.'

The object of the present writer is not the ambitious one of attempting a history of Egypt, but to give a simple account of such things as he saw and heard while in pursuit of his work as an artist. The story of Zohra is still told in the bazaars, and the professional reciter still entertains his audience with the doings of Sheger-ed-Durr. This queen has also a bearing on that vexed question of the origin of the Holy Carpet. The departure of the *Mahmal* and its return from Mekka are the two events in Cairo which annually excite the greatest interest.

The *hodag*, or the gorgeous covered litter borne by a camel, is usually taken by the foreign sightseers to be the covering of the Holy Carpet which is destined to be placed on the *Kaabah* at Mekka. There is little wonder that this should be so, for it is by far the most striking object in the procession. It does not, however, contain the carpet, or for that matter anything else. Its origin dates from the pilgrimage which 'The Spray of Pearls' made to the Holy City six centuries and a half ago; and though she is only reported to have gone once, her camel and litter were yearly sent to represent her. The original hood of this litter has since been replaced, and the Mahmal, as it is called, has ever since been sent with the pilgrims to represent Royalty at the yearly *hagg*.

I have had the good fortune to see the procession of the Mahmal several times, both on its starting for Mekka and on its return to Cairo. The *Kisweh*, as the carpet itself is called, is taken in four separate pieces, which are enclosed in boxes and borne by camels. Though handsome cloths cover these boxes, and the trappings of the camels are magnificent, they yet look far less important than the empty litter which precedes them.

A new carpet, or, properly speaking, a new covering for the *Kaabah* is annually made, and, when the fast of Ramadan is over, its component parts are deposited in the mosque of the Hasaneyn, there to remain for the few weeks which elapse before the pilgrimage sets out.

When the great day arrives, all Cairo assembles in the large open space on the south of the Citadel walls, and east of the great mosques of Sultan Hassan and of

el Rifaiya. His Highness the Khedive and all the great state functionaries are here, and smart up-to-date soldiers keep back the crowds of sightseers to make way for as picturesque and truly oriental a spectacle as any one could wish to see. I confess that familiarity has in this case robbed the proceedings of some of its charm; for I have seen and sketched some of these camels in their gorgeous trappings when they have done duty at weddings, and also in the courtyard of the man who hires them out. The pictorial effect is there, however, none the less. I have enjoyed it more while seeing it pass through the old mediæval streets, or file out into the desert through the Bab en-Nasr. Until quite recently its route lay through the passes in the Mokattam hills, and by the desert track which leads to Suez. It is now taken by train to Alexandria, and shipped to Jiddeh, as the nearest port to the Holy City.

My illustration to this chapter is the return journey to Cairo, and though I may have taken some liberties with the background, it will give some idea of its aspect during its desert march. My picture of the marriage procession in the earlier part of this book shows some of the properties which figure in this yearly spectacle.

As the Mohammedan year is composed of lunar months, it is eleven days short of the year as we understand it. Thus these and all other religious festivals are set back eleven days annually. When, in the course of time, the pilgrims will start on their journey during the summer months, few foreigners will have an opportunity to see this picturesque pageant. The

Great Beiram will also fall during the time when Cairo is empty of visitors, and this is the most important holiday in the Mohammedan world. It is the day of the sacrificial feast which the pilgrims partake of in Mekka after they have heard the sermon on Mount Arafat. As this impressive gathering on the holy mount is only to be witnessed by the followers of the Prophet, we must content ourselves with seeing all we can of its commemoration in more accessible places. The Lesser Beiram, with which we must not confuse it, is the holiday and feastings which follow the last day of the fast of Ramadan. To be spared the month of Ramadan is a loss no visitor need regret. He will not be much aware of it in his modern hotel, where Frankish servants may eat and drink their fill ; but should his occupation lie amongst the natives, he will indeed rejoice when the last gun is fired to herald the advent of the Lesser Beiram.

As in many other matters, this fast falls much more heavily on the poor than on the rich. The well-to-do can pass most of the hours, between the rising and the setting of the sun, in sleep or in their cool and comparatively dustless homes. But just think what a long day spent in the sun and the dust must be to a man who may not let a drop of water pass his lips ! The callous remark that they are used to it is nonsense. They are used to a drink of water whenever they feel inclined during the eleven months preceding the fast, and this must quite have broken the habit of a rigid abstinence.

I spent one Ramadan in the camp of the Egyptian

Exploration Fund, and have seen two or three hundred men and boys working the whole day in a perpetual dust. What their cravings for a drink of water must have been was easily imagined; for though I worked in the shade and as far from the excavation dust as I could, the dry desert air often induced me to have a pull at the water-bottle. Mr. Currelly, who directed the work, was considerate enough to alter the hours, when we appreciated how these men suffered; and by starting at daybreak and working till dark, a long rest during the extreme heat of the day was permissible.

In the streets and bazaars of Cairo the fast seems to affect the tempers of the people even more than the *hamseen* is wont to do. Quarrels are much more frequent, and the only occasion when I had a serious row with a native which might have led to very unpleasant consequences was during Ramadan.

I had secured a comfortable seat on the *mastaba* of a little shop and was painting a fruit-stall on the opposite side of the road. My man Mohammed induced the woman who kept the stall to pose to me while she squatted amidst the apples and oranges which she sold. The usual bargaining took place between my man and the woman, and inquisitive neighbours were interested as usual in the proceedings. When it was agreed that she would pose for about the value of her whole stock in trade, I set to work. She was a young woman and wore no face-veil, which suggested that she was of easy virtue. I was, however, more concerned with my drawing than with the morals of my model. A rough-looking fellow presently started

an altercation with her, and as he stood between me and my subject, I told Mohammed to ask him to stand aside. It appeared that the man objected to the woman being painted, and he turned furiously on Mohammed when the latter tried to induce him to move on. Had I then had Mahmood as a servant, he would have made short work of my interrupter; but Mohammed had neither the courage nor the physical strength for such strong measures. Gentle persuasion had no effect on the brute, and he suddenly ended his arguments with my model by giving her a violent slap on her cheek. He then rushed across to where I was sitting and roughly sat down beside me. I was new to Cairo then and could not understand what he said, and I put my materials aside before attempting to rid myself of my unpleasant neighbour. Leaning over me he stuck his fingers right on to my drawing, and was rewarded by a blow in his ribs which sent him sprawling on to the road. That was one for touching my drawing and two for the slap on the woman's cheek.

Personal courage is not a characteristic of the Egyptians; but when they 'see red,' as they describe it, they become like raving madmen. A crowd collected before the man had hardly picked himself up, and I did not at once know what the attitude of the crowd towards myself might be. Mohammed's persuasive powers were of good service now, and several onlookers held back the man, who made frantic efforts to get at me. He then ran back to the shop, and picking up the thickest piece of sugar-cane, he yelled out his curses and made another rush at me. The crowd

seemed happily to side with the Nusranee, or possibly wished to prevent the Moslem from getting into further trouble. However that might have been, the man was well guarded until I could get away.

Mohammed had doubtless been of great service to me; he had most likely lied to the crowd that I was a nephew of Lord Cromer's, or son-in-law to the head of the police, as I found out on later occasions that he had inspired a certain respect for me by similar falsehoods. Be this as it may, I was fortunate to have got out of the row as well as I had. But why should Mohammed have been so alarmed when I insisted on his going with me to the nearest police-court? He was about to turn tail when we reached the entrance; I was, however, in no mood to argue the matter—he should either come in or leave my service.

The Moslem magistrate and his clerks fortunately spoke French, and I was able to state my case. They questioned Mohammed in Arabic, and he, having got over his fears of the police-court, gave a fair account of what had taken place. I was assured that the man would be found, and that I should hear again from them before long.

I returned the next day to the fruit-stall, and made some compensation to the woman for the slap on her cheek of which I had been the innocent cause; but nothing would persuade her to sit to me any more. When I got to work she closed up her shop and departed. I consoled myself, while I put in the detail of the *mushrbiyeh* oriel which projected over her closed shutters, that the solatium I had given her would

more than cover any loss of custom during a Ramadan morning. When an Arab in the poorer quarters buys an orange, it is for immediate consumption. To be seen buying one, unless just before or after the gun announces the setting of the sun, would awaken suspicions as to the orthodoxy of the purchaser. A stray Jew or Copt might turn up as a customer; but the chances were slight, as we were far from either the Jewish or Coptic quarters.

I had to finish my fruit-shop as best I could from other studies, and find another woman to help me to finish the figure.

Days went by, and I heard nothing further about my aggressor, and concluded that either he had not been found, or that my statement had been pigeon-holed, and its existence forgotten. I was anyhow singularly free from interruptions when I worked in the street where I had been molested, and did not much mind if I heard no more about it. After a fortnight or so, I received a letter from the British consulate, telling me to appear at the police-court on such and such a day. I went at the appointed time, and waited in the magistrate's office until my case should come on. The clerk was pleased to air his French, and tell me about the prisoner, and the punishment he would probably undergo. Had he called me a *Kelb*? seemed a matter of great import. He had probably called me the 'son of a dog'; but I was more concerned at the time as to what he would do with the thick cane than hurt by these reflections on my parentage. I was asked if I would go into the hall and see the man, and I did so.

I not only found him there, in the custody of a policeman, but I was introduced to a crowd of his relations. One and all beseeched me to let him off, and Mohammed told a woeful tale of how many were dependent on the loafer's earnings. The starvation of a numerous offspring would be laid to my account should the prisoner be prevented from loafing in his own particular manner. The tears of his mother had some effect—but what could I do? I did not run this show, I got Mohammed to explain, and the decision must rest with the magistrate. I would, however, make as light of the case as I could, seeing that it was during Ramadan that it happened. There being no skirt to my garments, the old mother had a try at kissing the hem of my trousers, and as to the prisoner himself, I could hardly recognise in the poor lachrymose creature the furious ruffian of the fruit-stall.

The result of all this pleading put me in the unusual position (when our case was called) of advocate for the defence rather than that of the prosecutor. When the man got off with sixteen days, I had to slip away quickly to avoid the marks of gratitude from his relations. The part which struck me as odd was that none of his sentence was due to his violent slap of the poor woman's cheek. She was not his wife, I explained to the clerk while I waited in the office. 'There had been matrimonial relations of a sort,' he explained, and he seemed to hold that that might cover his right to administer corporal punishment. It was my first season in Egypt, so I had still much to learn.

Had the sixteen days of my aggressor's confinement

been passed while the fast lasted, it would have been a light sentence. But Ramadan was now far spent, and the term lasted over the holidays of the Lesser Beiram. That must have been a bitter pill for him to swallow, for there are great rejoicings and feastings on the first day of Shauwâl. Except those under lock and key, few Arabs sit down to a meal where a bit of mutton does not enrich their stew.

Some months after, while I passed through the street of my fruit-shop, I noticed a man smiling at me, and making his salaams; I seemed to remember his face, though I could not quite place him. I asked Mohammed who my acquaintance might be, and he said, 'Do you not remember the man you had put in prison?'

I have met with many cases since, where an Egyptian has been justly punished, and has shown as little resentment. I have asked large employers of labour as to whether any spiteful action ever followed to the master who had sent one of his men to the lock-up. I was told that acts of vengeance were common enough; but never in a case where punishment was merited. They are not slow to wrath, but the sun seldom goes down on their anger. I have known cases, however, where some fellah having been grossly cheated, and not being able to get justice in the courts, has nursed his revenge for a long while. A burning stack or a lighted thatch may be so long after the first wrong that suspicion may fall on others than the incendiary. 'Never hurry your revenge; it will be just as sweet in two years' time,' is a saying amongst the fellaheen; but nothing

but the grossest injustice will excite this passion in so light-hearted a people.

It is a matter of congratulation to every one in Mohammedan countries, whether he be a follower of the Prophet or not, when the festivities of Shauwâl announce that the fast of Ramadan is over.

The streets are full of colour during the first days of the month of Shauwâl. Parents take their children from house to house to show them off in their new garments; for all who can possibly afford it cast off their old clothes at the end of the fast and appear in new ones to enjoy the feast. Primitive merry-go-rounds are erected in the vacant spaces, and the various eatables appropriate to the Little Beiram are on sale everywhere. The rich give of their substance to the needy, and happy faces contrast pleasantly with the saddened looks so frequent during the great fast.

There is a pause in the festivals during the month of el-Kaadeh, which follows Shauwâl, and el-Heggeh, which is the last month of the Mohammedan year, makes up for this in the excitements pertaining to the Mekka pilgrimage. The Great Beiram, or the 'Eed el-Kebir,' as it is called by the Egyptians, falls on the tenth day and it lasts during the three following ones. Its advent is noticeable from the flocks of sheep and goats and also the buffaloes which enter Cairo from the fertile plains of the Delta. Sheep are brought round to the bazaars to sell to the merchants who may not wish to attend the markets, and they are frequently to be seen tethered outside the stalls in the poorer quarters, where they are fatted for the sacrifice which takes place at the

same hour as the one offered up by the pilgrims at Mekka.

Almsgiving is an important duty and is well observed in the Mohammedan world: on the tenth day of el-Heggeh those who cannot afford a sheep partake of the sacrificial offerings of their well-to-do neighbours.

The new garments of the Lesser Beiram appear again on the greater festival, and the gaily coloured dresses of the children once more enliven the streets. For three days all business is at a standstill, and merry-making and religious exercises go on all the while. On the third night it is usual to visit the tombs of the deceased relatives — a less mournful ending to the festivities than might be supposed. The approaches to the cemeteries are gay with booths and tents, rigged up either for entertainments or for religious *zikrs*. Should the festival fall during the hot season the tomb visiting is somewhat of an all-night picnic.

Moharram is the month which follows the last, and with it begins the Mohammedan year. The tenth day is called the Ashura, and an event which takes place on the evening of that day is not easily forgotten by any strangers who may happen to have witnessed it. The Sheeas in Cairo (mostly Persians) then commemorate the death of Husseyn, the twin brother of Hassan and grandson of the Prophet. They claim that as Hassan had died, the succession should have continued through Husseyn and his son, Ali Akbar, after him; whereas the Sunnees claim that as Abubekr was chosen by the Prophet himself as his successor, Abubekr's descendants

had a claim prior to that of Mohammed's actual blood relations. This caused the great split in the Mohammedan world. The Sunnees revere the memory of the twin brothers, and the festival which takes place on their birthday is one of the great events in orthodox Egypt.

The Sheeas commemorate the day of Husseyn's death, which he met on the field of Kerbala while fighting the usurper of his rights to the Khalifate. That they should do so in Persia is easily understood; but that they should be allowed to parade the streets of Cairo and proclaim their heresy to the crowds of orthodox Sunnees, speaks well for the toleration of the latter. It is true that the police rope the streets through which the procession passes, and a large body of them guard the processionists from molestation. But were the fanaticism of the populace really stirred, the events which I witnessed could never take place.

I got a seat in a coffee-shop close to the Hasaneyn mosque about an hour after sunset; and although the Persians would not be allowed to enter the mosque itself, I felt sure that their enthusiasm would be stirred to the highest pitch when they passed by the shrine where the head of Husseyn is said to be buried.

Crowds of people awaited alongside the route which the Sheeas would take; the display of so much heresy seemed to trouble them very little, and, like myself, they looked forward to an evening's entertainment. The street was not lighted up as on the day of the birth of the twin brothers, so that the light which presently appeared at the further end of the street attracted the attention of every one at once.

A number of flaming cressets lit up the grey houses where the procession turned from out the Mousky into the Hasaneyn street. As it approached, the short jerky chorus of the men was more often repeated: 'Hassan, Husseyn! Hassan, Husseyn!' The shouts got wilder and more frequent as the procession drew near to the mosque. The first to pass us was a man on horseback, who harangued the crowd during an interval in the chorus. He told of how the young Husseyn died in fighting for his faith and against the usurper of his throne. The crowd seemed as little inclined to contradict him as I was, although a few murmurs of dissent came from some who sat on the bench beside me. The men who carried the flaming cressets followed next, and then several mounted policemen. These were not necessarily Sheeas, but were there to preserve the heretics from any hostile demonstrations on the part of onlookers. A number of men carrying tall banners and others with more cressets followed the guardians of the law. Two led horses between a long double file of Persians carrying lanterns were the next objects of interest, for these horses represented the twin sons of Ali, who both were killed while mounted on their steeds.

The ever-increasing noise at the further end of the procession prepared me somewhat for an exciting scene; but I hardly expected the gruesome sight which now followed. A number of men, some half-clad and others in long white garments, were literally streaming with blood. They carried naked swords, with which they occasionally slashed their foreheads, and the

white garments which caught the jets of blood seemed as if they had been worn with the purpose of making the sight more ghastly. Some swayed as if about to fall, and had hardly any voice left to shout the names of their heroes. Others, in a state of frenzy, brandished their swords and shouted, 'Hassan! Husseyn!'

We were so near some of these men in the narrow street that I had to withdraw my legs so as not to touch their blood-stained garments. They wore no turbans, and the awful wounds on their close-shaven heads made me feel sick. There were some without swords who preferred to flog their naked bodies with chains, and though this ordeal may have been worse than the other, it was, at any rate, less gruesome to behold. A small boy on a led white horse followed, and blood ran down his face and stained his white robes. I felt indignant that a child should take part in this ghastly orgy; but a suspicion that the blood had been skilfully placed there before the procession had started cooled my indignation.

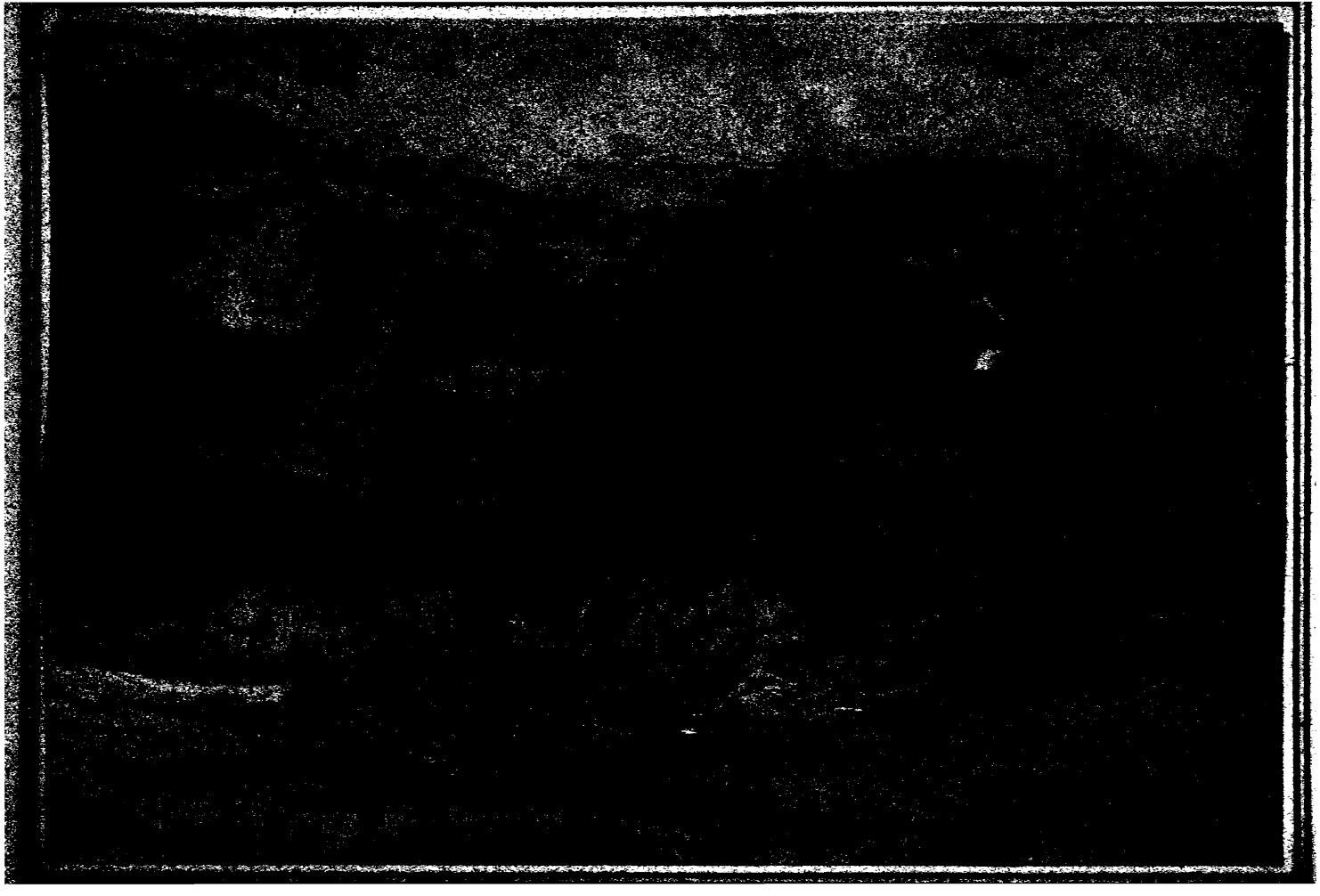
I witnessed the above some fifteen years ago, and it is possible that some of the worst features may have been modified. It might well be prohibited, for these Sheeas are strangers in the land, and no orthodox Egyptian could object to the prohibition of practices carried on by those whom they consider heretics. When the Dóseh was stopped soon after the British occupation, it was a much greater interference with the religion of the people, for the Dóseh was not a Sheea practice; it was, on the contrary, one of the great events during the *Moolid en-Nebi*, the birthday of the

Prophet. It was a barbaric performance and many people were seriously injured, though to this day Moslems have tried to assure me that when the Sheykh rode over the prostrate bodies of the faithful, none were injured by the horse's hoofs, and all received great blessings through this act of faith. They have, however, quietly submitted to the prohibition of being trampled on, and would doubtless raise no objection to the heretics living in this country being similarly prohibited from practising the barbarities of the Ashura.

Towards the end of Safar, the second month, the return of the Mekka caravan may be expected, and we again witness the picturesque procession of the Mahmal which has been described.

The third month, or Rabeea el-Owwal, is the month of the Prophet. His birth and death are both said to have taken place on the twelfth day; and any one wishing to see as much of the life and character of the Egyptians as possible will find something of interest during the first two weeks of that month. With the exception of the Dóseh, all the ceremonies which Lane describes as having taken place in his day may now be seen during the latter end of the tourist season, for the first day of the Mohammedan year 1330 was on the twenty-second day of December 1911. Three lunar months added to that date takes us into the middle of March 1912. As these dates get a set-back of eleven days each year, visitors in the near future will not have to wait to as late a date to assist in the festivities of the Moolid en-Nebi.

If not pressed for time and a certain amount of heat



can be borne, both April and May are delightful months in Egypt, always excepting the days of *hamseen*. Apart from this festival (which then fell in April) modern Cairo is beautified with its numerous blossoming trees. The trying hot winds cease early in May, and though that month is, I admit, a hot one, I consider it and also June to be the months when the painter may do his best work in Egypt.

CHAPTER XV

MORE RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES, SPRING'S AWAKENING, AND THE CAIRENE HOUSE OF COUNT ZOGHEB

THE religious observances, the festivals, and the superstitions of Islam have been so fully described by Lane that it seems presumptuous to attempt to do so here. But they are so intimately associated with the life and character of the Egyptians that it is impossible to describe the people amongst whom I have so long lived without referring to these observances. From the first day of the month of the Prophet every street and bazaar in Cairo show some signs that the Moolid en-Nebi will soon be on us. Bands of dervishes, carrying the banners of the sects to which they belong, make happy incidents in the streets through which they pass. Should we go past a dervish *tekke* the sound of a *zikr* will be heard ; and should we be bold enough to peep in we may see a group of men swaying backwards and forwards, and hear them repeat in unison the name of Allah till physical exhaustion causes a pause. Queer-looking fakirs beg for alms in the name of the Prophet ; and whether they have lain low during ordinary times and only donned their rags for the great occasion, I cannot tell, but they turn up now like butterflies on a fine spring morning.

It is pleasant to wander about the streets of the old

quarters after sunset. Their usual dark and deserted appearance is enlivened here and there by a display of lanterns hung beneath a marvellously patterned awning, and one's curiosity is incited to know with what thrilling romance the *shâer* is engaging the attention of his audience. It is also curious to find men who, after the religious excitement of a *zikr*, will sit in ecstasies in the little theatres while the sensuous dance of the *ghazeeyeh* is performed. Arabic music can also be heard at its best. Incomprehensible at first, as a strange language to the foreigner, it has a subtle charm which increases as the sounds become more familiar. A dark lane, where one or two small lanterns mark the entrances of some old mameluke palaces, may of a sudden be lighted at one end by the approach of a band of dervishes carrying now flaming cressets in lieu of the banners we may have seen in the daytime.

I neglected the old quarters, during my last stay in Cairo, when the month of the Prophet was on us. The commonplace, but luxurious, modern quarters were made glorious by the wreath of blossoming shrubs and trees which adorned them. The Esbekiyeh gardens, which I usually avoid, were a great attraction to me then. A large and rather gimcrack grotto, which I thought a horror during the winter, was now almost smothered by the gorgeous blossom of the bougainvillea. Seldom have I seen such an orgy of colour. I made some studies of it which I have since found useful; but I should then have left the bougainvillea severely alone. I heard of a fine display of its blossom in the zoological gardens, where I knew that the small entrance fee as

well as the other attractions would allow me to work with less of an admiring crowd. Captain Flower (to whom we are indebted for having made this collection of the fauna and birds of Africa one of the most interesting in the world) gave me every facility for working in the gardens which he controls. Besides the masses of bougainvillea, I found the bohenia in full bloom; the hibiscus was in flower, the poinciana regia, as well as many other subtropical shrubs.

I started a morning as well as an afternoon drawing of the bougainvillea, and much as I was taken by this display of colour in nature, I found that somehow or another I could not get it to look pictorially right on my paper. The purplish-crimson fought unpleasantly with the green, and with the blue of the sky. It is a pity; for the otherwise delightful days I spent at the Gizeh gardens have this black mark against them.

The bougainvillea had hardly shed its blossom when the jacaranda began to show what it is capable of, both as to its beauty as in the difficulties it sets before the painter who attempts to record the delicacy of its colouring. I thought nothing more of the bougainvillea when the jacaranda put on its spring garments. Leafless trees of a graceful growth, which may be seen in almost every garden, but which we simply label in our minds as trees without paying them any further attention, become each one an object of admiration when April glides into May. I had generally been in Upper Egypt during that season, or had left the country too soon to see the jacaranda in bloom. The cherry-blossom had attracted me to Japan the previous year, I have made

studies of the almond tree and the peach during one or two seasons in Italy, and I never fail to get at the apple-blossom should I happen to be in England in May. Each in its turn has filled me with enthusiasm. But there is none to compare with the beauty of the jacaranda.

Its local colour is a pale violet, but when the declining sun plays amongst its bloom-laden twigs, it tells as a mass of warm pink against the turquoise sky. The fear of a *hamseen* increases as the blossom gets to perfection, for two or three days of the hot dry wind may rob the trees of most of their beauty. The colour is so different under a sand-laden sky that it is hopeless to continue a drawing begun when the wind came from a better quarter. Should the *hamseen* have done its worst before these trees break into blossom, we may enjoy their beauty for a fortnight or more. When once the green buds show between the blossoms, we know that in a day or two all will be over. The rapidity with which a leafless tree changes to a mass of green is surprising to any one who has spent his years in northern climes.

Whether the oleander was exceptionally fine that season I cannot tell, but I had seen nothing like it anywhere—and an oleander in flower is a thing no one with any æsthetic sense would pass unnoticed. The scorching winds may have shrivelled up some of its bloom, but the profusion of buds was ever ready to fill up any gaps left by the falling petals.

Where water is available anything seems to grow in this rich alluvial soil. Flowers were in plenty during the

whole winter, but the flower gardens in Egypt attracted me less than do those nearer home. The blackish mud from which they grow makes an unpleasant setting. The large flowering shrubs get their moisture deeper in the soil, and little or no irrigation seems required. Cairo is but a few feet above the level of the Nile, and the roots of the larger trees probably reach down to where a continuous supply of water is ever available. I can only account in this way for the luxuriance of growth often seen in a dry and sandy courtyard.

It is difficult to say when the rose season is at its best; we were seldom without them. The bushes possibly take a rest during the hottest months of summer; during the autumn, the winter, and the spring they are hardly ever denuded of their bloom before they show signs of renewed efforts to break into flower.

The new suburbs, which are ever stretching out to the north and south of the modern Cairo, have little to attract one. Architectural studies may be made there to learn what to avoid. I avoided them altogether until the blossoming trees, the flowering shrubs, and the gorgeous colour of some of the creepers attracted me from one otherwise villainous house to another. There are scarcely any flowers to be seen in the old parts of the city, so that the houses and mosques could wait; but not so the blossoming trees in the gardens of the modern quarters.

Count Zogheb kindly showed me over his house, which forms a striking exception to the many tasteless

buildings in its neighbourhood, and it was a pleasure to find that the planning and decoration of the best mameluke palaces can be adapted to modern requirements if the possessor has the means and the good taste to appreciate them. Herz Bey designed the building, and though it is no slavish copy of any existing old Cairene house, it has the spirit and the good taste of the best Saracenic work. I was also glad to see that it is possible to reproduce the handsome tiles, which I had repeatedly heard to be a lost art. Some panels which the owner pointed out to me were made up partly of old and partly of modern tiles, and I confess I found it difficult to tell which were which. Connoisseurs in old faience may smile at this, and they might have pointed out some differences in the glaze; but in the decorative effect on the walls one was quite as useful as the other. I wish they had been made in Egypt, for any signs of a revival of the lost handicraft would be most welcome. The Count informed me that some were made in Venice from patterns he sent there, and others were manufactured in Austria.

Nassan, he of the lamp-shop, must have acquired a good customer in my new acquaintance, for a great number of his lamps were seen here, and they were beautifully adapted to the electric light. A fear I had before entering the house was that it might look theatrical and not suitable to present-day use; but I lost that completely after I had been there some while. There was no affectation on the part of my host and his family to live as mediæval Moslems, any more than the possessor of an old English house

attempts to live as did his predecessors. Chairs, tables, books and all other modern requirements were there, and they looked no more incongruous than did the unveiled faces of the handsome wife and daughters of my host. It was a bold venture, and if a less able architect than Herz Bey had had the designing of this home, it might have been a deplorable failure, instead of an encouragement to other wealthy Cairenes to try to do likewise.

The first attempt at a revival of Saracenic domestic architecture was the French Agency. I can only judge of it from its exterior, which is a dignified and handsome building; competent judges have assured me that the interior is very beautiful. It is singular that this noble attempt to build according to the traditions of Cairo's best period went on while Ismael Pasha was tearing down fine old mameluke palaces and destroying one of the most picturesque parts of the old city, in order to construct the hideous 'Boulevard Mohammed Ali.' This act of vandalism went on under French influence while a French architect was constructing the 'Maison de France,' as the agency is called, and endeavouring to give it the appearance of the houses the Cairenes were destroying. Fine old *mushrbiyeh* work was to be had in plenty, and the furniture of a fine mosque, which was partly demolished in order to preserve the alignment of the Boulevard, were available to the architect of the agency. It contains, therefore, much genuine old work which was not procurable when Count Zogheb recently built his home. It is as well that this should be so. Age does little to improve the

woodwork, whose chief beauty consists in the design, and of this plenty of examples remain. It is a hopeful sign that all that I saw in the Count's beautiful house can still be achieved, providing an able architect be selected.

CHAPTER XVI

DER EL-BAHRI, AND SOME INCIDENTS WHICH TOOK PLACE DURING MY STAY THERE

FROM 1905 and onwards I spent five long seasons in Upper Egypt. I was engaged during a part of that time in reproducing a series of eighteenth dynasty bas-reliefs for four different museums. By the courtesy of the Antiquities Department I was allowed the use of the hut built by the Egyptian Exploration Fund, when, under the direction of Professor Naville, the excavations of the Mentuhoteb temple at Thebes were begun. I joined the camp during the last season of its work there. I spent a delightful winter in the companionship of four enthusiastic excavators. The exciting finds while Professor Currelly was in charge of the camp, as well as the epoch-making discovery of the tomb of Queen Tyi in the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings, all tend to make the winter of 1905-1906 a memorable one in the annals of Egyptian research. It was an exciting time; but as these events, as well as my own work for the museums, has been given in detail in *Below the Cataracts*, I propose now to recount some of the incidents which occurred since the Egyptian Exploration Fund broke up their camp to carry on their work at Abydos.

The reproduction of the bas-reliefs in the Hatshepsu

temple, which I originally undertook rather as an experiment, brought me numerous commissions from various museums. The work was interesting as well as lucrative; but after some months of it I yearned to get back to my water-colour drawings. I therefore engaged an artist in Paris to come out the following season to assist me. We then had the hut to ourselves, and we turned the antiquities store-room into a studio for such work as we had not to do in the temple itself.

We led the 'simple life' here with a vengeance. We slept under the canopy of the starlit heavens; we fed on what our Arab cook could find in the village between us and the cultivated land, supplemented with preserves I had sent out from England; we rose with the sun and retired not very long after it had set. Hatshepsu's temple rises in terraces a couple of hundred yards from the hut, and the foundations of the newly excavated shrine of Mentuhoteb lie beside it, the former more or less an enlarged copy of its neighbour of twelve centuries earlier date. An amphitheatre of imposing limestone cliffs backs the two ruins and divides us from the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings.

The great Theban necropolis spreads over the desert between us and the cultivation, and stretches some two miles both to the north and to the south of our hut, the vast temple of Medinet Habu being at the southern extremity and the road to the Valley of the Kings at its northern end. In these two to three square miles of broken ground, raised above the limits of the Nile's overflow, can we read most of what is known of the history of Egypt from the Middle Empire up to the Mohammedan

invasion. Little is known from the decline of the twelfth dynasty until the rise of the New Empire some five-and-thirty centuries past. But the story of the renaissance during the eighteenth dynasty, the conquests of the second and the third Rameses, as well as the gradual decline of the empire until the foreign domination, can be read here by the Egyptologist as in an open book. Of the rule of the Tanites, of the Libyans, and of the Ethiopians, we find fewer indications. Some remains remind us of the second renaissance during the late Egyptian period, and we are also reminded of Cambyses and the Persian domination, when we behold the overturned colossal image of Rameses. A beautiful little temple of Nektanebos carries us forward to when the Egyptians came by their own again.

The Ptolemaic façade at Medinet Habu, the beautiful little shrine at Der el-Medineh, and the inner sanctuary of Hatshepsu's temple remain as examples of the work done under the Ptolemies. If we go a mile beyond Medinet Habu we find a little temple of Isis erected by Hadrian and Antoninus Pius, and bearing the inscriptions of Vespasian, Domitian, and Otho.

The early Christians have left their mark in Hatshepsu's shrine to Ammon Ra; unfortunately little of their constructive work is seen, but a great many obliterations of beautiful eighteenth dynasty bas-reliefs make us regret their pious zeal. Until recently a partly ruined Christian church stood in the centre of the second court of the Rameses III. temple at Medinet Habu. Misplaced zeal on the part of Egyptologists caused this primitive place of Christian worship to be

cleared away so as not to obstruct the view of the earlier building. A broader view of archæology might have spared such an interesting structure.

To settle down to a stay of seven consecutive months in an arid waste, surrounded by tombs and the crumbling remains of a bygone age, might strike the man in the street as holding out a gloomy prospect. The idea that I had not been particularly favoured never entered my head till, after four or five months passed here, I received a visit from a relative. This lady had picked her way on a donkey, through a mile or more of pit tombs, rock tombs and broken mausoleums, on a hot and dusty day, before she reached my hut. After our greetings she remarked, 'You must be fed up with this place by now.' She asked me to come and stay, as her guest, in the huge new hotel which we could see from here outlined against the eastern horizon. That I had become an object of pity instead of one to be envied was a new and strange idea to me. To give up my free life in this fine air, surrounded as I was with an infinity of things which filled me with interest, and my only regret being that the days were far too short—to give this up to loaf about the hotel at Luxor amidst a crowd of people whose one object is to kill time—the very thought of it gave me a shudder. I tried to console my kindly intentioned relative that she would think better of my locality when she had seen the beautiful things Hatshepsu's temple had in store for her.

The beautiful series of reliefs illustrating the expedition to the Land of Punt, the presentation of Queen Aahmes to Ammon Ra and the divine birth

of Hatshepsu, all executed during the best period of the eighteenth dynasty, did less to expel the gloomy thoughts of my relation than did the cup of tea which my Arab cook had prepared for her. The frank admission that the chipped and cracked examples of an archaic art did not appeal to her was refreshing, and I began already to have my suspicions as to the genuineness of many exclamations of admiration I had heard.

Early Egyptian art must ever remain as caviare to the masses until they learn that art is not merely a slavish reproduction of some natural objects. They would do well to credit those who have studied it and who assure them that it is in truth a very great art, and that it well repays any intelligent person who approaches it with proper reverence. The absence of perspective and of all foreshortening in these low reliefs shocks the tyro, and he may express himself that the figures must be wrong when an attitude is depicted which it is impossible to hold. The mind, however, soon accepts these conventions and is free to admire the wonderful drawing of the outline, the sense of proportion, and the marvellously suggested modelling in a relief that seldom surpasses the eighth of an inch in thickness. Apart from the purely æsthetic pleasure the eighteenth dynasty work gives us, it is a delight to be carried back to a remote age and to see depicted not only the gods and the kings, but the everyday life, with its joys and its sorrows, of a people who flourished more than three millenniums ago.

The past may seem too remote to awaken much sympathy in many who are always surrounded by the comforts of the present day. But if we enter into the

life of the fellaheen who dwell in the villages where desert and cultivation meet, we find much in common between the early Egyptians and this country-folk.

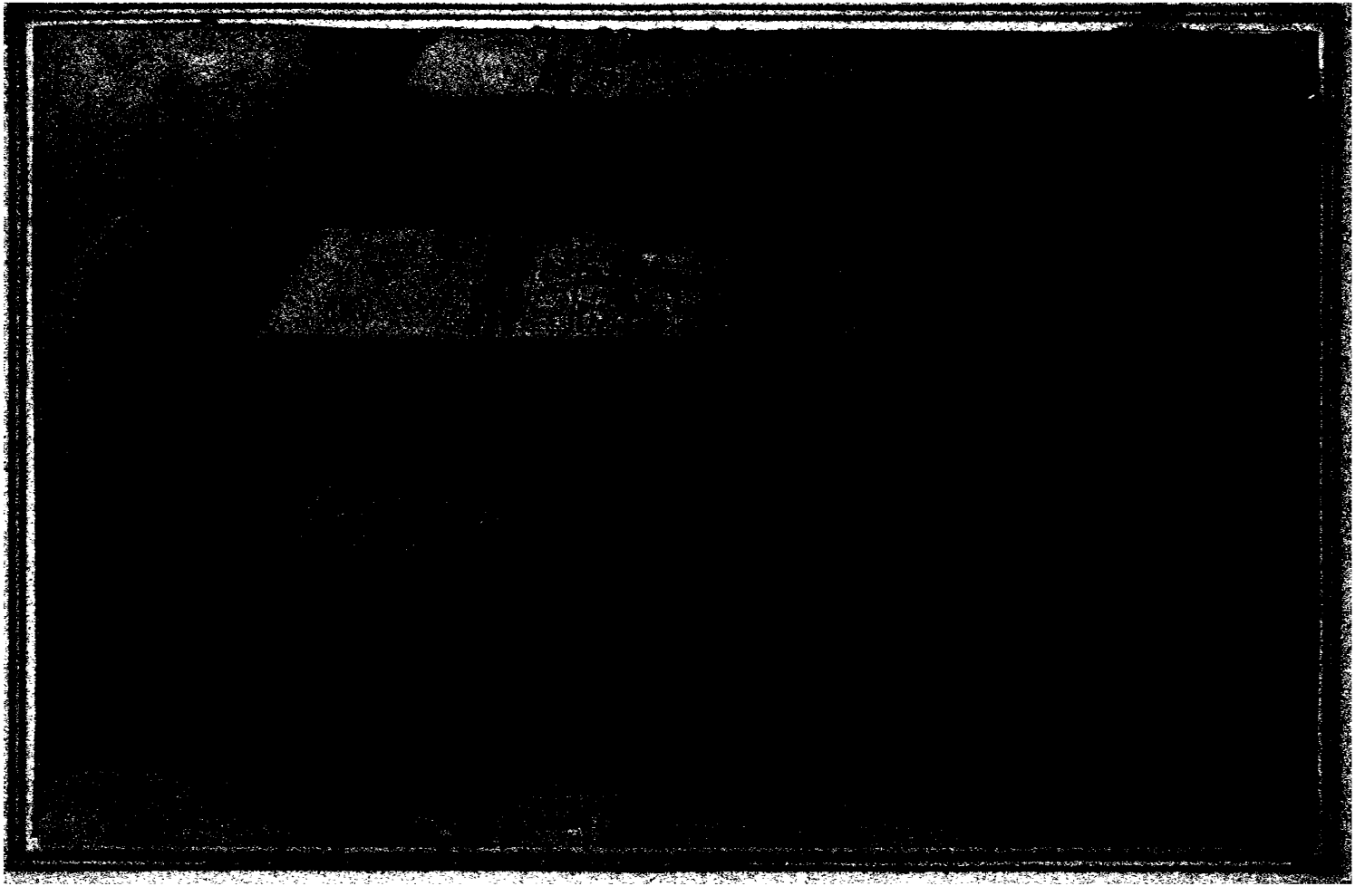
Some actually live in the tombs, using the forecourts for their beasts. Where exceptionally interesting wall inscriptions exist in the ancient sepulchres, the Antiquities Department has stepped in and protected them from the risk of being damaged. The evicted tenants then build their homes nearer the cultivation. The one I give as an illustration to this chapter is a fair sample of a modern Theban homestead. The dress of the people has altered slightly from that of their remote ancestors, and the camel was presumably non-existent in pharaonic times; but little else has been changed. The rude bins made of dried mud are of early Egyptian rather than of Saracenic design. The stone in the right-hand corner with which the fellaha grinds the corn, finds its prototype on the walls of many an adjacent tomb.

The farming operations have little changed during this great lapse of time. The scenes depicted on the walls of the tomb of Nakht: the men reaping with sickles, the women gleaning; others packing the ears of corn or measuring the garnered grain—all this can be seen now, in any of these villages, and it is done in the same simple and primitive manner. The types of the labouring people are less changed than their simple garments. The women plucking durra or winnowing the corn in Nakht's sepulchre might have been drawn from any of the women we now see carrying their pitchers of water from the wells. All are now followers

of the Prophet save a few Coptic Christians; the worship of Isis gave way to that of the risen Christ, and the crescent has since replaced the cross. But many a superstition has survived these changes. The mental characteristics of the Upper Egyptian differ very much from those of the true bred Arab; it is therefore rational to believe that these have been transmitted as well as the cast of the features.

Some allowance must be made for the inhabitants of Gurna, the long straggling village at the base of the necropolis. Year after year tourists pass by its hovels, and from a coin thrown now and again to the children, a breed of beggars is replacing an otherwise hard-working people. The demand for 'antikas' has caused a supply of false ones, or tempted the men to steal from the temples whenever a favourable chance presents itself. Many have lost the habit of work in consequence of these evil influences; thus, on the whole, the Gurna peasants compare badly with those of less frequented villages.

With the exception of a few friends who were connected with the excavations, or an occasional visit from acquaintances who were spending a season in Upper Egypt, I saw few human beings beside the Gurna peasants. I endeavoured to see the best side of their natures, and to make allowances for the centuries of bad government under which they have existed. I found them not quite so bad as they are painted. Their ingratitude, of which I had heard a good deal, can be explained in two ways; firstly, hospitality is a duty of the Mohammedan religion, and hospitality of a kind is



expected and taken for granted. We are seldom grateful for what we consider our due. Secondly, many favours conferred by the foreigner are little more than common humanity demands, and he is liable to place too high an estimate on what he may have done. Where too much gratitude was not expected for some service performed, I generally found that the fellah could be as grateful as the peasant nearer home.

Their greed for money is a characteristic which the tourist cannot fail to perceive; but the tourist seldom meets any of the fellaheen save those who live near the frequented 'sights.' The annual influx of sightseers has become as a crop, to these peasants, from which a harvest should be gathered. In their eyes the *Sauwâhîn* are all millionaires, and, according to the oriental mind, the rich man should pay out of the abundance of his riches, and not necessarily in proportion to the services rendered. Our mediæval 'largess' was taken in that light by our forebears, and corresponds very much to the fellaheen's notion of *baksheesh*. This is not expected of those who live and work amongst them, for 'How can a man be rich if he works daily with his hands?' *Baksheesh* from such as myself would be expected not as largess, but more as a gratuity after a certain period of service.

I remember a man asking where the *Beled es-Sauwâhîn* was, that is, the 'Land of the Foreigners.' On being told that the English, the French and Germans, who were all *Sauwâhîn*, had each a separate country, my questioner retorted, 'But surely you are not one of them?' I told him that as I was an

Englishman, I was of course one of them, and I, in my turn asking him a few questions, managed to arrive at his views on the subject. He was aware that there existed beyond the seas a land of the *Ingleesi*, also one of the *Fransowi*, and one of the *Nemsawi*; but besides these there was a land of the *Sauwâhîn*, a rich people who apparently did no work, and annually migrated to the south to visit the temples and tombs of the ancient Egyptians for some obscure purpose which he had not quite fathomed.

They are superstitious to a greater degree than the pure Arab, who, to my thinking, is less so than most other illiterate people, and it would be an interesting study to sift the superstitions which date back to the Pantheism of the early Egyptians from those which have been imported since the Mohammedan invasion.

They seem to credit every foreigner who lives amongst them with a certain amount of medical knowledge, and when their own treatment will have failed in its object, any European living amongst them may expect a visit from the sufferer. A supply of Epsom salts and a solution of boracic acid, left in my hut by the last tenants, did duty for most internal and external complaints which were brought to me during my first season; and these remedies, largely assisted by the antiseptic air of the desert, soon established my reputation as a *hakeem*. The remedies being gratis, and a bottle thrown in, it is possible that the bottle may have attracted some of my patients. There is a well-appointed hospital at Luxor to which I vainly tried to persuade many to apply. Wild stories of imaginary horrors

practised there, and the usual fear that some means would be used to extract money from them, prevents many an excellent hospital from being the blessing it should be.

A painful case that was brought to my notice decided me to augment not only my medical stores, but also to gain some elementary knowledge as to first-aid treatment. In early November scorpions are still active, and are not hibernating, as they do while the tourist's season is on, and only those who live here in the hot season have any idea what a pest scorpions can be. The case in point was that of a little girl who had been stung, and the father hurried round to my hut to ask me for a remedy. The only treatment I had then heard of was to take alcohol in sufficient quantities to counteract the poison of the scorpion. As the child was only eleven years old, I put more water than whisky in the bottle, and told the man to give his girl a teaspoonful about every half-hour, and to be careful to keep the wound clean. I saw the man the next day, and he told me that the child was well again; how far he had applied the whisky solution I could not tell. A suspicion crossed my mind that he had probably drunk the whisky, and possibly rubbed the wound with the empty bottle. The child, however, being well, I thought no more about it till I again met the man, a week or so later. I playfully remarked that I hoped no more whisky might be required for scorpion stings, and received the startling answer that the child was dead. The man took his loss in the resigned fatalistic manner of most Mohammedans. 'It was the will of Allah, and we must accept that as all for the best.'

I sent a letter the next day to the dispensary which is attached to the American mission, and begged the man in charge of it to supply me with any known remedies for the sting of the scorpion, and also to kindly write out how the remedies should be applied. My servant brought back two preparations of ammonia, some lint, and detailed instructions how to use them. There was no mention of alcohol, so I trusted that my suspicions as to who had swallowed my whisky had been well founded.

As we got into December, we heard and saw little of scorpions, and, during the season of hibernation, I forgot about these creatures as well as about the remedies, till a very rude reminder of their existence brought one and the other back to me.

While lifting up some stones in the Ramesseum so as to arrange a level place to stand my sketching-stool, I put my hand inadvertently on a sleeping scorpion. He was soon awake, and the sting I got in my hand caused the most acute physical pain I can ever remember. I was a mile away from my hut and the remedies; but remembering the first instructions, I endeavoured to tie my handkerchief tightly round my wrist, so as to stop the poison, which I felt shooting up my arm. I could not manage this with one hand, and had to call in the assistance of two American ladies who happened to be viewing the temple. When one kindly tied the handkerchief as tight as I could stand, the shooting pains up my arm lessened, and the poison then worked its way to my finger-tips. My good Samaritan tried to induce me to mount her ass and ride into Luxor to see a

doctor. This and the crossing of the Nile would have taken me over an hour, and the pain in my finger-tips became too acute to make an hour of it even thinkable. Besides which, I was keen on trying my new remedies.

The treatment which my missionary friend had written out worked very well; the application of ammonia to the wound, and the drops taken internally, soon had some effect, and Ebers's *Bride of the Nile*, which I was reading, and on which I tried hard to concentrate my thoughts, probably did some good also. A native acquaintance called to suggest a cure. I was to repeat certain words accompanied by some signs, and I know not what else, for I was not in the mood to take his instructions in. Not wishing, however, to throw cold water on his good intentions, I told him that, good as his remedy might be, I was afraid that it might act counter to the one I was trying. The cabalistic words and signs might not agree with the ammonia treatment prescribed by one who had no belief in these words, and my friend admitted that he had never thought of that. I also pretended to fall asleep, and succeeded thereby in ridding myself of my well-intentioned visitor.

A peculiar stiffness hung about my finger-joints for nearly a week and then left me; it was my left hand, so it did not interfere with my work. One detail I had omitted may be well to mention, in case a reader be similarly circumstanced, and that is, when using some sharp instrument to open the puncture so as to squeeze out as much poison as possible, be sure to disinfect

this instrument properly. I imagined a good wipe of the hypodermic syringe I used for the purpose would be a sufficient precaution; but a sore place which took some time to heal has taught me in future either to dip the instrument into carbolic acid, or, failing that, to heat it in the flame of a candle before trying any surgical operations with it.

No patients from scorpion stings applied to me again, for the death of the poor little girl may have been put to my charge. As an eye doctor I was in great request. Dirt being the chief cause of the complaints, a wash with the boracic solution did no harm, and generally did some good. Some brought blind people to my hut—rather a lot to expect from a little boracic acid! Some cases were probably only cataract, and quite curable; but say what I would, I could not persuade these people to go to the Luxor hospital.

Since then I hear that a member of the Khedivial family has devoted a large sum of money to send properly equipped medical men to the villages to see how far they can cope with the various eye maladies. A wiser and better charity it is hard to conceive. Had my patients dwelt in the towns or on the cultivated land, my cures might have been few and far between. The pure desert air had much to do with my healings.

I mentioned the case of the little girl who had died to a medical friend who happened to be spending the season at Luxor. In his opinion the poison from the scorpion was not the cause of the death; but when picking at the little wound some poisonous matter must have got in and caused blood-poisoning.

I went out the next season more fully provided with medical stores, and our good doctor in Haslemere had given me some hints as to bandaging a wound and applying first-aid treatment. I had not long to wait before putting my freshly acquired knowledge to a test. One of the guards at the Hatshepsu temple trod with his naked foot on a jagged bottle end which some careless picnickers had left there. It was a ghastly wound, and though I told the man I would pay for a donkey to take him to Luxor, and would see that he lost no wages while he might be laid up, he would not go, and preferred taking the risk of losing his foot. As all persuasion failed, I set to work to do my best. I washed his foot and bandaged it with the antiseptic material I had, and sent him home with a broomstick for a crutch. He and the broomstick appeared early next morning to have the wound dressed, and his visits were repeated twice daily for the best part of a week. The rapidity with which that foot healed up made me doubt as to whether I had not missed my vocation. No London surgeon could have effected a cure as rapidly with all his experience and his up-to-date appliances. But lest I should become too conceited, I reflected that the London surgeon had neither the desert air to operate in, nor had he as abstemious patients as mine was. No strong drinks had ever heated his blood, and his simple fare was sufficient for the easy work he had to do, but not enough to produce the acids of the often overfed Britisher.

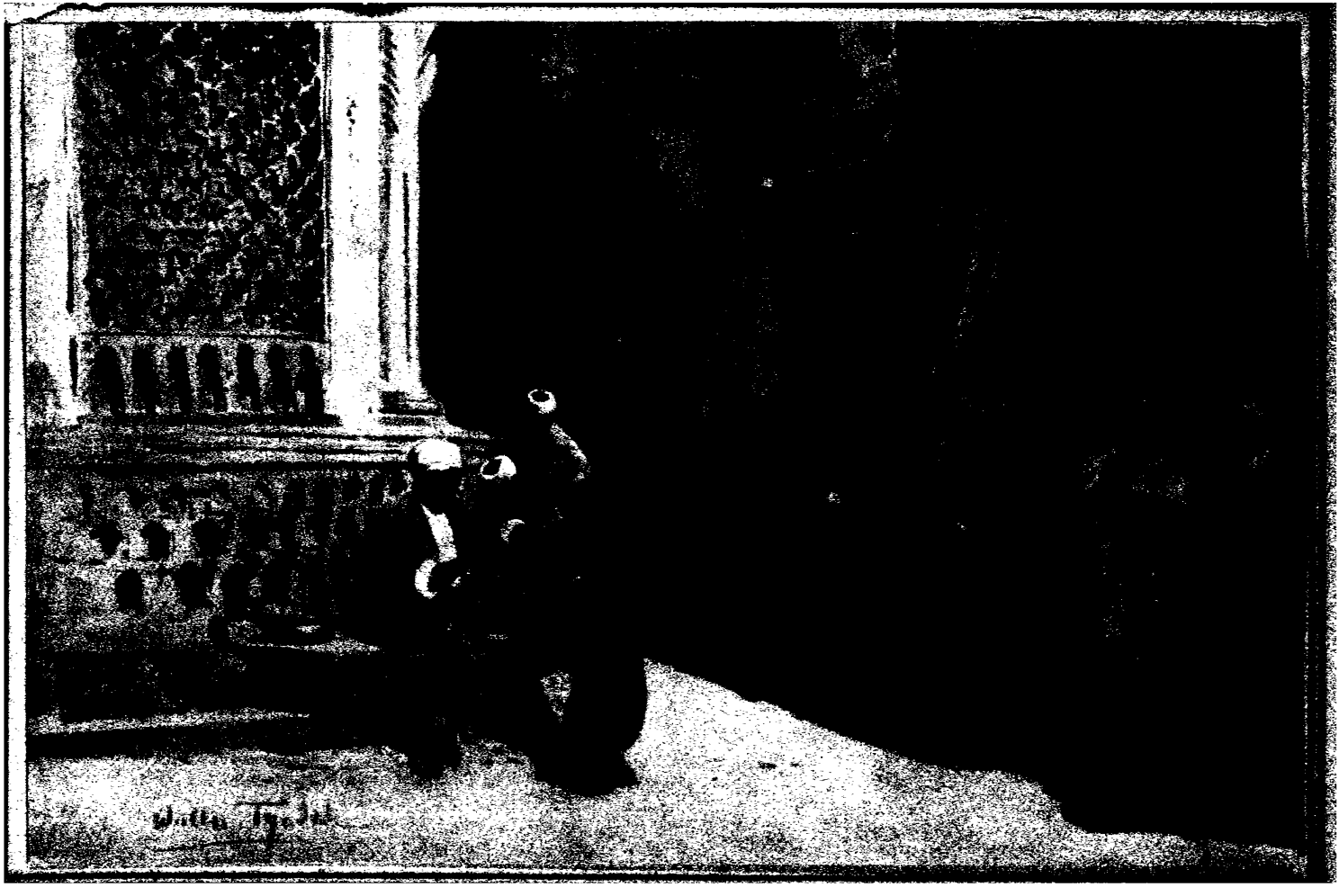
Now this man was grateful for the trouble I had taken, and I'll be bound to say, more so than many

London hospital patients who take all that is gratuitously done for them as a matter of course.

He tried to show his gratitude one day in a manner I had to decline. I found him shaving the head of his fellow-guard with pieces of broken glass. I watched him for some time performing this dry shave: he would break a piece off a bottle and then jag the sharp edge over his mate's skull. When the edge was blunted, he would break off another piece of glass and continue the operation, till finally the head appeared as free of hair as a billiard ball. It took the best part of an afternoon to complete the job to his satisfaction. It was past the season when visitors to the temple might be expected, and time was therefore of no object. Seeing that my hair wanted cutting badly, my late patient seriously offered to shave my head in like manner.

I dislike long hair, especially in hot weather, but I thought I might dislike the broken glass still more. Neither I nor my assistant from Paris wished to lose a whole day by going to Luxor to visit the hairdresser, and the latter decided that he would let our cook try his hand on his head. Our cook appeared to be as expert a barber as the temple guard, and time being rather more valuable to him, he cleared the hair off my companion's head very quickly.

Even this did not encourage me to submit to the operation, and I reflected that as my time was more valuable than that of a native Luxor barber, I would get a barber from thence to come to me. I also prefer these artists in hair to use my own brushes to any they may themselves possess. The brushes were, how-



ever, of little use, for there was nothing to brush for a fortnight after the Luxor hairdresser's visit.

I have no picture of the broken bottle school of barber; but I painted one of the craft, at a recent date, plying his trade in a street in Cairo. He had a pair of scissors to take off the main crop, and a dry shave (where no blood was spilt) followed with a razor. He got through his job very much quicker than the amateurs at Der el-Bahri, but he did not do it as cleanly. While I painted my street corner, I noticed several heads the worse for the razor, and though some talk as to the charge for the operation usually preceded it, there were seldom any complaints about the cuts in the scalps.

CHAPTER XVII

DER EL-BAHRI—(*continued*)

FROM the middle of January till the beginning of March not a day went by but some parties of visitors passed through Der el-Bahri to see Hatshepsu's temple. They usually went to the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings first, and then crossing over the mountain which separated us from that valley, we would see them defiling down the steep incline which leads to Cook's rest-house. After lunch the guide would rush them through Hatshepsu's shrine, and then start them off to see the tombs of Sheykh Abd-el-Gurna; the Ramesseum would then be visited, and with hardly a pause for breath every one would remount their donkeys or get into their litters to be rushed off to Medinet Habu. The Valley of the Tombs of the Queens might then be visited, and a long ride, with a short halt at the Colossi of Memnon, would take them to the Nile, to be crossed after sunset, before the Luxor hotels could be reached.

I have no doubt that most of these good people were thankful when so fatiguing a day was well over, and vowed that no power on earth would ever induce them to go through it again. A week would barely suffice to get more than a cursory glance of all the

sights which are crowded into this one long day. The following day is usually devoted to 'doing' the Luxor temple, and being rushed through the ruins of Karnak. These people who do their sights at such a giddy speed usually take part in a tour up the Nile organised by some travelling agency. A few well-advised ones remain at Luxor till the steam *dahabieh*, which has taken them so far, picks them up on its return trip from Assuan. This gives them time to see at their ease that which the ill-advised ones had merely been rushed through.

It was amusing, after some months of solitude, to see my fellow-creatures again, but before the tourist season was over I longed to get back to the usual quietude of our valley. The trippers would arrive in batches of from one to two hundred, and add to this an equal number of donkeys and their drivers—Der el-Bahri on those occasions became a veritable pandemonium. Fortunately they generally swept down on us at about the same hour of the day—in time to lunch at the rest-house opposite my hut; by three o'clock they were driven off, by the guide in charge of the party, to see the Ramesseum. I had to rearrange my day and feed when they fed, and take a 'siesta' until the temple was empty once more. Until the tripper season we were almost flyless, being sufficiently far in the desert to be away from that pest. The donkeys and the débris of the picnickers brought the usual swarms of flies with them, and work in any of the temples was as bad in that respect as in the bazaars at Cairo.

The smaller parties who dropped on us unawares were most to be feared. I might be making some studies in one of the tombs, which are airless enough at the best of times, and be suddenly aware that a party was approaching by hearing, 'Dis way, ladies and shentlemens, to de Tomb of Rekmaré.' There would be no help for it but to pack up my traps and be off. If I returned after the crowd had been rushed off somewhere else, the air would be unbreathable, both from the numbers who had been there, and from the extinguished tapers or magnesium wire.

By the end of March I, and possibly some artist friend, would again reign supreme at Der el-Bahri. It is a hot valley, for it is shut off from the northerly breezes, and the cliffs throw back the rays of the sun. By rearranging our days we managed to avoid the worst of the heat. We breakfasted at daybreak, and we took our midday meal about eleven, and from twelve till four we would sleep in some recess where the sun's rays had never penetrated. After that, and a cold bath and some tea, we could get to work till sundown. The hut became unbearable in April, for it had no double roof. The coolest spot I could find for the midday rest was in the Ptolemaic sanctuary in Hatshepsu's temple. This is cut deep into the overhanging cliffs, and in the hot season would be some twenty degrees cooler than my hut. I put an Arab bed in here, and by lying with my head to the entrance, there was just light enough to be able to read myself to sleep.

There was no fear of trippers now, and the few visitors who remained on in Luxor would only arrive

before or after the heat of the day. On first entering my temporary boudoir nothing would be visible on the dark walls; but on getting accustomed to the dim light, rows of gods and goddesses would appear. The hawk-headed Homs, jackal-faced Anubis, and the unspeakable Min of Koptos were all here; also the rounded forms of Euergetes's Queen, and Maat, the goddess of truth. The tiger-headed Sekhmet, Bellona's prototype, and Sobk with his crocodile snout made a foil to the rounded features of Hathor and Isis.

A squeaky sound somewhere above would make me aware that I was not the only living tenant of this sanctuary. Bats have long since discovered that it is fairly cool here in summer, and not too cold in winter. A noise like gentle taps from a hammer would draw my eyes to a wide crack in the wall, and around two shiny little beads I would make out the form of a large lizard. The little beads would stare at me for some time, and if I just moved my head they would disappear into the depths of the wall. The bats like myself only used this place as a shelter from the heat, and would venture out towards night to find a living; but what could this lizard (a gecko, I believe, it is called) find here to subsist on? Flies kept away from this dark sanctuary, and except the water I had in my water-bottle no moisture finds its way here.

The guards occasionally shot a snake, but all I have seen in this temple appeared to be harmless ones; anyhow, none ever shared my resting-place with me. It was different in the enclosure of the Ramesseum, which is nearer the moisture of the cultivated land. I was

returning from my work there one evening, and passed close to a large cobra. It was curled round a stone which was partly hid in the scrub growing near the pylon. I had no stick with me, or I might have been able to kill it. It was the first I had ever seen, except in captivity, and I was very interested in comparing it with its numerous presentments in every temple in Egypt. To kill it, with as little risk as possible of its killing me, became my chief wish when I had watched it for some time, and reflected what a danger this beautiful creature was to the numbers of people who roam about the temple. When I picked up a good-sized stone, it shifted its place and disappeared in the scrub.

I came to the spot on the following evening with Mr. Howard Carter and a shot-gun; we also brought some milk in a pan, and placed it near where I had seen the cobra. We waited till dark in the hopes of our bait attracting it, but I am sorry to say we saw it no more.

Professor Flinders Petrie told me that he had killed several with his walking-stick. They are easily destroyed; but if one merely wounds the creature with a blow, it may strike its fangs into one before a second blow can be dealt. We told the guardians of the temple, and they promised to try to shoot it. I never heard of their having done so, and I have a suspicion that the prospect of a gratuity from a snake-charmer may have prevented them. Whether this cobra has since hearkened to the voice of the charmers, charming never so wisely, and is now occasionally pulled out of a sack to perform on the pavement in front of Shepheard's hotel, I cannot say. I have never seen as large

a specimen in Cairo, and I expect they are taken when they are young.

As this is an art practised now as in pharaonic times, it may be of interest to hear what Canon Tristram says about it in *The Natural History of the Bible*: 'The art of serpent charming, referred to in Ps. lviii. 4 and Jas. iii. 7, is of immense antiquity, and is practised not only in Africa but in India. In the latter country it is exercised on another species of cobra (*naja tripudians*) very like the *haje*. The resources of the charmers appear to be very simple—the shrill notes of a flute, which are the only kind of tones which the serpent, with its very imperfect sense of sound, is capable of distinctly following: and, above all, coolness and courage, combined with gentleness in handling the animal, so as not to irritate it. The charmers are not impostors; for though they may sometimes remove the fangs, it is a well-attested fact that they generally allow them to remain, and they will operate on the animals when just caught as willingly as on individuals which have long been in their possession; but they are very reluctant to make experiments on any other species than the cobra. When a cobra has been discovered in a hole, the charmer plays at the mouth until the serpent, attracted by the sound, comes out, when it is suddenly seized by the tail, and held at arm's length. Thus suspended, it is unable to turn itself so as to bite, and, when it has become exhausted by its own efforts, it is put into a basket, the lid of which is raised while the music is playing, but, at each attempt of the serpent to dart out, the lid is shut down upon it, until it learns to stand quietly on its tail, swaying to and fro

to the music, and ceases to attempt to escape. If it shows more restlessness than ordinary, the fangs are extracted as a precaution. Instances are not uncommon in which, with all their care, the jugglers' lives are sacrificed in the exhibition.'

We were surprised one evening by a much more alarming creature than a cobra, and that was a raving madman. My friend Erskine Nicol was staying with me, and we had asked Howard Carter to dine with us. When the latter arrived within sight of our hut, he was accompanied by a native who farmed a large part of the land between the fringe of the desert and the Nile. The man appeared very excited about something, and Carter was doing his best to pacify him. As they got nearer, we heard him accusing some one who had cut down a tree belonging to him, and he kept pointing to our hut, and saying that the culprit lived there. Nicol then approached the man, and asked what the excitement was about, and after some conversation he called out to me not to let the man in as he was out of his mind. It was dusk at the time, and my cook had lighted the lamp and set the table; we had a lot of inflammable material about, as I and my assistant were packing a large number of casts to send off to America. A madman amongst our casts was about the last thing we wanted, besides the danger of his upsetting the petroleum lamp.

The man of a sudden dodged away from my two friends and made a dash for the hut. I was just in time to close the door, and my assistant and I had to lean against it to prevent the madman from bursting it in. It was a frail double door and could not long

resist the onslaughts of our unwelcome visitor. I managed to reach a crowbar, and, by sticking one end in the floor and jamming the other under one of the transoms, it made a powerful buttress. Finding that that half of the door resisted his efforts too stubbornly, the man threw himself on his back and kicked his foot through a panel and forced his leg well inside. 'Hold on a bit longer,' called out my friends outside, 'we have sent for the temple guards and some rope.' I had to dislodge that leg or we should have had the whole man in through the broken panel. A severe bastinado on the sole of the foot finally made the man withdraw it. He then butted the door with his head and, making several rushes, threw the weight of his body against it. Another panel had just given in when the guards arrived.

My two friends then closed with the man and called on us to come out, and we also threw ourselves on to the poor fellow. The guards handed us a bit of rope, but would not touch the man, not through physical fear so much as apprehension of making an enemy of one who from his wealth was a power in the village. With his turban we pinioned his arms, and we tied his ankles together with the rope, and then sat on his body till his relations had been sent for. We did our best not to hurt the unfortunate man; but as he was powerfully built, it was all we could do to master him.

When his relations arrived he was sufficiently exhausted to allow of his being lifted on to a donkey and taken away into the darkness.

That same evening we had several of his relatives

round, as well as the *Omdeh* of the village, and they all implored us not to let the authorities in Luxor know about it. They would keep him locked up till he was safe to be at large; whereas, if he were taken to the *Mamúr*, he would be sent to the madhouse at Keneh, and there, according to these villagers, he would be treated with the utmost cruelty. Now the right person to report him was the Omdeh of the village, and we reminded him of this, and told him that if any one was harmed by this madman we should report the Omdeh for having neglected his duty. The latter promised to take all responsibility, and said that we could rest assured that the man would never come near my hut again.

For a couple of days we had peace, for the poor madman had probably not recovered from his exhaustion. After that time we saw him rushing about the neighbourhood with half the village-folk after him. We called on the Omdeh to tell him that he must inform the authorities at Luxor, or we should do it ourselves, and he promised that he would send a messenger that very day. I did not expect him to keep his promise, and decided to write to the Mamúr the next day to report on the madman as well as on the Omdeh for neglect of duty. This time, however, the latter did not lie, and we heard that some mounted police and a litter had arrived and had taken the man off.

An important official and his secretary rode over to my hut on the following day and gave us a good example of Egyptian red-tapism: age, place of birth, nationality, profession, etc., of all the witnesses had to be taken down by the secretary; each one in turn

down to the cook and our messenger had to give their testimony. 'Did the man call you names, and if so how many?' was one of the questions put to me; as if it mattered what a madman said, for the poor man had been pronounced insane by the doctor that very morning. It is also difficult to see how our ages and places of birth bore on the subject, unless one had the mind of an Egyptian and that of an official as well.

We heard that the patient had gone out of his mind once before some years previously, and that he had now been sent to the lunatic asylum at Keneh. Madness must either be quickly cured there or else the rumours —that *baksheesh* (if in sufficient quantity) can get a patient out—must be true, for in less than three weeks the man was in our neighbourhood again. He was, however, carefully watched by his relatives, and we had no further visits from him.

To give some idea of the dread the fellaheen have of hospitals (unless they go as out-patients), as well as of lunatic asylums, I will repeat what one of these peasants maintained takes place in the latter. He declared that those of unsound mind were hung by their heels from the ceiling, over a charcoal brazier, and then holes were bored in their heads to let out a valuable juice for which the doctors got a large price. 'A piastre a drop,' said one; 'No, three piastres a drop,' declared another. It would be curious to trace the origin of such an absurd statement. In some of the out-of-the-way places, I am, however, sorry to hear that some native doctors are not above extracting *baksheesh* from their patients.

I heard this from an Englishman and his wife, whose words I cannot doubt. A man whom they employed as gardener in Upper Egypt, where they were living, had to go to a hospital owing to some accident to his leg. The doctor who attended him said he could cure the leg, but might possibly have to amputate it. He then asked the patient what he earned and what his relatives were worth, and on being told, suggested that a certain sum would be necessary to save the leg. The poor gardener could not pay this, and, after the usual bargaining, the sum agreed on was obtained from the patient's people, and the man soon left the hospital with both his legs. Of course, had the doctor's villainous behaviour been reported to high quarters he would have been summarily dealt with. Let us hope that he has been found out since.

Any one seeing the poor hovels many of the fellaheen dwell in would be surprised at the attachment they have for their homes. During my second winter at Thebes we had a poor Nile, and a large portion of the land near us had not had its usual share of inundation; besides this, the Egyptian Exploration Fund having started their work elsewhere, the three hundred men and boys it had been employing for some years past had not this work to do. It was therefore a singularly bad year for the people of Gurna. Work at the Assuan dam was being paid at three times the rate these men got while the excavations were on, and now a great many were stranded with no means of a livelihood. It was useless to try and persuade any to apply at Assuan for work, the idea of going more than a hundred miles to better their

circumstances was abhorrent to them. It was pitiable to see the number of men who applied for the little work I could give them in connection with the reproduction of the bas-reliefs.

Towards the end of the season the view of the Ramesseum was being spoilt by a great bank of earth that was being raised round it as an encircling wall. I was sorry to see this, as it ruined the effect of the temple from a distance; but I had some consolation in the fact that it gave employment to a number of the villagers. Let us hope that a similar amount of work in pulling it down again may be reserved for the next bad Nile.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CROSS DESERT JOURNEY TO KOSSEIR

I PROPOSE now to break the sequence of events during my second season at Thebes, and attempt to describe a desert journey I took early in November. During the months I spent at Der el-Bahri, when I joined the camp of the Egyptian Exploration Fund, I was awakened every morning by the first light in the eastern sky, and daily saw the sun rise above the distant hills which shut off the Nile valley from the Arabian desert. The Libyan desert, on the eastern fringe of which we camped, stretches for two thousand miles and more in a westerly direction till it reaches Morocco, that land of the setting sun known in Egypt as el-Maghrib, the West.

The 'call of the desert' could easily have been satisfied without crossing the Nile valley; but the Libyan desert called me no further into its tractless wastes than to the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings. Distance lent an enchantment to the view of the low-lying hills between me and the rising sun, and as Alice wished to see what went on in the room beyond the looking-glass, so I felt drawn to the land which lay between those hills and the Red Sea.

It was across that tract that the Thebans of old

journeyed to the port of Kosseir to bring back the products from the far East. Beyond those hills gangs of slaves were driven to dig for the gold now found in the tombs of the Pharaohs—King Solomon's mines are spoken of as being there—and the Rehenu valley of the ancient Egyptians, shut in with black breccia cliffs, echoed to the sounds of hammer and pick, while many a statue was there being fashioned, to be dragged down to the Nile and floated to far-away Gizeh or Memphis.

From the earliest dynasties right up to the present day each generation has left its mark on the rock surfaces between those hills and the sea-coast. Ancient Kosseir, which remained a port of some importance to within a quite recent date, had often been the goal of imaginary journeys I had made across the desert which lay between it and my present camp.

Imagine my surprise when, shortly after I and my assistant from Paris had settled down at Der el-Bahri, Mr. Weigall, who is Chief Inspector of Antiquities in Upper Egypt, told me he was about to take that desert journey, and wondered whether I would care to accompany him. I had only to provide my own camel and to share in the provisions we should need on the way; the chief expense of the train of camels and men to take the tents, the water-supply, and the other necessaries of a desert journey, would be borne by the government, as Mr. Weigall was going to get information connected with his department. Mr. Charles Whymper, who had come out from England with me, and Mr. Erskine Nicol, whom I had long known in Egypt, were also asked to join the party. None of us wished to lose

such a chance, and in three or four days after first hearing the proposal, we mounted our camels and started from Luxor for the over and beyond which had been my dream for many a long day.

Our caravan consisted of twenty-three camels, fourteen of which left an hour or two before us, to take our heavy baggage to that night's halting-place. We four started in company of the sheykh of the camel-drivers, two guards, Mr. Weigall's servant, who carried our lunch, and an Ababdi son of the desert, who acted as our guide. We struck inland for a short distance and then took a northern course parallel to the Nile; we skirted the further side of the ruins of Karnak, and shortly after left the cultivation to continue our route on the higher level of the desert. During the twenty miles of our first day's ride nothing could have been more dissimilar than the country on our right to that which we beheld to the left of us. The contrast was startling—the scorching desert on one hand, and on the other the shady palm groves on the fringe of the cultivation, with the rich dark soil covered in places by the Nile's overflow or just turning to green by the lately sown crops. Yet this very contrast is more characteristic of Egypt than anything else; and it is this which must have called forth the saying of Herodotus that 'Egypt is the gift of the Nile.'

We halted for lunch under the shade of the tamarisk trees, which seem able to grow on a slightly higher level than the palms. The shade was more than welcome; for sitting still in the noonday sun is a very different matter to passing through it even at the

gentle trot of our camels. It was a beautiful spot, for no trees harmonise with a desert background as do the tamarisks, and these had an especially massive and plumy leafage of an even more delicate grey than usual; their gnarled and twisted trunks seeming a mute protest to the poor soil in which fate had forced them to grow.

We did not remain here long, as we wished to reach the Coptic convent, Maris Bughtra, while there was still daylight, and there we proposed to pitch our camp for the night. Though the sun was hot, the crisp air was so invigorating that what would be a very fatiguing day elsewhere is easily borne in the desert. The motion of the camel is trying till one has got accustomed to it, and a few miles will cause the beginner an incredible amount of stiffness. There being no stirrups, it takes some time to learn to rise and fall with the motion of the beast, and until that is acquired every stride means a bump for the would-be rider. I had unhappily not acquired this, and felt rather stiff and sore when I dismounted for lunch; when we halted at the end of that day's journey the stiffness was positive pain. I had misgivings as to how I should feel by the time Kosseir was reached and when longer hours in the saddle would be the order of the day. To lie down seemed more painful than to walk about, for on whatever part of one's anatomy one rested that part seemed more painful than any other—until one tried that other.

Outside the walls of the Coptic convent we came on our baggage, and found the men already pitching our

tents, hobbling the camels, and boiling some water over a fire of dry brushwood. We sent some one to Qus (on the outskirts of which little town this convent is situated) to find the priest who could show us over the building. No monks dwell there at present and the chapel is only used on the day dedicated to Saint Bughtra, whoever he may be. All that remains of the convent, except the chapel, could be seen before the priest arrived, as the fortress-like wall which encircled it had crumbled down in several places. A few cells were still roofed over, but for the most part ugly ruin had disfigured the buildings. Except where some fine columns or portals have endured the wear and tear of ages, as in the case of some of the temples, a desert ruin is a depressing sight; no growth to hide the shapeless bits of fallen masonry are there, neither moss nor lichen give it the beautiful colouring associated with the remains of bygone structures. A shrine which may have crumbled down centuries ago might have fallen in the day before yesterday unless the desert winds had swept a covering of sand to give it a partial burial.

The little many-domed church still stood erect amidst the fallen masonry, and when the priest arrived and fumbled with his wooden key to loose the bolt in the ponderous lock, our expectations somewhat revived. Some tawdry objects of piety showed that some folks still remained who gave this place of worship a passing thought; but in the otherwise neglected interior these tawdry ornaments reminded me horribly of the patches of paint I have seen on the cheeks of a corpse laid out for burial in Portugal. The simile may be far-fetched,

but there it was, and I was pleased when we had gone through the farce of giving the priest his gratuity—called, to save his face, 'for the upkeep of the church.'

We found our camp all prepared for us when we rejoined it. The packing-cases which served as a table were neatly set for dinner, and our saddles were arranged to do duty as chairs. Our two sleeping-tents stood primly one on each side of the small marquee which served as a dining-room. Weigall's servant was an excellent cook, and a long day in the desert had prepared us to do justice to his dishes. The saddles make very good chairs when sitting is not a painful operation; they are covered with sheepskin, but the thickest fleece, in my condition, could not disguise the hard wooden skeleton beneath it. An air-cushion helped matters a trifle, though the air seemed harder than it usually is. Stiffness crept over the bodies of the two of us who had most recently come from England; but on comparing our complaints I fancied that I had more than my share—I was more conscious of it anyhow.

When the dinner was cleared and pipes were alight, we discussed our several interests in our desert journey. To Charles Whymper the birds we had seen along the fringe of the cultivation were of the greatest importance. We had passed many white Egyptian vultures; we had also put up some coveys of cream-coloured coursers; the desert lark, the sand-grouse, and desert martins had all been seen as well as the familiar hoopoes, the black kite, the little owl, and green bee-eaters—or shall we call them blue, for they can be either colour according

as the light catches their plumage? The archæological interests were still before us, and though these had not been explored for some time, records of journeys in this eastern desert have been left by the German Egyptologist Lepsius, by Golenischeff, the Russian, as well as by the more recent Schweinfurth. Its pictorial aspects appealed to each of us, and as I had brought my sketching materials I hoped that there might be sufficiently long halts to allow of my doing some painting. Erskine Nicol is well versed in the habits of the wandering tribes who pitch their tents on the higher levels where the cultivation stops short. The Ababdi and the Bishareen territories meet on this desert high-road, and we should probably come across a few of both one and the other. As we were to start soon after sunrise the next morning, we deferred our topics of conversation to another occasion.

It was still dark in our tents when we were awakened, because the heavy baggage was to be got off as soon after daybreak as possible. The tents were lowered and stowed away on the camels, leaving us to pack our bedding in the open, and it was surprising to find what a difference in temperature there was when our canvas shelters were removed. It was bitterly cold, and much movement was impossible in my case, for I was rigidly stiff. I stuck to a couple of blankets, and with some straps improvised a primitive garment; my camel served as a shelter from the cold breeze and made a warm back to lean against, while we squatted in a circle to have our breakfast. The blankets would serve later, when the sun got up, as extra padding to the saddle.

THE JOURNEY TO KOSSEIR

Our cross desert journey began this morning, for on the previous day we had skirted the cultivation to reach at Qus the mediæval route from the Nile to the Red Sea port. We started before the baggage train of camels, which would overtake us before we reached Lakéta, a small oasis where we should spend the night. Selim, as the cook was called, and our Ababdi guide accompanied us. The former looked a quaint object, seated on his camel amidst pots and kettles, photographic apparatus, sketching materials, and any other odds and ends which we might require before the camp would again be pitched.

The rising sun was very beautiful; when I have tried to paint it, it has always risen and lost its rich colouring too quickly. This morning I was concerned with the slowness of these proceedings, for until it rose well above the distant hills I felt perished with the cold. We could plainly see the cliffs around Hatshepsu's temple, right across the Nile valley; they and the Theban hills were pink in the early sunlight whilst we were still in the shade. Slowly the light caught us on our high mounts, while the soil beneath us was still in a blue grey tone. Looking back after a while camel legs a mile long could be seen in pale shadow on the track behind us, and by the time they contracted to a lengthened silhouette of a comprehensible form, I began to feel my blankets were more than I could stand.

To unrobe on a trotting camel was no easy matter, and to make the camel do anything different from those ahead of it was an impossibility. I had practised making the peculiar noise of the bedouin when they wish to

make their beasts kneel down—it spells something like this, 'ghrrr,' and is repeated at rapid intervals. Laura, as my camel was called, either affected not to understand me or felt too great a contempt for her rider to heed what he said. She was very nearly riderless before the unrobing was completed, and I am not sure that Laura had not that wish in her mind. When I was near landing on her neck, I thought I saw Laura's mouth working up towards my boot, which was her way of smiling. I tried to fix the blankets over the saddle, for the wooden skeleton beneath the sheepskin seemed painfully near parts of my skeleton; but I only gave Laura fresh cause to smile.

The clatter of Selim's pots and pans was not far behind me, so I yelled out to the cook to overtake me and to stow my blankets amongst his ironmongery. Laura disapproved of this, for, as the clatter, clatter behind me got louder, she quickened her pace. There are no reins to check the creatures; the camel rope is merely fastened to a face strap, which is held in place by a second strap passing behind the nape of the neck. I lugged on to the rope as hard as I could, but as there were no stirrups I should have pulled myself off the saddle before I could have bent the beast's stiff neck. Not to be beaten, I placed my foot on her neck, and thus got a sufficient leverage to pull her head sideways till I could see her ugly profile; by this means I checked her pace sufficiently for the cook to overtake me, and I threw the blankets amid the pots and pans.

We reached Gebel el-Korn about noon; we had seen this hill for the last two hours reflected in what

appeared to be a lake, and as this effect of the mirage disappeared here, we saw it repeated in the distance beyond. Three routes to Kosseir join at this point; the mediæval one we had been on was a part of the highway which the caravans took since the Mohammedan invasion and until Keneh eclipsed Qus as a Nilotic town. The Keneh route, starting some twenty miles further down the river, is still used by the Arabs, who bring camels from Arabia to barter in the Nile valley. The ancient Egyptian road was from Kuft, known as Koptos in Græco-Roman times, and starts about midway between the two others to join the one great highway uniting the Thebaid to the sea.

Gebel el-Korn, or the Hill of the Horn, would have been more attractive had it been steep enough to shade us from the midday sun. The rise in temperature in the moist air of cultivated lands is as nothing to what it is in the dry air of the desert. We saw some bushes ahead, along what appeared to be a dried watercourse, and we decided to move on and possibly to find some shade in which to pass our midday halt. This, however, was nothing more than camel-thorn—a dried-up mass of prickles—as useless for shade as it apparently was for fodder. But Laura and the other camels thought differently; the absence of shade did not trouble them, and the way they started devouring these long sharp thorns reminded us that of the twenty-three camels which formed our caravan not one carried anything in the shape of fodder. They would be away no less than a fortnight from the cultivation, and on questioning our guide as to what the creatures would have to eat, he

seemed to think that enough fodder could be picked up on the journey. 'You forget the hump,' said one of our companions. Camels having 'the hump' is an old and well-seasoned jest, but their feeding on their humps was news to me. I decided to examine Laura's hump when next she was unsaddled and see if it held a fortnight's nutrition, also to take daily observations of its disappearance. The throaty noise spelt 'ghrrr!' from our guide brought his camel down on its haunches. I made the same noise, or thought I did, and, like descending a lift in two shifts, Laura came down to the ground. She looked at me when I jumped off, as much as to say, 'Don't flatter yourself that I have come down owing to the silly noise you made; I was only following the example of my husband over there.'

Laura was not her real name, it was more like Laharrha with a throat-scraping sound in the middle. This was not euphonious, and all the throat-scraping sounds I could produce were to be reserved for when a halt should be called.

We decided to lunch on the top of a low-lying hill where, if there was no shade, we should at all events get the benefit of what breeze there was. My word! we did enjoy that lunch. I forget what we had, and can only remember the appetite with which we ate it. I kept some back for Laura, to see if kindness could overcome the dislike I felt sure she had for me. She gobbled it up, and nearly took a bit of my hand with it. I think she preferred this to the sharp thorns of her last snack; but if she felt any gratitude, she carefully disguised it. It was probably more contempt for me as a

rider than a dislike of me personally. Her expression was as a sealed book with an ugly cover.

Now was the time to fix the blankets on to the saddle, and the Ababdi guide and Selim made a good job of it. The trot at which we started was less painful in consequence, and I had also, by carefully watching the motion of our guide, fallen into the movement myself, and the bump, bump of the previous day, which had caused my discomfiture, disappeared, and I rose and fell to the motion of my mount. When once this is acquired, a long day's ride will cause less stiffness than an hour's journey to a novice.

It was not until we had reached Gebel el-Korn that we finally lost sight of the Der el-Bahri cliffs. A feeling of being far away from home and of venturing into the unknown got hold of me, though I was barely twenty miles in a direct line from the hut beneath those cliffs. I consoled myself that the assistant I had brought out from Paris had some French neighbours close by, who could assist him with his novel housekeeping. M. Baraize and his wife would also appreciate having a near neighbour who spoke their language.

Nothing much in the way of archæological finds were made during the day, and these were not to be expected till the wide track closed in between the rock surfaces. We saw in the distance the little oasis of Lakéta, with its palms upside down in illusive sheets of water at their bases; for a moment it looked like an island shimmering in the sunlight, and which might vanish as easily as the reflections it cast. It looked as if it might be reached in a half-hour's trot; but it had

that look for a long while—the appearance of water gave way to that of the arid waste all around us more than an hour before the oasis was reached.

How strange it looked when we were near enough to see some crops, between the palms, growing apparently out of the desert soil. We then caught sight of a man working a *shadoof*, and after that we could distinguish the chessboard patterning of the ground, so familiar in the Nile valley. The whole oasis seemed little more than three or four acres in extent; but probably a good deal more cultivable soil had been covered by the sand drifts where no walling existed to prevent this. Some half-dozen Ababdi families lived here; our guide found friends amongst them, and we heard some greetings in their dialect. The people seemed very little surprised to see us, and this not being a tourist-ridden spot, we had no beggars. A building with a many-domed roof stood here, and looked very like a deserted Coptic convent, though I was told that it was formerly built for an Arab caravanserai.

I watched a woman patching up the mud runnels to carry the water from the *shadoof* to the furthest squares of cultivated ground, and I tasted the water when the man first tilted it out of his leathern bucket. It was distinctly brackish—the only thing, of course, which these poor creatures had to drink. The man did not seem to mind that; but he complained that it was a thirsty soil, and that working all day at the *shadoof* hardly brought up a sufficiency of water to irrigate his little patch of corn. Taking me for an official, he asked me if I could not induce the government to place

a small pumping station here. 'Were it only known what a lot could be grown here if enough water could be got up, the government would not hesitate to bring the machinery.' The poor man might genuinely have thought so; but the cost of the fuel, brought to this out-of-the-way place to raise the brackish water, had evidently not entered the man's calculations.

Canon Tristram mentions in his book, *The Great Sahara*, that artesian wells were used by the Rouaras centuries before the principle of those wells was acknowledged in Europe. What a blessing they might be here! Possibly the sub-soil would not be suitable for such borings or they would have been in use.

The sun was still hot enough for us to enjoy our tea in the shade of the tamarisks which grew here. The children watched us from a distance and spoke in hushed voices. 'Were these people dangerous who spoke in an unknown tongue and wore a strange garb?' A smile and a hint that sugar was good brought them a little nearer. A venturesome little tot came near enough to pick up a lump, and then scampered away; by the time we had finished our tea, the juvenile population of Lakéta knew the taste of a Huntley and Palmer biscuit and a lump of sugar.

A little bird, the green willow-wren, according to our ornithologist, was less shy than the children, and picked up crumbs long before the latter ventured so near us.

Our baggage camels were only just in sight when we sat down, and at their rate of travel it would take an hour and a half before they reached us. I tried to make

a sketch of the little oasis, which looked charming in the evening sunlight, but I was too stiff and tired to do much. A vague hope that it might look as well on our return journey induced me to put up my materials and lie on my back and stare at nothing in particular, till I became unconscious of my surroundings.

It was dark when I was awakened by the noise of the men driving in the tent-pegs. The four tents, including the little one which served as a cook-shop, were being erected, camp beds and bedding sorted out and fixed up, and all the other bustle was going on of pitching a camp. While I slept, Weigall had found our first graffiti : it was a fragment of stone on which we could read the name of the Emperor Tiberius Claudius.

A very good account of the archæological finds we made during our journey is given in Mr. Arthur Weigall's *Travels in the Upper Egyptian Deserts*, published by Messrs. Blackwood and Sons. These have been so fully described in that handy volume, that I do not purpose to mention more than one or two.

CHAPTER XIX

THE VALLEY OF HAMMAMÂT

WE left Lakéta at dawn the next day. Being on higher ground and so much further in the desert, we felt the cold more than on the previous morning, and it was hard to realise that we should be seeking a shady spot for our luncheon at midday. We trotted our camels faster than previously, as if in a hurry to get nearer the luminous red disk which was peering over the distant hills.

The desert so far was hard surfaced, and not the sandy waste one is given to expect. When I attempted to make Laura go at more than a fast trot, I soon looked anxiously about for soft places below, and I was lucky in having kept my seat till she caught up with the rest of the party, when she as usual took her pace from that of the leader.

We passed nothing of exceptional interest during the first ten miles. The valley we followed would widen out to a mile or more, and sometimes contract to a few hundred feet. The rows of camel tracks, marked here and there by the skeleton of one which had fallen on the way, showed that this was still an important highway. I counted over twenty of these skeletons during one hour's ride. Some may have been bleaching there

for many years, but a few were of sufficiently recent date to make it advisable to keep on the windward side of them. The hackneyed camel ribs in the foregrounds of pictures of desert incidents are not the stage property I used to think they might be.

The Kasr el-Benat, or 'the Castle of the Maidens,' was the first object of real archæological interest we reached. It is a Roman station known formerly as the Hydreuma, and is still in a very fair state of preservation. No new builders have been at work near here since, to use it as a quarry with ready-cut stones; and Time in the desert deals gently with the structures of bygone ages. Roman soldiers in charge of gangs of quarrymen have used the little vaulted chambers within the large rectangular enclosing wall.

A huge rock close by was covered with inscriptions and rude drawings, dating from the early dynasties to the times when Arab traders began to use this highway to the coast. Drawings and photographs were duly taken of these records; and during most of that day we zigzagged across the valley to wherever a smooth rock surface showed any likelihood of inscriptions being found. We were seldom disappointed, and on one rock in particular our interest was particularly excited, for the graffiti here threw some light on the much vexed question as to the age of Akhnaton when he first came to the throne. I have described elsewhere our excitement at Thebes when, during the previous season, the royal tomb of Queen Thiy was discovered; how, after the body had been bereft of its royal casing, the archæological world was startled to find that the body was that of a young man.

Since then Weigall has made out a strong case in favour of the mummy being that of the heretic Queen's son, Ammonhotep IV. (*vide* the October number of *Blackwood's Magazine* for 1907). This same Ammonhotep, when secure of his throne, at the instigation of his mother, proclaimed the worship of Aton—the one supreme God whose earthly manifestation was the sun's disk—and, so as to sever every tie with the worship of Ammon and the lesser divinities of that pantheism, the young Pharaoh changed his name from Ammonhotep to Akhnaton, *i.e.* the Beloved of Aton.

The weak point in Weigall's contention was the youth of the mummy, which Dr. Elliot Smith declared could not have exceeded some five-and-twenty years of age, and it was doubtful whether he could have inaugurated and carried out a great religious revolution had he died at so early an age.

The three cartouches on this rock face are: one of Queen Thiy, one of her son as Ammonhotep IV., and one of the same prince under the name of Akhnaton. The symbols of royalty are placed beneath each cartouche, while the rays of the sun's disk embrace the three from above. This clearly proves that the Pharaoh was still a child when he came to the throne, and that his mother ruled in fact if not in name, otherwise the royal cartouches would not have been united as here they are; and it also proves that the worship of Aton had begun while the prince was still under the tutelage of his mother.

As the images of Ammon and the lesser divinities were destroyed during the youth of Akhnaton, so did

the priests of Ammon, when the old religion was restored, deface the inscriptions relating to the newer creed. The cartouches here of both Thiy and Akhnaton were partly erased ; but the rays, terminating in hands, from the disk above were left intact as if the workmen, sent to obliterate the 'marks of the beast,' feared to desecrate the divine symbol. Thus after three and a half millenniums this rock gives an echo of the religious movement which caused the fall of the eighteenth dynasty.

I have so far encroached on a subject fully treated by Weigall because I had devoted a chapter to it in *Below the Cataracts* and sent this into print before the subject had been so fully thrashed out, and while speculation was rife as to whom to ascribe the mummy found in the royal sarcophagus of the great Queen Thiy.

Shortly after losing sight of the tell-tale rock and the Roman Hydreuma, our path lay through a narrowing valley which contracted to a pass between imposing masses of granite, now known as el-Mutrak es-Salâm. It was an awe-inspiring pass. These gigantic and shiny black rocks which rose up on each side of us, deprived as they were of every vestige of growth, seemed hardly terrestrial, and suggested some landscape in the moon. There was no difficulty in finding a shady place for our midday meal and rest ; but I was glad when we moved on, for there was something as oppressive in the aspect of the pass as there was in the atmosphere. More graffiti were found and duly photographed ; but wishing to get into a more open country I pushed on ahead. I was safe not to lose my

way as long as I followed the tracks of previous caravans, which were plainly visible. After a couple of hours of this pass the black shiny rocks became hateful to me, and when I emerged into a wide valley again my spirits rose rapidly.

Ranges of sandstone rock were to the right and left of me, and though not as beautiful in form as the limestone cliffs of Der el-Bahri, they were congenial in colour, and set off the intense blue of the distant mountains.

My solitary ride had to come to an end when the road branched off on two sides of a range of hills on both of which were camel tracks, though not in equal quantities. There is no risking a wrong route in a wilderness such as this, so I chose a shady place, and felt proud when I induced my camel to go down on its knees. I tied up its foreleg in the approved fashion to stop its running away in case I might fall asleep. My companions might easily fail to see me, but they would be sure to catch sight of the camel.

I tried to analyse the charm of the desert, the 'Call of the Desert,' as Hichens aptly names it; for while I rested here its inexplicable charm pervaded my whole being. I am fond of my fellow-creatures and am in no wise cut out for the life of a hermit; besides, many lonely places exist far removed from desert wastes where solitude can still be enjoyed. It was not, therefore, the feeling of solitude that could alone explain the desert's attraction, now that I had left behind me the oppressive blackness of the Mutrak es-Salam pass. A drowsiness soon began to displace my futile analysis,

when a slight tickling of my ankle prevented me from falling asleep. My presence was being resented by a colony of ants whose operations I was impeding. I had to shift my position, and there being room enough for them as well as for myself in this vast desert, I returned those, which were exploring my leg, to their companions.

We were some fifty miles from any cultivation, except the little oasis where we had last camped, so what on earth could have induced these ants to choose this spot? The inexplicable charm of the desert would soon fizzle out were we cut off from water and provisions; and where could these ants have found either? I followed the trails, which started from the nest, to discover what means of subsistence they had, and found that some camel's dung, buried beneath the sand-drift, was the 'call' which had attracted them so far.

Hardly an hour had passed since we left the Nile valley but we had seen some animal life. Birds follow the camel tracks and flies and beetles infest the *Mabwala*, or stations, where the caravans rest. These are often in the only shady places, and they often obliged us to take our midday meals in the blazing sun; for we could hardly add a tent to the load which was carried on Selim's longsuffering camel. We had seen two butterflies that very morning, and accounted for them as having been carried here by the prevailing wind. A poor look-out for them, for the desert reaches to the Red Sea coast. The ants puzzled me, for I saw no signs of any organic matter when I chose my resting-place.

Meditations in this climate soon end in sleep, and I became unconscious of my surroundings till I heard my name being shouted. I looked up, and behold, my camel was gone, and following the track in the loose sand I saw Laura hobbling on three legs, about half a mile away, and making for the guide who rode the leading camel; my companions in the meanwhile were zigzagging across the valley to find me. When I caught the beast up and satisfied my friends that I was not lost, I made Laura go down on her knees to allow me to mount, and now all the cussedness of her camel nature showed itself. I had to undo the end of the halter which tied the foreleg into its bent position and also keep at a safe distance from Laura's teeth. The instant I got it undone, up she would jump before I had a chance of getting my seat. She did this several times, till I was obliged to hang on to her as best I could and climb into my saddle while she moved off.

Canon Tristram says: 'The camel is by no means an amiable animal, and its owner never seems to form any attachment to his beast, nor the animal to reciprocate kindness in any degree. I never found one camel valued above his fellow for intelligence or affection. A traveller always makes a friend of his horse, most certainly of his ass, sometimes of his mule, but never of his camel. I have made a journey in Africa for three months with the same camels, but never succeeded in eliciting the slightest token of recognition from one of them, or a friendly disposition for kindness shown.' Canon Tristram never wrote truer words. Laura was a beast! I would do my best

to get something for her to feed on, other than on her hump, when we should reach Kosseir; but no corner of my eye would moisten when Laura and I should part company.

When we got to a further reach in the valley, we were surprised to see some gazelle. This was more surprising than the ants, for surely gazelle could find neither fodder nor water here. That the poor creatures had been frightened further and further away from the cultivation was probable, but until they returned there nothing but a long fast awaited them; if they were making for the coast, nothing to feed on awaited them there. We were near enough to have shot some with a rifle, but I am glad to say that none of us had a rifle; we had even packed up our revolvers with the baggage. We regretted the latter for a moment the next day, but of this anon.

We reached a second Roman station as the shadows were lengthening; it was considerably smaller than the Hydreuma of the morning, and was also in a worse state of repair. We heeded it little beyond using one of the walls for our backs while Selim brewed us some tea. The guide climbed one of the hills to see if there was any sign of the baggage, and on his reporting that none was visible, we could take the next ten or twelve miles to Bîr Hammamât at our ease. The colour of the landscape took extraordinary combinations as the sun declined, and as we again approached the blackish hills which contracted the caravan route.

The lower-lying sandstone hills turned a greyish violet, except where a roseate light caught their summits,

and purple black hung about the base of the Hammamât mountains. The altitude of the latter being considerably more than any we had so far seen, the heights still reflected the light from the setting sun—a flame-colour split up in violet patches of shade. It was wonderful, but was it beautiful? Where strange combinations of colour and form are first seen, this question is often difficult to answer. We watched the dark shades rise and spread over these mountains till they told black against an ash-grey sky. The Rehenu Valley of the Egyptians was a spooky place to enter. Our path wound through great masses of breccia rock, and it contracted in places so that we could hardly ride abreast. The darkness increased till the camels of my companions were lost in the gloom, and the white helmets rising and falling with the motion of the beasts were soon all that I could see of our party.

Our track becoming quite invisible, there was just a chance that our Ababdi guide might take a wrong turning, and if once well out of the beaten road, in a wilderness such as this, it is doubtful whether we could find our way before our water-supply gave out.

The longed-for moon showed herself at last, and by her light we pursued our way to the well where we had settled to camp for the night. The valley opens up here to a considerable width, and the well, known as Bîr Hammamât, is a conspicuous object in the centre. There was nothing now to do but to wait for our baggage camels, and to keep ourselves as warm as we could.

Our guide rode back to reconnoitre, and when we

could distinguish an answer to his calls, other than the echo, we were filled with a sense of relief.

Lakéta is only thirty miles from Bîr Hammamât, but with our crossing and recrossing the valleys in search of graffiti we must have ridden half again as far. Dinner and sleep, and an easy day to follow, were pleasant things to contemplate.

CHAPTER XX

THE WADY FOWAKIYEH AND BÎR HAGI SULIMAN

WE slumbered till the sun beat down on our tents. There was enough water obtainable to fill our collapsible baths to the brim, and good enough for the camels to drink—poor brackish stuff we should have found it, had we depended on it for our own consumption.

The well seemed an immense depth, and had a spiral staircase down it, though it was dangerous to descend more than a few yards. A mining company had of late years partially restored the building which stood over it, and for the first time since we left Luxor we saw the names of some fellow-countrymen who had put this well in workable order. Unfinished sarcophagi lay near by, with some flaws in the stone to account for their having been left here by the workmen of one of the Ptolemies.

We did not propose to travel more than a few miles that day, for the Wady Fowakiyeh, as the natives call it, is that part of the Hammamât valley where Lepsius and other former explorers made their greatest finds.

Now, as Mr. Weigall devotes to this valley many pages in his *Travels in Upper Egyptian Deserts*, I shall not attempt to describe what he has so ably given to the

public. I will quote what he says of our arrival there, and of the earliest inscription which was found: 'Amidst these relics of the old world our tents were pitched, having been removed from Bîr Hammamât as soon as breakfast had been finished; and with camera, note-book, and sketching apparatus, the four of us dispersed in different directions, my own objective, of course, being the inscriptions. The history of Wady Fowakiyeh begins when the history of Egypt begins, and one must look back into the dim uncertainties of the archaic period for the first evidences of the working of the quarries of the valley. Many beautifully made bowls and other objects of this tuff are found in the graves of Dynasty I., fifty-five centuries ago; and my friends and I scrambling over the rocks were fortunate enough to find in a little wady leading northwards from the main valley a large rock-drawing and inscriptions of this date. A "vase-maker" here offers a prayer to the sacred barque of the hawk-god Horus, which is drawn so clearly that one may see the hawk standing upon its shrine in the boat, an upright spear set before the door; and one may observe the bull's head, so often found in primitive countries, affixed to the prow; while the barque itself is shown to be standing upon a sledge in order that it might be dragged over the ground.'

By the modern German school of computation, which Mr. Weigall accepts, the period of the Shepherd Kings was but of two centuries' duration; but according to the reckoning of the majority of Egyptologists, this period lasted a millennium longer. Should the latter be right these graffiti would date back sixty-five centuries;

and from that remote period (with the exception of the dark ages known as that of the Hyksos or Shepherd Kings) some signs of human activity were visible in this valley, telling us something of the various peoples who ruled Egypt until the three Englishmen scratched their names with a penknife shortly after the British occupation.

Every collection of Egyptological objects will have some specimens of sculptured stone quarried out of these tufa and breccia rocks.

I found a large smooth surface of stone, forming the back wall of a hollow quarried out of a gigantic mass of breccia, which, in Ptolemaic times, had been made to serve as a shrine to the god Min of Koptos, the protecting deity of the Upper Egyptian deserts. There were signs that this shady nook had recently been used as an Arab encampment, and it suggested a delightful subject to paint. I was torn with conflicting emotions: whether to secure so good a background for a figure subject, or whether to join my companions in their search for archæological treasure. The background won the day. A faint hope that we might spend a second morning here on our return journey, which would make it possible to complete my study, finally decided me.

The smooth stone at the back of the hollow was decorated with very delicately incised Ptolemaic work. The spacing of the panels containing the deities was most artistically done, and the figures were chiselled with a delicacy and style not usually seen in work of that period. I had seen little Ptolemaic sculpture on any

other material than on sandstone, and this was bound to look coarse compared to the eighteenth dynasty work on the finer grained limestone. The hard breccia rock surface gave the sculptor a chance; and though it lacked the distinction of earlier work, it compared well as to delicacy of treatment. Greek influence seemed more apparent than ever. Hathor looked less of a goddess, and was possibly more charming as a pretty little mortal; Ammon Ra without his headdress would have passed for a lithe and well-proportioned Greek slave; but the god Min, owing to his conventional pose, combined the Hellenic sensuosity with the severer Egyptian traditions. The Ptolemy who made offerings to the above trilogy was a Greek grandee in the pose and apparel of a Pharaoh. The figures measured about two feet high except that of an attendant priest, who, as modesty demanded, was a few inches shorter. There were one or two more panels in which Min figured conspicuously.

The bold forms of the massive rock which overhung this wall may have helped to emphasise the delicacy of the sculpture. The colour of the rock formation is as extraordinary as its drawing: the untouched portions are a chocolate brown, and those parts exposed by the work of the quarrymen vary from green to a bluish black.

When the sun shifted to where I sat, the effect changed so much that it seemed hardly worth risking sunstroke by continuing my study. My companions calling out their several discoveries tempted me to join in the hunt. So much of interest was crowded into the

one day spent at Wady Fowakiyeh that the thirteenth day of November 1908 will remain as a landmark in my somewhat varied existence.

One long inscription, which Mr. Weigall interpreted, tells us of 10,000 men who were sent during the eleventh dynasty to work the quarries. Amongst this army of quarrymen there were miners, artists, draughtsmen, stone-cutters, gold-workers, and officials, and full directions were given as to the work they were sent to do. When one thought of the voices of this host of men, awakening the echoes of the cliff-bound valley, the present silence became almost oppressive. As the shades deepened with the declining sun, the impressiveness of our surroundings seemed to have got hold even of our escort. We could just hear them muttering their evening prayer, and when that was over nothing but the crackling of the fire, round which they sat, disturbed the stillness of the night.

Till this point in our journey, the road we trod is sufficiently hard and smooth to allow a motor-car to do it in three or four hours. We had now reached the highest part of the desert highway, but the incline is so imperceptible that only the aneroid could prove that we were on a greater altitude than when we left Qús. No motor-car could, however, cross the mile or two of boulders which choked up the road on which we made an early start the following morning. Most of this we did on foot, jumping from boulder to boulder, the men leading the camels a serpentine route or assisting them over the rocks which blocked the way. We followed up a narrow pass in the mountains to inspect the abandoned

workings of the gold-mines. We soon came across some huts used by miners who had in quite recent years come here to glean where the early Egyptians had reaped a good harvest. The huts were already in worse repair than many we saw at the Roman Hydreuma. From what I have heard since, the modern working of these mines had soon been abandoned as a hopeless task. There are, however, other mines north of these which are now worked at a profit.

We decided to continue on this pass and join the main route to Kosseir a few miles further on, the baggage train, of course, following the usual caravan road. Our guide declared that he knew the road, so there seemed nothing to apprehend. Nevertheless we took the precaution of leaving a trail behind us, as boys do on a paperchase, for there were tracks in the sand of other camels than our own, and the road, such as it was, split up into several winding passes through the hills. As one of our party had chosen to follow the baggage, we decided to send back Selim to the main highway to tell him when and where we expected to join him, and Selim had also instructions to prepare our midday meal at that spot.

The landscape became more extraordinary than ever when we left the tuff and breccia rocks behind us. On either side of us rose sandstone cliffs worn into the most fantastic shapes. It is difficult to associate rain with such a country as the one we were in, yet rain and nothing else could have worn this stone into the shapes we now beheld. An inscription which Weigall had carefully copied described a torrential

shower which descended on the quarrymen in early dynastic times, and which they considered a good omen of a successful issue to their labours. Rain descends at long intervals, but during periods as counted by geologists an immense amount of water had fashioned these sandstone rocks into their unearthly shapes, for no growth is here to impede the action of the torrential streams.

We wound amongst these hills for two or three hours, and I was delighted when we regained the highway and returned to less strange, though more beautiful scenery. But where was Selim? We fortunately could see our companion in the distance, while the baggage camels which he followed were disappearing round an angle in the range of hills. We managed to make him hear, and he rode back to meet us. He had neither seen nor heard anything of our cook, and had the latter followed the trail he should have joined the main body a couple of hours ago. Our guide went back to try to find the lost cook, and as he was born to the desert, we had little fear of losing him. After a hunt of a couple of hours the guide returned, hoping that Selim might have found his way to us by the main road. There was nothing to be done but to send the guide back to try some of the passes which he had considered too unlikely for the cook to have taken.

It was awkward to lose the man on whom depends your midday meal. But worse than a long day's fast was the possibility that the man had completely lost his bearings, in which case, his bones and those of his mount might, at the time I am writing, be bleaching in the

desert surrounded by his pans and kettles as well as by our sketching and photographic paraphernalia.

About four o'clock a clatter, clatter awoke us from a doze we had indulged in under the shade of a projecting rock. The cook had turned up at last, still trembling with the danger of being lost which he had experienced, and also expecting a blowing up for being so late with our lunch. A puff of wind had, it appeared, blown some of our paper trail over a low hillock into a pass which we had not taken, and seeing camel tracks there he followed it up and got lost in the labyrinth amongst the sandstone cliffs. Though he rode his camel well, his practice had hitherto been confined to the cultivated land where he could hardly go a quarter of a mile without meeting some one to direct his way.

We made a hasty meal, for we had a long ride before we could reach our night's camping-place. We passed two more Roman stations, but could not give them much time. The scenery increased in grandeur and beauty, for the Hammamât mountains we had left behind us are in truth more extraordinary than beautiful. A high range of limestone mountains caught the evening light, while the meaner hills in the foreground were lost in a subtle grey-violet shade.

Twilight is of short duration, and not long after admiring the after-glow on the limestone heights, we had to trace our way in no other light than that from the starlit sky.

When we reached our halting-place for the night we found our tents pitched, table set, and our meal

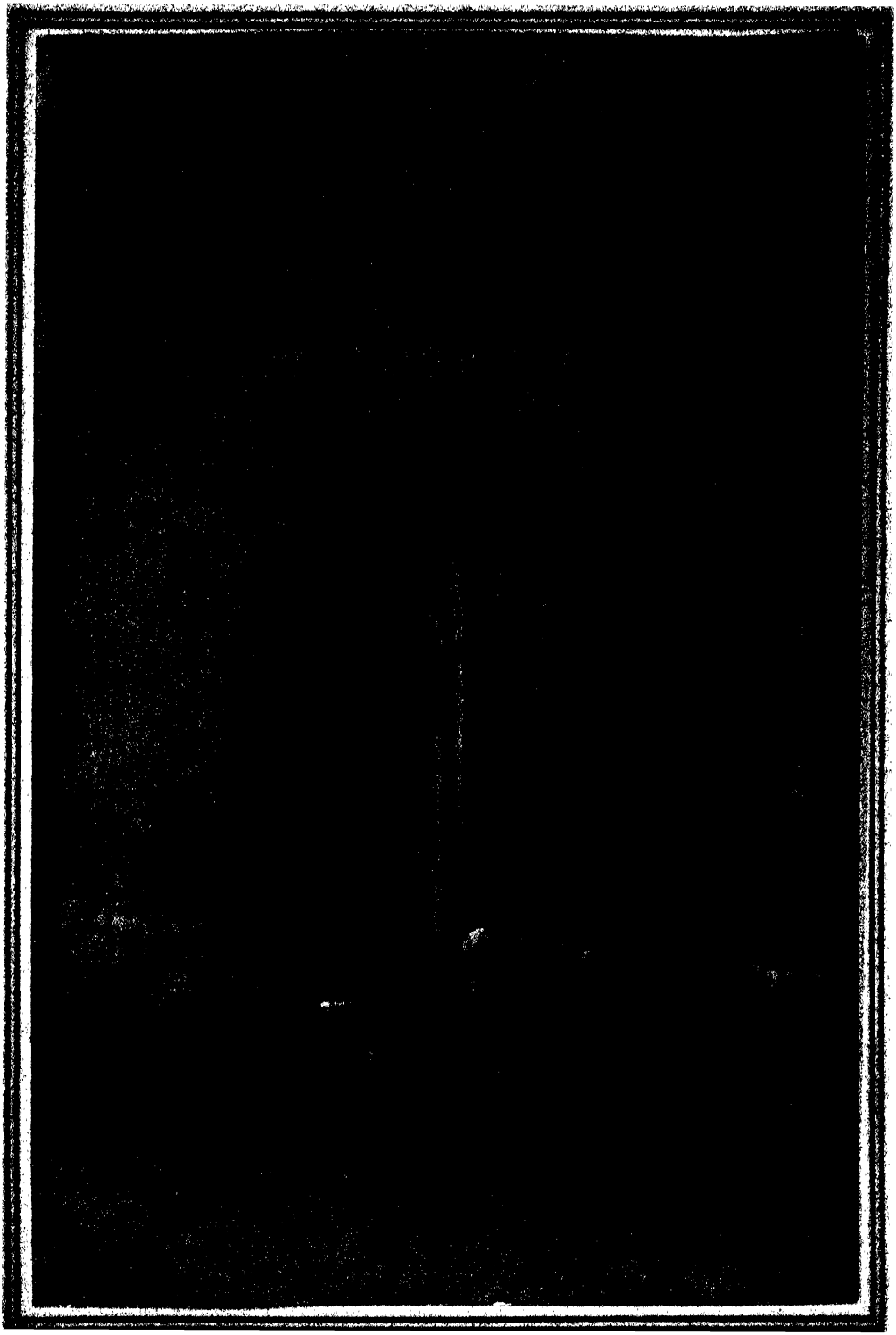
ready to be served up. Selim had got over his fright, and was anxious to do his best to make up for the inconvenience he had put us to during the day; the Ababdi guide likewise arrived before we turned in for the night. Our camp was near another Roman station, known by the name of the well close by, Bîr Hagi Suliman. Whatever else of interest there may be in a desert highway, the vital importance of water (even though it be brackish) is such that the name of the supply is the name the district is known by. Beer runs this close in London, judging from the names of public-houses being so conspicuous on any omnibus route. Should you ask an Ababdi Arab where the Hydreuma was he would shrug his shoulders; but if you mention a well, *el Bîr*, anywhere within fifty miles, he will be able to direct you. The similarity in the name of their water-supplies to that of the British favourite drink is a curious coincidence.

The domed enclosure of the Bîr Hagi Suliman was in good repair, and a tablet in the wall bore these three names and a date: 'Briggs, Hancock, and Wood, 1832.' Probably the names of three Englishmen who were prospecting for gold in these regions.

We decided the next morning to follow the caravan road, and that we should return from Kosseir by a second route which joins this one near the well. No archæological find was as welcome as the first rays of sun which fell on our perishing bodies. To get out of the cold wind and creep along the rocks which first caught the morning sun was our only thought. One is obliged to dress in thin summer clothes, as these

valleys are very hot by the time the sun is high in the heavens. I strapped enough blankets round me to give me the appearance of a well-packed breakable object stowed on the top of a camel, and I kept near the useful Selim, so as to enable him to catch the blankets as I shed them. I had hardly got down to my cotton suit when we arrived at another Roman station. It seemed as difficult to avoid Roman ruins here as to get away from trippers in the Nile valley. Some Cufic inscriptions on a doorpost interested us the most, as an indication of this route being used soon after the Mohammedan conquest of Egypt. Our ornithologist had his sketch-book out to note the flight of some sandgrouse which rose from amongst the ruins as we entered them.

We had met but one or two nomad Arabs since we left the oasis of Lakéta, so that our interest was considerably excited when we perceived a considerable caravan advancing towards us in the distance. They were undoubtedly Arabs from the Hedjaz who had crossed the Red Sea to barter their camels in the Nile valley—queer customers for so small a party to meet in this lonely place. We were miles ahead of our baggage train, and I found that my companions had, as I had done, packed their revolvers in their kit-bags. We consoled ourselves with the thought that our want of precaution would not be suspected by the people we were approaching, and I was more anxious to get a shot at them with a hand camera than with any more deadly weapon. They were a most picturesque lot, and might have posed for a group of Hyksos invaders, or, to come



to modern times (which only their long-barrelled guns suggested), they might have been a small host of the Midianite Arabs who plunder the pilgrims on the Mecca road. Some of their womenfolk were with them, but enclosed in litters on the camels' humps.

I managed with difficulty to get a couple of snapshots: the head of my own camel had to be avoided, and I wished not to attract too much attention from the evil-looking men, who greeted neither us nor the two Arab servants in our party—a most unusual occurrence anywhere in the Near East.

The first bit of news we heard, when we got back to Luxor, was that a party of three Egyptians had been attacked by Arabians travelling from Kosseir to Keneh, and the date given was that of the day after we had met these people. One Egyptian had been killed, and the two others had managed to escape. The attacking party could have been no other than the one we passed. Whether they were ever brought to justice, or whether they were able to recross the Red Sea and get safe back to the Hedjaz, I was never able to ascertain. Little news, except that which an occasional European paper gave us, reached my camp at Der el-Bahri when I was reinstalled there.

We halted at midday at a well in an open plain. Bîr el-Ingliz, as this well is called, and also the names of two Frenchmen, on a rock near by, and dated 1799, vaguely recalled some incidents in the fight between France and England during the Napoleonic wars. Desaix, who commanded the French troops in Upper Egypt 1799, must have sent his men by this route to

garrison the still existing fort at Kosseir. We know of no record that the young French general was ever at Kosseir himself; but we know that in January 1800 both Desaix and Kleber signed the convention of el-Arish, six months after Buonaparte had left Egypt. The two Frenchmen, Forcard and Materon, whose names we find near the well, were therefore in all probability returning with a detachment from Kosseir to join Desaix before he went north to el-Arish. The English could not have restored this well till two years later, as it was not till May 1801 that an Anglo-Indian force, under Baird, landed at Kosseir and drove the garrison back into the desert.

Though the well is known as Bîr el-Ingliz, it is probable that the English put an already existing one into working order, and built the well-house as a protection to it. Some of its slightly brackish water may have been the cause of these Frenchmen resting here.

A magnificent range of limestone cliffs, which came into view soon after our rest, shut us off from any glimpse we might have had of the sea. These were the finest mountains I had seen in Egypt; their formation is very similar to that of the Der el-Bahri cliffs, but they were more imposing from their greater altitude.

As we approached the northern extremity of the range, a patch of vivid green had a singular attraction for us, and hastened the trot of our camels. It could not be a mirage, for the form that phenomenon took, as far as our experience went, was that of reflecting, in what appeared water, objects above our horizon. Our Ababdi guide knew it as the Bîr Ambagi. We had been only a few

days in the desert; but we felt some of the excitement of pilgrims in the wilderness who, after a prolonged journey, catch their first glimpse of a land of Canaan. Our oasis turned out to be nothing more than a mass of rushes surrounding some pools of water; it was, however, a refreshing sight to our eyes, and possibly more refreshing to the stomachs of our camels—there was not much left of Laura's hump when I had last taken observations.

A half-dozen goats—sole milk-supply of Kosseir, as we later on found out—grazed peacefully here, while the young goat-herds stared round-eyed at the new-comers.

The air we breathed was different, and though no air is purer than that of the desert, there was something singularly exhilarating in that which was here. The sea, which we could not yet catch a glimpse of, had sent its breezes to welcome us to its shores.

On remounting our camels we followed the dry bed of a river—a wash-out,—and after descending it for a few miles, we turned the corner of some low-lying sand-hills, and the Red Sea was before us. How intensely blue it looked! I had not at that time gone down the Red Sea, or I might have been prepared for its being no redder than a blue band-box. It is just as well that its colour was no other, for no sight could have given us greater pleasure. We kept our camels at the trot, and it looked as if we should be there in half an hour. The low white houses of Kosseir were on our left horizon, with some huge ugly erection over-topping them. In a couple of hours we cleared the

sandy waste, and jumped off our camels on the strand.

One of our party threw off his clothes to have a swim, in spite of our warning him that the water might be infested with sharks. 'I'll risk it anyhow,' he called out, and we watched him splashing about with mixed feelings of sour grapes. Weigall sent our guide with a note to the *Mudir* to tell him of our arrival, and Selim lighted the spirit lamp to prepare our tea. We strolled some way along the beach, when we came on the body of a young shark, with its throat cut, lying on the edge of the water, and our looks at our venturesome companion silenced his boastings of how he had enjoyed his bathe.

CHAPTER XXI

KOSSEIR

WE had not long to wait before the *Mudir*, or Governor of Kosseir, arrived to welcome us. He was a stout, good-natured, middle-aged Maltese; he spoke English fluently, but with the accent of his countrymen. His pleasure at seeing us was very genuine, and the more we heard him tell of life in Kosseir, the more we appreciated what an event in his dull existence our arrival must have been. Besides his wife and little daughter there was not a European in the place, except an Austrian mechanic who attended to the sea-water condenser. A Syrian doctor had been sent here to attend to the sick, and as no one ever was sick, and the Mudir never had any cases to try, their only topic of conversation was of the dulness of the place. There were 1500 souls in Kosseir when the Mudir was first appointed, and now there are barely 300. They lived on the fish they caught and some bags of flour which a coasting steamer left here at long intervals. The arrival of the steamer was the one event which awakened the inhabitants, who, during the intervals, spent most of their time in sleep.

I asked what the large building was which we noticed when first we caught sight of the place, and I

was told that it was a condenser which the government had erected so as to save the people having to go four miles to the nearest well to fetch the brackish water it supplied. The Mudir would show us over it the following morning, as well as the other objects of interest in the town. We were told we could not get some necessaries we thought we might be able to procure for our return journey. 'There is nothing here, nothing, nothing,' and which he pronounced 'Nozing, nozing, nozing,' while the tears almost started from the poor man's eyes.

It appeared that when he was first sent here the people were often reduced to eating chopped straw with their fish. The little trade, which had hitherto kept the place going, disappeared when Suakin and Suez became the only places of call on that coast. The great condenser had supplied the ships with water, and a trade in fish gave the men an occupation and brought a little money into the place. The Mudir sent a report to the government on the starving condition of the inhabitants, and a grant was voted to transplant the population to more prosperous districts. Three-quarters of the people left when the means were given them to do so, and as none but the aged remained, it was hoped that Kosseir would soon cease as an inhabited town. So great, however, is the native's attachment to his locality, that a certain number returned, after a while, to the semi-starvation of their natal place.

We asked if the people were honest and well-behaved. 'Dere is nozing to steal, and when they are not fishing dey sleep,' was our answer. The doctor had as little to

do as the Mudir in his capacity as magistrate, for, in spite of the poor living, old age was the only physical complaint from which any one suffered.

On this barren coast, where no blade of grass can grow, the germs of disease do not easily spread, and the filth from the habitations is soon sterilised in the perpetual sunshine. To rust out takes longer than to wear out in such a climate, and this must account for the great age which most of the inhabitants attain.

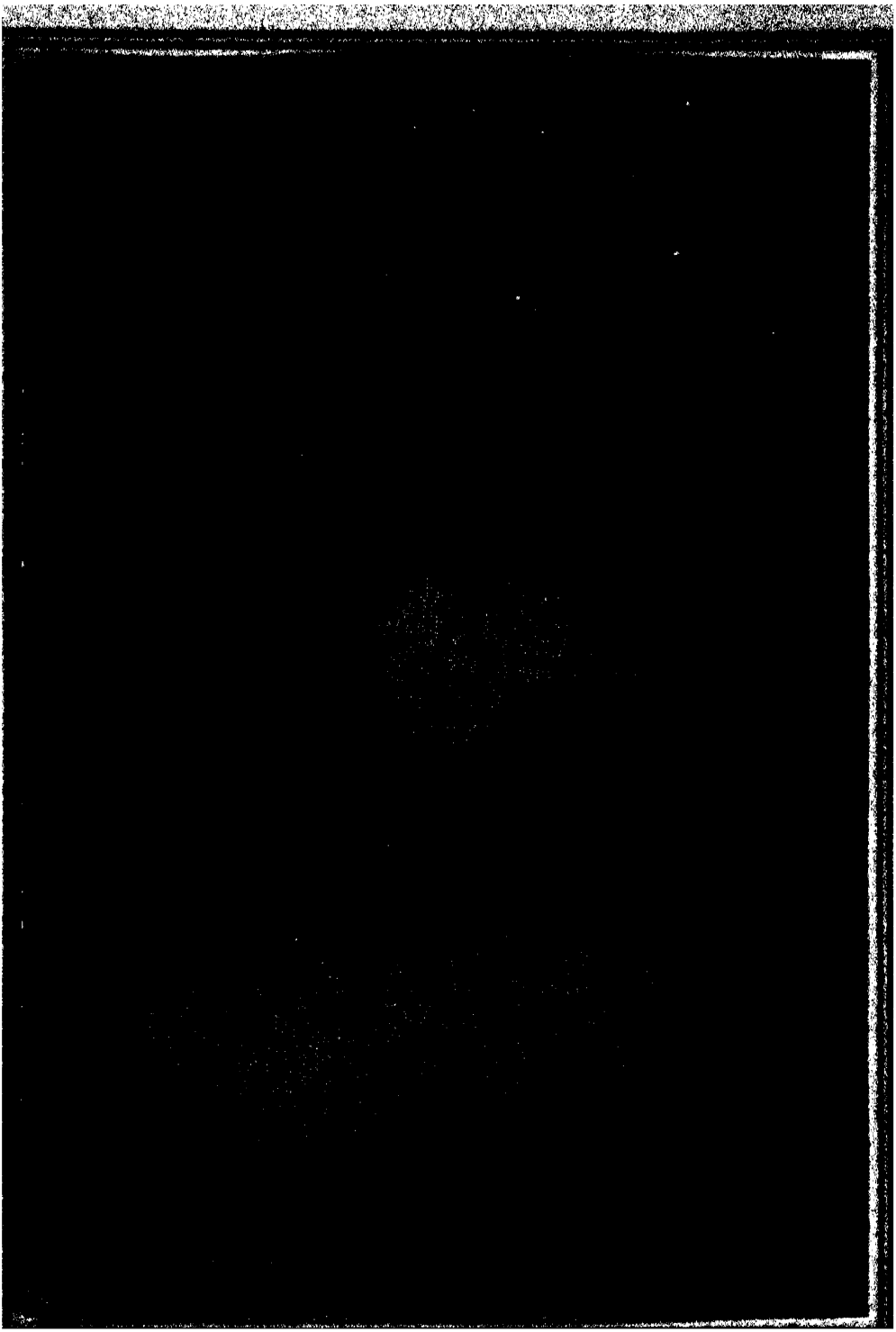
Our baggage had arrived during these tales of woe, and we tried to induce the governor to share our dinner. He would not stay, but promised to have tea with us the next day, and to bring his daughter, the Austrian mechanic, and the Syrian doctor. He had hardly taken his departure when some men arrived bringing half a dozen chairs and a present of fish, with a message that if there was anything Kosseir could supply, it was at our orders. I think the kind-hearted Mudir left to spare us our expressions of gratitude.

To lie on the soft sand within a few yards of the gentle plashing of the incoming waves, and to watch the full moon slowly emerging above the sharp-cut line of the blue waters, consoled us that Kosseir could at least supply a half-hour of as exquisite enjoyment as any wealth could command in the most prosperous of cities. The fizzling sounds which proceeded from Selim's cooking-tent did not jar in the least, for the anticipation of some fresh fish, after a régime of tinned meats, was far from disagreeable. After a course of crayfish and of a well-served *belbul*, we told Selim that he could give his tin-opener a thorough rest.

We returned to our soft couches in the sand, and lay there till the moon was high in the heavens, when we turned in for the night.

The Mudir was awaiting us when we arrived at his office at eight o'clock on the following morning. It was in a large building, for our host's duties were various: he was consul to many nations, of whom a subject might be here cast ashore; he was also postmaster-general, in case a letter ever arrived; head of the customs—on what dutiable articles was not related. As captain of the coastguards a chance of some work might occur, for were this coast not guarded, hasheesh would be sure to find an inlet and poison some of the people in the Nile valley. He was here also to enforce the orders given by the sanitary inspectors in regard to pilgrims returning from Mecca through this port. In spite of these and other duties, Mr. Wirth (as we discovered his name to be) had plenty of time to place at our disposal, and when we had sipped the usual cup of coffee we started to see Kosseir under his guidance.

The huge and unsightly building which housed the condensing machinery was, as might be expected, the *pièce de résistance*, and with pride we were shown the one thing left in which some lingering signs of vitality remained. The government had spent £14,000 to put this thing up. It was large enough to supply water to 10,000 souls, and now by working it during two mornings per month it more than supplied the present population. A paternal government had decreed that a charge of one millième, that is a farthing, should be made for each pailful supplied; but as many had not



the farthing, it was a case of 'thank you for nothing.' The governor informed us that many women filled their pitchers at the brackish well, four miles off, from want of this money to pay for the distilled water: a case of farthing wise and pound foolish on the part of the government.

I was glad when we got out of the place and proceeded to inspect the chief mosque. When we had awakened the caretaker, he started removing the matting, so as not to oblige us to take off our shoes. Mr. Wirth wittily remarked that the ground would be less likely to dirty our shoes than would the mats if we stepped on them. We prevented the man from moving one of them, so as not to disturb the sleep of one or two worshippers who lay there. It was a picturesque old mosque, and Mr. Whymper and I decided to return and make a drawing of it when we had seen what else Kosseir had to show.

The fort stands close by, and we were taken to see the place where Desaix had quartered some troops, and where these French soldiers pined, during two years, for their native country, until they were hurriedly dislodged by the Anglo-British force under Baird. Our Maltese friend, being a British subject, pointed out with pride the gate through which the English and Indian soldiers effected an entrance, and at the back of the fort he showed us from whence the poor Frenchmen escaped to try and reach the Nile across the desert. How many succeeded, history does not relate. Knowing what preparations have to be made to make a desert journey, it is awful to contemplate the fate of these

soldiers with only the food they could hurriedly grab up, and the wells guarded by the enemy. We are told that the British troops reached Keneh, and that the French had by that time evacuated Egypt. General Desaix had joined Napoleon's army more than a year before, and fell in the battle of Marengo on the 14th of June 1800.

His brilliant career was cut short while only in his thirty-second year, his greatest achievement being the conquest of Upper Egypt, where he became known by the natives as the Just Sultan.

The custodian of the fort told us how the British fired water from their ships on to the ammunition of the French, and the latter, then being unable to return the fire, tried to reach Keneh as best they could. Strange things are often related by Arab custodians!

The main street of Kosseir is picturesque, with the minaret towering above the deserted shops, or rather it might have been, had the coloured stuffs and fruits and a busy throng been there to furnish it with the usual properties which make up an oriental street picture. The two stalls which had something to sell had no other customers than a swarm of flies, and we should hardly have had the heart to wake the shopman from his profound sleep had there been anything worth buying. The Mudir had had the little quay repaired, as well as the wooden pier which formed the break-water to a small harbour. He had also fenced in a space of about a hundred yards square in the sea, so as to allow any one who wished to bathe to be able to do so in safety from the sharks. We mentioned that one

of our party had bathed near our camp, and he was horrified, for the sea, he told us, was alive with sharks. 'Had we not noticed a shark lying on the strand with its throat cut?' We mentioned that we had, though not till after our friend's bath. We were then told that a youth was standing there with his feet just in the sea when a shark made a dash at him, and, missing his prey, landed too high on the beach to be able to get back into the water before the youth cut its throat. This had only happened a couple of days before our arrival at the coast.

Two high-sterned dhows were beached near here for repairs; they added considerably to the characteristics of the place, which had something un-Egyptian about them. Kosseir is a Red Sea port, and it bears something, hard to define, but which is not to be observed till on this side of Suez. The people dressed as Egyptians; but on studying their features more carefully, one could discern that nothing of the old Egyptian stock was here. Their blood is Arabian intermixed with that of the Ababdi tribe. We were neither pestered with beggars nor importuned by the officiousness met with in the Nile resorts.

I returned to the mosque to start my drawing, and remained there until it was time to join our tea-party at the camp. Two or three men dropped in during the midday prayer, but the caretaker beckoned to me not to move my easel. Some boys arrived later on and sat around an old sheykh who expounded the Koran to them.

A date stone of two hundred years ago, probably only

alluded to a restoration. I should place the original construction some five centuries earlier, though in an out-of-the-world place such as this architectural style changes very slowly.

I arrived at the camp in time for our tea-party. The governor regretted that Mrs. Wirth was not well enough to accompany him; his daughter was a pretty girl of about thirteen years of age. The poor child seemed very conscious of having outgrown her frock, judging from the way she kept smoothing it down over her knees. She had plenty to say for herself, and could say it in four different languages. Her father regretted that no means of educating the child existed except such instruction as her mother could give her, and that there was not another child in Kosseir for her to associate with. 'If I could only get her to Alexandria and get there myself also,' he said with a sigh. 'It is four years since we had an opportunity of getting her some frocks.' The poor girl coloured up and seemed more conscious of her legs than ever, and had the last pleat of her skirt not been newly let out to its full limits, we should probably not have seen her at our party.

The Austrian mechanic was pleased to find some one who could speak German; but he, poor man, seemed conscious of being without a collar to his shirt. It was difficult to put him at his ease till he got well launched into the subject of what a dismal hole Kosseir was to live in. The Syrian doctor seemed disappointed at not seeing a possible patient amongst us; we all looked in disgustingly rude health. We promised to

look in at his dispensary the next day, where he assured us he had the means of coping with every ailment; but as the whole population was always in the best of health, time hung heavily on his hands.

He amused himself by fishing occasionally, and told us of the extraordinary number of crayfish which were to be got by the simple process of getting on to the coral reefs at night and holding a candle over the pools. The stupid creatures then come to have a look at the light, and you have only then to pick them out of the water and put them in the basket. Should we care to have a try, he would be delighted to take us to the best place that very night. The moon was the difficulty, for a dark night was necessary. It was settled that he should bring some men and lanterns at midnight, when he reckoned that the moon would have disappeared.

We turned in after our dinner, so as to get what sleep we could before starting on our fishing expedition. When the doctor summoned us that night, the moon was so high in the sky that we were loath to turn out. Bed was so comfortable; while pottering about on a sunken reef, with the moon to spoil our sport, seemed hardly good enough. The doctor hoped that the moon would be down before we reached the coral reefs, and for the first time we realised that the reefs were three miles away. It seemed, however, ungracious not to go, so off we started.

The doctor was rather depressed when he heard moonlight effects being discussed, though we were thinking more of its pictorial aspects than of its influence on crayfish. Early recollections of coral islands,

in a book which made my tenth birthday memorable, excited my curiosity to see at last what a coral reef was like. Grottos as pink as a necklace, of a ten-year-old little girl I associated with my book, rose in my imagination, and to see these in a brilliant moonlight might more than compensate me for a poor catch of crayfish.

We found several fishermen on the reefs, and we were puzzled to guess what they were up to. They appeared to be walking on the water, for when we first saw them they were some distance out at sea, and the water looked no shallower than that which we had hitherto skirted. Some were running about and beating the surface with long sticks, and the proceedings had an uncanny look until we got near enough to follow what they were about. A long net, which a couple of men hung on to at the water's edge, reached some distance into the sea, making a slight curve to its furthest extremity, which was held by some men far out on the partially submerged reef; the water was being beaten with the object of driving the fish into the net. The men furthest out presently advanced towards the shore, dragging the net through the deep water while they walked along the edge of the reef. We were able to reach them by seldom being more than ankle deep, taking care, however, to avoid the deep holes in the coral. As the net curved more and more on the advance to the shore of its further end, our interest to see what it would bring in became as great as that of the fishermen.

When finally the whole net was drawn on to the

strand, we beheld as strange an assortment of creatures as can be seen in the Naples Aquarium. Some had transparent bodies with long filmy tentacles, others were difficult to class, whether as fish or as marine plants, for they were so rapidly picked up and thrown into baskets that we had little time to examine them. The queer things left on the shore might safely be classed as unedible. The men telling us that the moon would not be down till three o'clock, I bothered no more about crayfish, but found plenty of entertainment in peering into the holes in the reef. The water was so transparent that, where the moonlight reached the bottom, the shadow of my head was clearly defined. I might have been looking into a depth of one or two feet instead of into several fathoms of water. Some of the beautifully arranged tanks in the Aquarium at Naples might have been modelled on what I saw here. The holes were sometimes globular in shape, though passages might have existed where the moonbeams did not fall. Two lights, an inch or two apart, moved about in the shadow of one of these holes, and disappeared whenever they reached the moonlit part. I crept down on my knees to see if I could distinguish any form around these weird lights, and as I could not do so, I concluded that they were the eyes of a transparent fish such as those we had seen taken out of the fishermen's nets. The lights disappearing, I crept round to a hole a few yards off, and there I could distinguish the entrance to a passage leading towards the hole I had left. The two lights reappeared, were lost again as they passed through the moonlit space, and

seen once more until they were lost in some cavern in the darkness.

Sea-anemones stuck to the sides and hung from the roofs of these fairylike chambers, the claws of a hermit crab just distinguishable in a hollow at the base of what looked more like some hot-house plant than of a conscious creature. On touching the spreading tentacles with my stick, they rapidly contracted to a conical knob.

The reefs in themselves were a disappointment, for I should hardly have known them as coral had I not been told so; but what we saw of the marvellous forms of life contained in their caverns well repaid us for our night's excursion. Some attempts were made to beguile the crayfish with lighted candles; three were brought back to our camp, but I never quite got rid of a suspicion that the Syrian doctor had caught these out of the fishermen's net by means of a piastre. He need not have looked so sad about his miscalculations, for each one of us had spent a most interesting hour or more on the reefs. It became too cold for us to remain any longer in our wet clothes, and we were glad to tramp briskly back to our camp.

Weigall and Erskine Nicol rode on the following morning to the ruins of Old Kosseir, some five miles north of the Arab town, while Whymper and I returned to the mosque to finish our drawings. We paid the doctor a visit in his dispensary, and were shown how up-to-date was its equipment. 'But what is the use of all this,' he said, 'if no one is ever ill?'—one more proof of the ingratitude of the native.

KOSSEIR

We bid farewell to the kindly governor, and hoped for his sake that he might soon be transferred to some more congenial place, trusting that one who had the welfare of the people at heart as much as he had might be found to fill his post. May his charming little daughter be where suitable companions abound, and also frocks long enough to reach to her ankles. The doctor may now be surrounded with patients more than enough, for the two years' exile he then anticipated are now over. Let us hope that the Austrian engineer has been replaced by one whose orders may allow him to distribute the distilled water without having to exact the farthing per bucket from the impoverished people of Kosseir.

We bought some pretty shells—about the only things the town had to sell. The good Mudir spoke the truth when he said, 'In Kosseir dere is nozing, nozing, nozing!'

Some fish was sent to us as a departing present when we were starting on our return journey to the Nile valley. The whitewashed town was pink in the light from the rising sun when we again mounted our camels. Kosseir was asleep, and Kosseir has probably slept ever since, just waking up for a short while when the coasting steamer brings the bags of flour.

CHAPTER XXII

EDFU AND THE QUARRIES OF GEBEL SILSILEH

THE few incidents which occurred during the following six months, after I was reinstalled in my hut at Der el-Bahri, have been related in previous chapters. During the short season at Luxor friends and acquaintances often paid me a visit when going the rounds on the Theban side of the Nile. Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Parker induced me to leave my camp to spend Christmastide with them in the delightful house they had lately built at Assuan. It is one of the few new houses in Upper Egypt which in aspect fits in exactly with its surroundings. Situated as it is on the western bank of the Nile, it commands a beautiful view both up and down the river, and Elephantine Island, the only green spot near Assuan, lies just opposite. A more ideal residence in which to pass the winter months would be hard to conceive. Would that he who built it had been spared to enjoy it for more than a few short seasons! Two years previously I had spent three months with them on their *dahabieh*. Henry Simpson, the artist, was of our company. We visited everything worth visiting between the first and second cataracts, mooring the ship wherever we found a subject we wished to paint. This is the ideal way of seeing the

Nile, and when, as in this case, congenial companionship is added to the comforts of a well-equipped dahabieh, no more delightful way of tiding over the winter months is imaginable.

A diary in the form of caricatures of the daily events, which Mr. Simpson had left with the Parkers, brought those pleasant times vividly back to us.

Mrs. Parker and I made several excursions to Philae while there was still a chance of recording some of its beauty before it would be entirely submerged by the raising of the Assuan dam. As it is proposed that I should treat of Nubia in another volume, I shall defer what I may have to say on Assuan and of the country south of it.

Towards the end of my season at Der el-Bahri, which as usual was two months after the hotels at Luxor had put up the shutters, Mr. Weigall suggested my spending June with him in the tombs and temples south of Thebes. The valley in which I camped had become a veritable oven, and my hut was untenable till the sun sank behind the cliffs which form the amphitheatre behind Hatshepsu's shrine. Some work I wished to do in the temple of Edfu, as well as to get shelter from the burning sun, tempted me to accept this kind invitation. The quarries and shrines at Gebel Silsileh, the tombs of Assuan and the courts and colonnades at Philae, all held out hopes of shady places in which I should find plenty of subjects to paint.

Our preparations were soon made. On the first day of June we took the train from Luxor to Edfu, and were encamped that afternoon in the dark shades of the great temple of Horus.

The thermometer fell to 100° Fahrenheit in the hypostyle hall, and we were grateful for this comparative coolness. Our attire could safely be of the scantiest, as there was no fear of a party of trippers arriving at this time of the year. Shoes were advisable till the pavements had been examined, for in some seasons the temple is infested with scorpions. Happily this was a poor scorpion season, and barely a dozen were killed during the eight days we spent there.

We decided on the hypostyle hall as our dining-room, unless the open court should cool down sufficiently after sundown; our beds were to be made on the roof of the great vestibule, and no cooler spot could be apportioned for our midday siesta than in one of the corridors which run round the sanctuary. What earthly potentate could claim so majestic a dwelling-place? If an apology for its modernity be needed to those whose interests lie in the earlier dynastic remains, we at all events had a roof over our heads, and Edfu temple, though shorn of its furniture, is not a ruin. Going back to pre-Ptolemaic times, no temple in Egypt exists where imagination has not to fill in great portions which are not in the places which the builders designed for them. Edfu temple is doubtless the grandest preserved edifice in the world which can date back rather more than two thousand years.

Some portions are out of repair; but let us hope that no more attempts at restoration may be made, more than to tie or buttress such places that may be in danger of falling. All credit is due to Mariette, who, under the auspices of Saîd Pasha, cleared the temple of the rubbish which in places filled it to the roofing

slabs; a part of the town actually stood on the roof. The rubbish hills which surround it are gradually lessening, for the septic material of which they are composed serves as a valuable manure to the fields around.

The entire building took 187 years to complete, its progress going on more or less uninterruptedly during the rule of eleven of the Ptolemies. The design is so complete that it is hard to believe that one architect did not draw up all the plans. I do not purpose to give the details of this vast building, as this has been so adequately done by Baedeker and in other guide-books. Curiously enough the Baedeker, which so accurately describes the most interesting details to be observed, makes no mention of the dimensions, though the first thing which impresses the visitor is the vastness of the building. Actual measurements are liable to do little more than give an impression of size, but a comparison with well-known structures often conveys a truer conception. The area of St. Paul's, in square feet measurement, is 28,050, that of St. Peter's at Rome is 54,000, while the temple at Edfu covers an area of 80,000 square feet. There is but one other temple in Egypt with which we can compare it, and that is the temple of Denderah. But in every way it is Denderah's superior. The great temple of Ammon at Karnak was raised when Egyptian art was at a higher level than at the time of the Ptolemies, and, grand as that ruin may be, it fails to impress one as much as the almost intact structure here at Edfu.

The temples of Edfu, of Denderah, and of Esneh,

though all three were raised during a debased period of Egyptian art, owe their impressiveness chiefly to the fact that they still have a roof above them. The subdued light of the vestibule, the dimmer light of the hypostyle hall, and the increasing darkness as one passes through the next two chambers till the blackness of the sanctuary is reached, strikes the imagination to a degree which no sunlit ruins can do, be they ever so fine. The reliefs which cover every wall space and column are not to be compared with the refined work in Hatshepsu's shrine ; but in this dim religious light they serve their purpose, and the general effect is in no wise diminished. The sculptured reliefs, on the girdle-wall and the pylons, which are seen in broad daylight, suffer greatly in comparison with the eighteenth dynasty work. But taken as a whole, the design of these temples is probably more beautiful than was that of the earlier structures, of which only fragments now remain. A Greek most likely furnished the design, the detail being left to Egyptians who had lost much of their artistry.

We ascended to the roof by a long inclined plane in the thickness of one of the walls, and in the comparative coolness of the evening we watched the sun dip into the coloured mists which hung over the cultivation between us and the Libyan desert. Edfu spreads round three sides of the temple, and we got a bird's-eye view of the medley of mud huts, little courtyards, and modest places of worship which go to make up a small Nilotic town. Children were at play amidst the cattle and fowls in the yards, while their elders were

attending to their household duties on the roof. The houses were on a higher level as they neared the temple, and the piles of débris on which they stood were sharply cut away a few yards from the girdle-wall, forming a second enclosure on that side of us. It was easily seen that before the temple was cleared the incline of the rubbish mounds would have reached to the roof we stood on.

In a letter which Mariette wrote in 1860 to the *Révue Archéologique*, he says: 'I caused to be demolished the sixty-four houses which encumbered the roof, as well as twenty-eight more which approached too near the outer wall of the temple. When the whole shall be isolated from its present surroundings by a massive wall, the work of Edfu will be accomplished.'

Something similar to what Mariette found here fifty years ago may still be seen at the north end of the Luxor temple, where a mosque and a cluster of houses still remain on the top, on the yet unexcavated portions. The apertures in the roofing slabs (which now at midday allow of some rays of sunlight to lighten the interior) served as drains to carry off the filth from the houses on the roof. No wonder that the fellaheen gladly now fatten their land with the scourings from the temple enclosure. Many of the smaller objects now seen in the Antika shops are found by the peasants while they load their asses with this septic rubbish. Sub-inspectors and guards are told off to watch these operations; but it is seldom that anything which is not too heavy to carry off can be saved to the Antiquities Department.

It is no sinecure being Chief Inspector over as

extended an area as that which is in Mr. Weigall's charge.

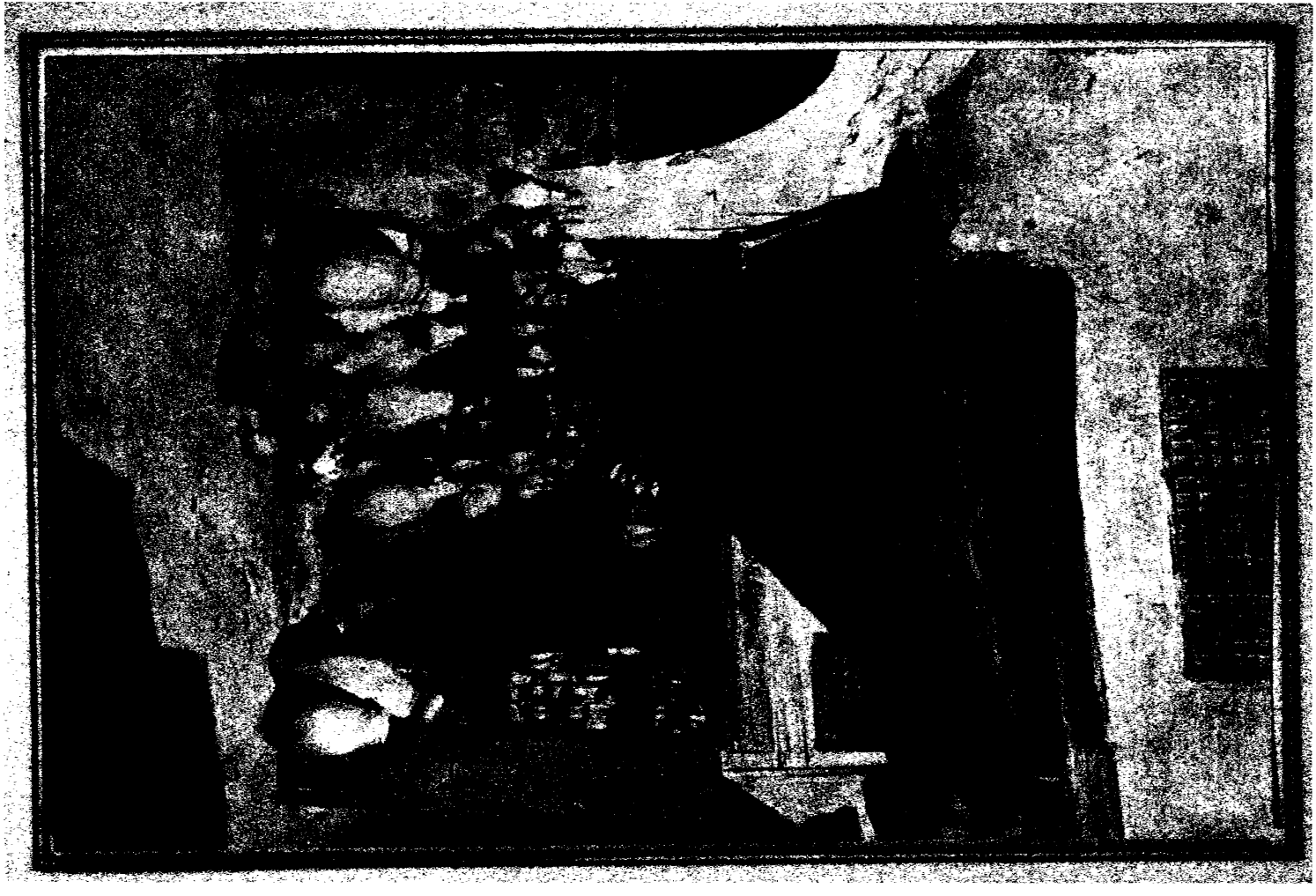
By the light of a couple of candles we dined in the courtyard. The afterglow caught the top of the propylon as we sat down—from a deep rose it sank to a slaty grey, and then slowly darkened to a black mass against the starlit sky.

The two guardians preceded us with candles, so that we could find our way to the stairway entrance at the further end of the temple. Thousands of bats squeaked and fluttered above, disturbed by these unwonted lights; and from the rounded columns, whose summits were lost in the darkness, beast and bird headed gods seemed to resent our intrusion into the sacred precincts. When we ascended the inclined stairway we rubbed shoulders with the divinities and the Ptolemies which lined the wall surfaces of the narrow passage to the roof.

Selim had fixed up our camp beds above the great vestibule, which is considerably higher than the inner precincts of the temple; and here we slept well above the gods, but beneath the canopy of the heavens.

We arose with the first glimmer of light in the eastern sky and found Selim preparing our bath on the roof. When we descended to the interior of the temple we found that the thermometer had only fallen three degrees. The courtyard was again our coolest breakfasting place, besides being more or less free from the smell of bats, which is a distinctive feature of all enclosed temples.

The town is as unspoilt as any on the banks of the



Nile, and the early morning and evening are the only times when it is possible to explore it in comfort at this time of the year. I found some delightful subjects in the little bazaar, and could paint here till the sun drove me from where I had set up my easel. The temple interior, even at a hundred degrees of Fahrenheit, then became a welcome shelter from the burning sun.

My companion was engaged on some literary work and never stirred out of the temple till dusk. After lunch we would retire to improvised beds near the sanctuary, and a ray of sunlight descending through a slit in the roof gave us light by which we could read till we fell asleep.

We spent eight days in the shades of this majestic shrine, and though Weigall had brought quite a library of books on things Egyptological and was also able fluently to read the inscriptions with which the walls are covered, we could only cull a fraction of the flowery descriptions of the deeds that were done while this temple of Horus was being raised. I made a careful study of a fine panel on the inner side of the western girdle-wall. It represents a ship with expanded sail, with Isis kneeling at the prow and Horus astride on the deck launching a javelin into a minute hippopotamus near the edge of the river; both he and the goddess hold a cord which is attached to the beast. The king stands on the bank and is also driving a spear into the victim. The figures are so beautifully drawn and the panel is so decoratively filled, that when we speak of the debased art of the Ptolemies, it must be understood as being so only in comparison with

the superlatively fine work of some of the earlier dynasties.

We left Edfu in the early morning to step on to a steam-launch which would run us up to Gebel Silsileh in six hours. I seemed awakened from a sleep gently disturbed with dreams in which the great, of an age long past, and their strange divinities had slowly filed before me, to be lost in the darkness of Edfu's sanctuary.

The steam-launch seemed an anachronism after the eight days during which we had been transported back to times before the dawn of Christianity. Running against the current our progress was slow; but it was a giddy speed compared with that of the Nile boats we overtook, though their great sails were swelled with the wind blowing up the river. Lying on a mattress in the shade of an extemporised awning and enjoying the breeze which overtook us, we could thoroughly enjoy some hours of complete laziness which we glorified by the name of well-deserved rest. It seemed a pity to fall asleep and to lose consciousness for a moment of this delicious feeling of fresh air and pleasant coolness. Objects we passed were just of sufficient interest not to over-excite us, but just to prevent any feeling of monotony. The remains of a Byzantine fortified town with the ruins of a convent spread picturesquely over the crest of the hill es-Serâg. I should like to have made a sketch of this, though I soon found consolation in the thought that I might pass here again and catch it in a more pictorial lighting. Consolation for most ills comes easily while afloat on the Nile.

THE QUARRIES OF GEBEL SILSILEH

The character of the landscape changes considerably here. The nummulite limestone hills, with their pretty crag and cliff drawing, give place to the sandstone rocks. Ancient quarries with inscriptions abound, and had we not been making for the far-famed quarries of Silsileh, we might have felt inclined to stop and examine some.

We reached our destination in the early afternoon, and moored on the west bank of the river. Gebel Silsileh (the Mountain of the Chain) is so called on account of a tradition that ancient kings here blocked the river with a chain stretched across it from the cliffs on either side. The Nile contracts to within a couple of hundred yards, and the rocks rise, in most places, sheer out of the water. That a more natural barrier than this chain once blocked the river is evident, and also that it held up the waters in Lower Nubia sufficiently to force a second arm of the river to flow along the low-lying land between the first cataract, and on the western side of Assuan. A great disruption of the barrier is said to have taken place towards the end of the Hyksos period, when until then it was probably a rushing cataract. But in prehistoric times, when the course of the Nile was completely blocked at this gorge, the river must have flowed through other channels for a hundred miles or more.

We fixed on a tomb recess, cut out of a rock facing north, as our living-room, and put off deciding where we should sleep till we found which place might be the coolest after the sun had gone down. Selim improvised a kitchen in a disused tomb nearer the edge of the river.

These arrangements being completed, we visited the numerous objects of interest on our side of the Nile.

The rock chapel, known as the Speos of Haremheb, lies furthest north, and it contains some very beautiful late eighteenth dynasty work. A relief of the young king taking the divine milk at the breast of a goddess can be compared in beauty with the similar subject in the Seti temple at Abydos. The workmanship appearing coarser here is owing to the sandstone not having the marble-like surface of the nummulite limestone in the latter temple. The relief of King Haremheb returning in triumph from Cush (generally supposed to be the district between the first two cataracts, which we now know as Nubia) is also very beautiful, and reminds one strongly of some of the Der el-Bahri work. The Speos itself is very interesting, being a form of shrine of a plan different to any I had so far seen. It is a long narrow chamber parallel with the rock-face, and entered by five doorways which are separated from each other by four square pillars hewn out of the rock. In the centre of the back wall is an entrance to an inner chamber also covered with reliefs, except the end which faces the doorway where damaged statues of the Pharaoh and of six gods occupy each a recess.

For the best part of half a mile we scrambled over the rocks and through disused quarries, examining a number of little shrines, tomb recesses and *stele*, all of which are more or less ornamented with reliefs while some show traces of colour.

Three imposing chapels hewn out of the solid rock are at the south end of the quarries. These are votive

shrines to Seti I., Rameses II., and to the son of the latter, Merenptah—proscenium-shaped alcoves supported by columns of the clustered papyrus type, and surmounted with bold cornices. A rank growth of scrub on the strip of land between the shrines and the river relieved the amber hues of the sandstone, and some touches of pure colour in the shrines themselves helped to make this a promising subject for a picture.

Our camp was about midway between the Speos and these votive shrines. Selim was preparing our dinner when we returned, and during these odd moments we enjoyed a swim in the Nile. As usual we cut our evenings short by retiring early to bed, and we began our days with the first glimmer of light.

We spent four delightful days here, Weigall collecting Egyptological facts, and I increasing my number of drawings. We should have stayed here longer; but how this sojourn, as well as the remainder of our expedition, came to an end, will form the subject of another chapter.

CHAPTER XXIII

MY EXPERIENCES AS AN INMATE OF A NATIVE HOSPITAL

I HAD placed my bed on a rock high enough to get the benefit of any breath of cooler air which the north breeze might bring; the nightly drop in the temperature usual in the desert does not obtain in like manner on the edge of the Nile. Our exalted position on the roof of Edfu temple had been conducive to sleep, and during the first three nights I slept well, perched up on my rock. Strange dreams, however, disturbed the fourth night. My identity got hopelessly mixed up with that of Horus; the steam-launch and the ship I had copied at Edfu temple became a composite craft, with the lassoed hippopotamus serving as a drag anchor. I resented the anxiety shown by the goddess in the prow to meet the handsome young king on the bank, and felt I was handicapped in my courtship by having a hawk's head. My divinity was outweighed by the good looks of the mortal, and I was preparing to use my spear in as effective a manner on him as I had on the hippopotamus, when the boat bumped heavily against the bank and awoke me.

I was shivering on the rock, having fallen out of my bed, and was soon conscious enough to know that

I had fever. I never sleep out of doors without having a blanket handy to pull over me in case of a sudden drop in the temperature, and I made use of it now. I could not trust myself to climb down the rock and get to the more sheltered place of my companions, nor could I make any one hear me. Slowly the night went by, shivering fits alternating with fantastic dreams—yet no inclination to rise came with the dawn. I heard shouts from below that breakfast was ready, but all the breakfast I wanted was a dose of quinine. My friend climbed up bringing me the drug, and was anxious to see what was the matter. Thinking it was a touch of the malarious fever which for years I had been subject to, I hoped that in a day or two I should be all right again. I could not, however, remain where I lay, for as the sun got up, so my rock became untenable. Getting into the shade of the tomb, which we called our living-room, ways and means were discussed, I acquiescing in whatever my friend proposed.

Assuan was the nearest place where a doctor could be found, and a four-mile ride would take us to the nearest station on the line. A train left about two o'clock, and donkeys might be obtainable at the nearest village. We drifted down the Nile to the nearest spot from which we could ride to the station, and while writing these lines that ride comes back to me as a horrible nightmare. The midday sun of June in Upper Egypt is carefully avoided by those in the best of health, even when a well-saddled donkey is obtainable. But ill as I was, with nothing but a sack of straw for a saddle, the trials of that ride are indescribable. My sketching

umbrella and pith helmet were a protection from the direct rays of the sun, but none from the scorching heat which rose from the baked soil. When we left the sandstone rocks on our right we got on to the cultivated land, and I could see the little station, across the plain, trembling in the heated air. I managed somehow to get there without tumbling off the straw sack, and I had that sack taken off my donkey to use it as a pillow on the station floor. Some fellaheen were lying about on the flags, and even they seemed overcome with the oven-like heat of the station, on the flat roof of which the vertical rays of the sun had been beating.

The train service in Upper Egypt is excellent while the tourist season is on; but, as may be supposed, few trains crawl along the desert track in midsummer. Happily there is generally one first-class car attached, on the chance of some official being obliged to make a journey, and in this car there is often a sunk well in the floor, which serves as a small ice cellar. I had at other times unfavourably contrasted the luxuriousness of the official car with the cattle trucks which seemed good enough for the natives. I forgave them readily enough now, while I greedily drank of the cold water obtainable by means of the ice cellar. Fortunately, also, one decent hotel remains open at Assuan after the more luxurious ones put up their shutters. I could, therefore, look forward to a comfortable bed after the five long hours of the train journey.

When the proprietor seemed satisfied that I had neither the plague nor cholera, a room was got ready for me, and the only European doctor then in Assuan

was soon at my bedside. He was a kind-hearted Swiss missionary, who had still four days to remain here before he left for Jerusalem, and should I not be well enough to move then, the permanent medical man at the dam could be sent for from Shellal. He said I was down with sunstroke, and ordered an ice-bag to be put to my head, and told me I could put another on my chest if I liked. He looked in again about midnight, and several Englishmen also called to offer any assistance they could give. Who they were and what they said I only found out when I returned to Egypt the following season. One sentence, however, I understood, and that was that the thermometer had reached 124 degrees in the shade during the afternoon. I was also conscious enough, when left alone, of a cutting pain in the right side of my chest, and decided to dispense with the ice-bag there until I knew what this pain meant. I heard voices in another room, and a declaration of 'no trumps,' also an argument about 'going diamonds,' and I felt a certain comfort that countrymen of mine were near at hand.

While I lay awake that night a curious sensation that I was two people got hold of me. Was it I or my double who felt this cutting pain? And whose turn was it to take the medicine the doctor had left? It was very nasty, and I rather resented that my double had not fairly shared in the taste. The *Ka* (which the ancient Egyptians believed was born with the body, as distinct from the soul) served as a guardian spirit or 'double,' who accompanied the mortal during his life-time and tended to his wants after death as long as his remains were preserved in their mummy state. One of

us must be this *Ka*, I thought; and whether I or the other fellow was the 'double' exercised what little mind I could bring to bear on the subject.

The Swiss missionary came early the next day, and was evidently not satisfied that sunstroke was entirely my complaint. He sounded my chest, and called out, 'Oh, it is pleurisy.' He seemed very excited, and said that, though occupied most of his time with people's bodies, it was their souls which concerned him most. 'As a doctor I can give you no hope, but as a missionary I can tell you that everything is possible with God. What is your name?' I told him this, and, startled as I was, I still puzzled whether the name applied to me or to my 'double.' I can just recall the good man going down on his knees, and also his loud and earnest prayers; but owing to my semi-delirious state I can recall nothing of the latter but the good man's foreign accent.

Why pleurisy should have so much alarmed him I cannot say, as I can recall many who have got the better of it. One good thing about it was that I could be attended to by the hotel servants, who up till that time would not answer my bell; they evidently were not satisfied till then that I was not down with cholera. The fever abated somewhat with the new treatment, and I was able to recognise Weigall and one or two other acquaintances who looked in. The doctor was most attentive, and advised my going with him as far as Assiout, where there is a good hospital run by the American Mission. He called in the native medical man to get a second opinion as to whether I could do

the journey, and between the two of them it was decided that I had better risk the journey than risk remaining in the terrible heat of Assuan without any means of proper nursing.

The Swiss doctor would accompany me as far as Assiout, and he would wire to the mission to have me met at the station and take me to the hospital.

We left Assuan after I had been there four days, and a friend who was a manager of the line got a sleeping-car put on to the train. We started in the morning, and after a thirteen-hour journey we reached Assiout in the dead of night. Here I had to part company with the Swiss doctor, who was on his way to Jerusalem. Now, whether the telegram ever reached the mission or not I can't say ; anyhow, the doctor looked in vain for any one connected with the hospital. A good Samaritan in the shape of a Scot, connected with the government, had fortunately travelled down in the same train, and by good luck Assiout was his destination also. I can recall his carrying me to a carriage, and I can also recall his slapping the cheek of a native who tried to force his way in while he clamoured for baksheesh.

He rang up the hall-porter at the hospital, when we reached it, and asked if I was not expected. The porter knew nothing about it, and said every one had retired for the night ; there was, however, an empty bed in the room kept for occasional paying patients. I was then placed on that bed while the porter was sent to inform the head of the mission of my arrival. On his return he told us that the *hakim* was dressing and would be down in a few minutes ; there was therefore no

occasion for the Scotsman, who had been such a friend in need, to wait any longer. It was then about one o'clock, and I lay on that bed till half-past seven in the morning before I saw another soul except that porter, and he kept out of my way as much as he could, for I don't believe he ever went to the doctor's rooms.

Never shall I forget that night, and how I regretted that I had not spent it in the train and gone to a hospital in Cairo. The porter snored in the passage until it was time for him to give out doses to the patients, and then he rang a bell just over the entrance to my room and bawled out the names of those who were to take their medicine. The watchmen in the street, at intervals, called *wahed* with a long plaintive drawl on the last syllable, and this started every sleeping dog barking once more. A fretful baby in a dormitory next to my room put a treble to the bass notes of the watchmen and the howling of the dogs. I tried to awaken the snoring brute of a porter so that I might get something to drink; but my voice was not strong enough to have any effect, and I had to lie there perishing with thirst till the time came for that dreadful bell to be rung. When finally he brought me a glass of milk my 'double' was once more keeping me company—and one small glass for two people seemed a perfect mockery of my thirst. Thus I lay in the clothes I travelled in till a vision of a ministering angel, in white cap and pinafore, appeared in the doorway.

She asked the porter who I was and when I had arrived, for until that moment no one in the hospital was aware of my existence except that lying porter.

She sent for the doctor, got a sleeping-suit out of my trunk, and with the help of a male attendant she put me to bed.

Dr. Henry, an active, rather over-middle-aged American who has charge of the mission, was about as great a contrast to the little Swiss doctor as it is possible to conceive. He asked no questions till he had sounded my chest, and then gave the ministering angel, otherwise Sister Dora, orders to prepare a pneumonia jacket. 'Ever had pneumonia before?' he jerked out, and on my saying that I had not, and also that the Swiss doctor said I had pleurisy, he retorted, 'Guess you 've got both.' Possibly lying all night between the open window and door had added this to the list of my complaints.

Dr. Henry was too practical a man to waste much thought on idle speculations as to causes; here was something definite to go for, and he went for it in good earnest. 'That lung is clearing itself tiptop,' he would say with professional pride after the fourth or fifth examination. The sunstroke was curing itself, unless my 'double,' who had left me, had gone off with it. The pneumonia jacket and the night noises were my chief discomfort after a few days. Assiout was distinctly cooler than Assuan, though there is plenty of room for heat without reaching 124° of Fahrenheit in the shade. A cotton-wool jacket about two inches thick was a severe trial and it stuck to me like a wet hot sponge, and before it was thinned down to vanishing point I was covered with prickly heat which I did not lose till after I had got back to England.

I was very anxious to write home, as my wife must have been alarmed at not having heard for some time. The Swiss doctor's gloomy forecasts might easily be correct, and I wished to put my affairs in order. Writing was, however, such an exertion that I decided first to ask Dr. Henry whether my chances of recovery were good, and if so to put off correspondence until I could more easily manage it.

I asked him to tell me if I was likely to die, and his short 'Guess not' acted as a stimulant, and one also which was not followed by a reaction. Had I not had that irritating prickly heat I should have enjoyed the feeling of daily gaining strength. Three other nurses used to come and relieve Sister Dora; the head one was a fine strapping American lady with a strong and cheery face which acted like a tonic. There was also a sister from Holland who could wash me as clean as a Dutch milk-can. I could chat with her in her own language, and while we talked of the juicy green meadows of her country, it seemed to make my room feel cooler. I saw least of the German sister, who had some accident cases which took up most of her time. What a godsend to have educated women who will devote their lives to alleviating the sufferings of so many people!

The hospital was full to overflowing; but, being the only European patient, I had the room allotted to them to myself. The two assistant doctors were both ill themselves, and the whole burden fell on Dr. Henry alone and his excellent nurses. No wonder he had not much time for conversation.

A NATIVE HOSPITAL

Sister Dora had been in Morocco before she came to Egypt, and was able to tell of her experiences while nursing the sick in Fez. I was also interested to hear about this mission, and how it is supported; for it is a large building, equipped for a hundred in-patients, which number was at that time using it. It is a great work, and though Assiout has a good government hospital, there is more than room enough for both. Subscriptions to the mission fell off when statistics showed that converts from Mohammedanism were few —a proof of Dr. Henry's honesty; for the converted Egyptian Moslem hardly exists, whatever other statistics may attempt to prove. He did a great work amongst the Copts, Assiout being more or less their headquarters, and a large proportion of the patients in the hospital were Copts.

One Sunday afternoon a chorus of men singing in the next ward surprised me. The tune seemed familiar, and tunes rendered by unassisted Egyptians are not always easy to follow. It was an Arabic version of Sankey's 'Safe in the Arms of Jesus.' Loud prayers to Allah followed, asking Him to look down in compassion on these sick people. It was very touching to hear the afflicted ones calling out *Ameem! Ameem!* whenever there was a pause in the deep voice of the Elder. I was informed by Sister Dora that a Coptic Plymouth brother visited that ward (which was set apart for the Christian patients) every Sunday, and held a service. A sermon in Arabic with no mention of Mohammed was new to me, and familiar texts in that sonorous language sounded very much as they must have sounded to

Hebrew ears. The Arabic of an educated Egyptian has a strong affinity with the original language of the Old Testament.

After about ten days Dr. Henry told me that my lung was cleared, 'and, mind you, if you had not been a teetotaller, you could never have pulled through this.' I had to disappoint him by telling him that I had never taken the pledge; the disappointment did not abash him, as I expected it would. 'The little you 've taken has made no difference, anyhow,' was his answer. I seldom feel the want of stimulant, but I felt it strongly then. I longed for a glass of port, and I told him so. He shook his head: total abstinence was the rule of the mission. There was something, however, in my next medicine that proved that the word 'total' must not always be taken too literally. It tasted very like a favourite prescription friends in Oporto order on the least provocation. I drank Sister Dora's health in it, likewise that of the three other ladies who brightened the lives of all who entered this hospital. The only health the three doctors seemed to neglect was their own. One had to leave, during my stay, to try to recruit in a cooler climate, another was awaiting an operation, and Dr. Henry looked as if the strain of overwork was telling on him.

I left Assiout by the same night train which had brought me there from Assuan, and recruited sufficiently during ten days in Cairo to enable me to take the homeward voyage.

Having arrived at Assiout and having left it also during the night, I have seen no more of what is considered

the capital of Upper Egypt than I could see from my bedroom window in the hospital.

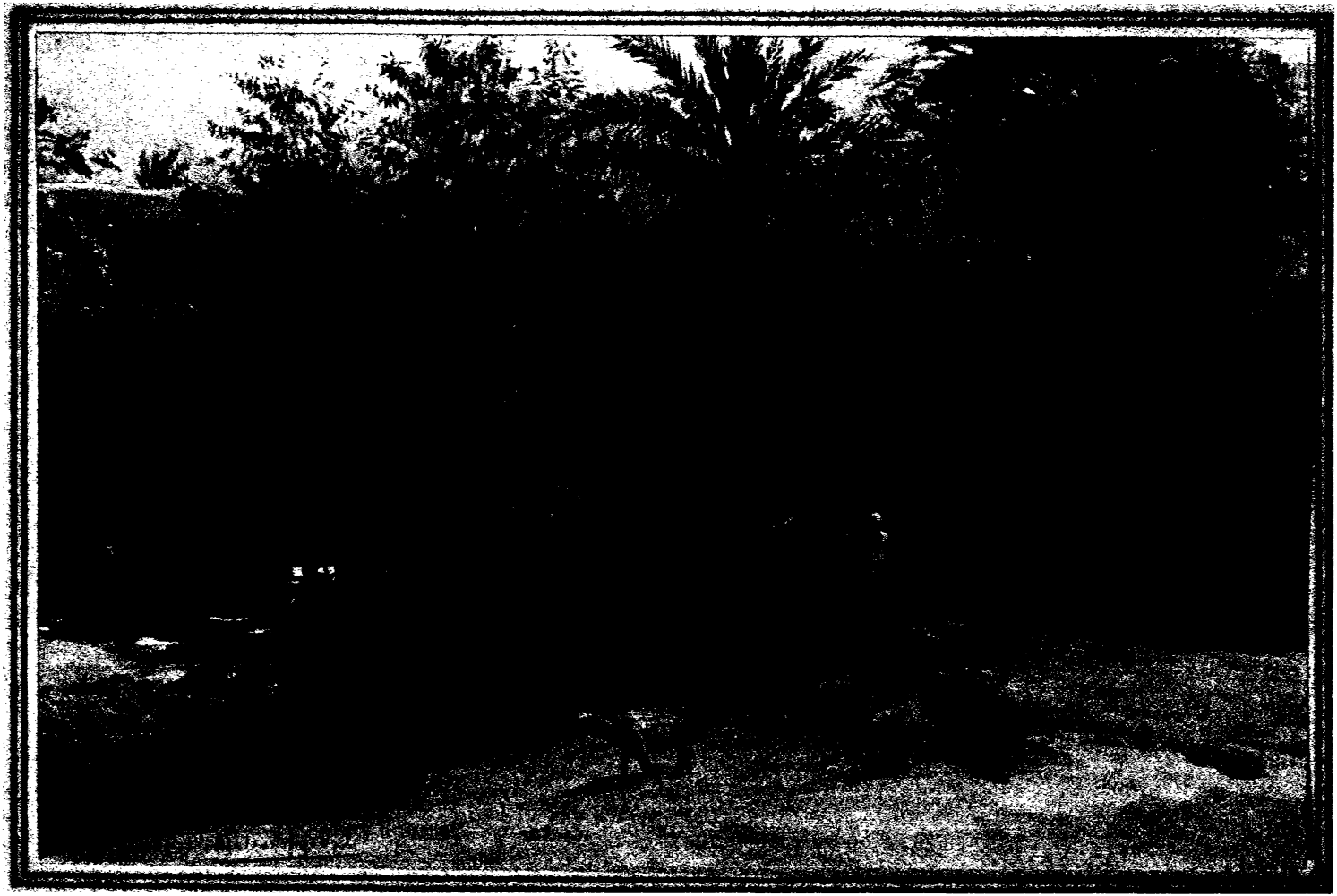
I often feel indignant at the sneers the very word missionary provokes amongst the self-indulgent people I meet in the hotels in eastern countries; for whatever the religious or moral convictions of these critics may be, their self-indulgence contrasts unfavourably with the self-denial of the many missionaries I have happened to meet.

After a stay of three months in England, I was ready to return to Egypt to complete a series of water-colour drawings for a future one-man show in London. The incidents related in this volume have not always followed a consecutive order: some took place after my return to Cairo, when also several of the illustrations to this book were painted. At Luxor I ran across my Scottish good Samaritan, whom I had not seen since he left me to the care of the hospital porter. He asked me if I remembered his slapping the face of the man who had importuned us while we drove from Assiout station, and on my replying that I did, he told me that on the following day he received a summons to appear before the Mamoor for assault and battery. This might have led to very serious consequences had the Mamoor reported him to his chief in Cairo, for to strike a native is as much as an Englishman's place in a government office is worth. It would also have been an easy way for the Mamoor to gain popularity with the Moslems, to have got a British official dismissed for such an offence. Fortunately the Scotsman had made the Mamoor's acquaintance on a previous visit to Assiout, and both

men liked each other. When the native had told his version of the services he had rendered and the brutal reward he received, my friend explained what really happened, namely, that while he was lifting an apparently dying compatriot into the cab, this man, who had done no more than to pick up the hat which had fallen off the sick man's head, tried, in his greed for baksheesh, to force his way into the cab as it was driving off. For this impertinence he received his slap in the face.

'Come here,' said the Mamoor, 'and show me exactly where you were struck.' The man approached and showed his left cheek, whereupon the modern Solomon gave him a smart slap on the right one, and told him that neither cheek could then be jealous of its fellow.

For once I left Egypt before the exodus of the tourists, as I was due in Japan before the cherry-trees had shed their blossom. As the ship slowly moved through the Suez Canal, the remembrance of unpleasant hours I had spent in Egypt vanished with the smoke from the funnel, and only happy recollections sped me on my voyage from the Near to the Far East.



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