

tents, governed by minor sheikhs, chosen from amongst the heads of families, who in turn choose the supreme chief of the tribe, whose authority, though practically hereditary, is still in theory elective. These Bedoween consider themselves the aristocracy of the race, and rigidly abstain from intermarriage with the settled inhabitants, whom they regard as degraded, and contemptuously call the "dwellers among brick."

The introduction of the *Turkish* element into Egypt dates from the Ottoman conquest, in 1517, when Sultan Selim dethroned the last of the Mamlouk Borghite dynasty, usurped the title of "Caliph," and nominally reduced the country to the rank of an Ottoman province. But the change was followed by only a small immigration of conquerors, who settled chiefly in Cairo, and neither then nor subsequently did these fuse with the native Moslem races. For nearly two hundred and forty years they monopolised most of the chief posts in the administration, but without exercising much real authority in the country. But towards the middle of the last century the Mamlouks—who in the meantime had remained a distinct and strictly warlike caste, kept up and recruited by the white-slave trade with the Caucasus—had regained most of their old ascendancy, and during the next fifty years the resident Turkish colony not only lost nearly all share in the government, but the sovereignty of the Sultan over Egypt was virtually extinguished. Nor was the position of this Ottoman aristocracy at all retrieved by the revolution effected by Mehemet Ali, who, only half a Turk himself, had few sympathies with it. His obvious aim, too, being to re-found an Arab empire, his policy was to employ rather the native Egyptian than the Osmanli element in both the military and civil services; and whether or not his successors have inherited his ambition, they have at least

followed the same rule. Just as Arabic has become the official as well as vernacular language of the country, so Egyptians have supplanted Turks in almost every branch of the administration, which in a few years bids fair to be wholly in Arab and Coptic hands. With some few official exceptions, the existing Turkish colony—of whom about 5,000 are settled in Cairo, 2,000 in Alexandria, and 3,000 are scattered throughout Upper and Lower Egypt—consists mainly of artisans, shopkeepers, small proprietors, and members of the Ulema, of good position in their respective classes, but of little either social or political influence outside.

The free *Nubians* are chiefly Barabras (or Berbers), who, though nominally Moslems, can be classed with neither the Arabs nor Turks. They belong to a tribe between the First and Second Cataracts, large numbers of whom migrate down into Egypt, chiefly to Cairo—as the Auvergnats and Savoyards do to Paris—to earn money in domestic service, and then return to their villages comparatively rich with the fruits of their ten, fifteen, or twenty years' savings. They have an especial repute for honesty, and serve Moslem and Christian masters with equal zeal and fidelity.

Next in order of number to these Mohammedan elements, but before them in historical interest, stand the *Copts*, who are not only the most ancient, but strictly speaking the only native Egyptian race. In spite of Volney and Champollion, ethnologists are now generally agreed in regarding them as the descendants of the Pharaonic Egyptians, mixed more or less with the Persians left by Cambyses and the Greeks who followed the standard of Alexander, but still visibly preserving the characteristics of the old-world race that built Thebes and worshipped Amoun-ra. To a portion, at least, of the Arab

population, which now so far outnumbers them, they bear a similar relation to that of the Gauls to the Franks under the Merovingian Kings; but unlike these, the victors and the vanquished in Egypt never completely blended into one national whole. A majority of the native race embraced the creed of their conquerors, and in time amalgamated with them by intermarriage; but a large remnant adhered to the older faith, and, preserving jealously all their special features of race and religion, have remained till the present as distinguishable from the surrounding communities as they were two thousand years ago. The etymology of their name has been disputed, but the weight of authority inclines to regard it as the middle syllable of the word *Ægyptius*,\* the oldest name of the Nile (anciently written *Ægyptios*), and their proper language is similarly accepted as the aboriginal tongue. It had some affinity to Hebrew and Ethiopic, but before passing from popular use in the tenth century, it had become largely mixed with Greek and Arabic terms. It now survives only in the church services, in which few even of the priests understand what they read. Though crossed with both Persian and Greek blood, in form and feature these Christian Copts still closely resemble the sculptured presentments of the original race which abound everywhere in tomb and temple from Beni-hassan to Philæ. The theory of Volney that they are of negro origin has been refuted by the minute anatomical investigations of Baron Larrey, chief of the medical staff of the French expedition, who adopted the view of Herodotus, that they are a cross of the Nubians with the Abyssinians—their skins being of a dusky yellow colour, darker than the Arabs; their countenance full without being puffed; their

\* Another derivation is from Coptos (now Coft) in Upper Egypt, which was the head-quarters of the Christians till the Arab conquest.

eyes large, black, and elongated; the nose almost straight and rounded at the tip; the nostril dilated; the mouth middle-sized; the lips thick, but not thrown back like those of the negro; and the beard and hair black and bushy, but not at all woolly. They are, too, in contrast to the fellaheen, generally under the middle size, as were—to judge from the mummies—the ancient Egyptians. In character, like all long degraded classes of men, they are mean, crafty, avaricious, and immoral; wholly lacking both the self-respecting pride of the Turk and the manly frankness of the Arab. In religion they are Monophysites of the Jacobite sect—pronounced heretical by the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 581—and claim St. Mark as the founder of their church. Their clergy—whose educational status is perhaps now lower than that of any other Christian priesthood in the East—consists of a Patriarch, who takes his title from Alexandria but resides in Cairo, of twelve bishops and an indefinite number of arch-priests, priests, deacons and monks. The Patriarch is chosen from the monks of St. Anthony—one of two monasteries belonging to the sect in the eastern desert between Beni-souef and the Gulf of Suez—a mode of election which, as Mr. Curzon remarks, ensures his entire ignorance of all sublunary affairs, and his consequent unfitness for his high office, unless he chance to be a man of very uncommon talent. He appoints the Aboona, or metropolitan, of Abyssinia—the “Christianity” of which is also Coptic—and, besides absolute ecclesiastical authority, wields extensive civil jurisdiction over both the clergy and laity of his own communion. The twelve bishops are also chosen from the monks, and, like the Patriarch, cannot marry: for the priests and deacons, on the contrary, marriage is a condition of ordination, but in the event of their wives dying, they may not marry a second time. Of

all Eastern Christians the Copts are perhaps the most bigoted and intolerant, carrying their peculiar tenet to the length of regarding all other churches as polytheistic, and so refusing any approach to fellowship with Latin, Greek, and Protestant alike. They practise polygamy, and the rite of circumcision on *both* sexes, as also auricular confession, frequent and rigid fasts, and some other observances common to both the Eastern and Western churches. At Cairo an energetic Jesuit mission has succeeded in making seven or eight thousand converts to Roman Catholicism, and it is but fair to say that these form the most civilised and progressive section of the Coptic population. At the same time, the social condition of the Copts generally is much improved since Gibbon described them as "a race of illiterate beggars, whose only consolation is derived from the superior wretchedness of the Greek Patriarch and his congregation." Mehemet Ali relieved them from many humiliating disabilities, and the same liberal policy has been carried still further by his successors. Several of the sect have from time to time been promoted to the rank of Bey, and the singular aptitude of nearly all the males for account-keeping and subordinate administration has long led to their extensive employment in Government offices and in the management of estates owned by the wealthier Arab and Turkish proprietors. In retail trade and skilled labour they compete successfully with the Jews, Syrians and rayah Greeks, who otherwise monopolise most of the handicrafts and petty commerce of the country; and in Upper Egypt, where the sect is most numerous, they cultivate their fields and date-palms under the same fiscal conditions as the ordinary fellaheen. The inhabitants of Nubia also belonged to the Coptic communion until about the twelfth century, when they embraced Islam almost *en masse*.

Of the other smaller Christian communities, the *Abyssinians* most nearly resemble the aboriginal race. Nominally identical in creed and ritual, they have also many physical traits in common with the Copts. Their features are more regular, but—except in the case of those from the borders of the Galla country, who closely approximate to the negro—their colour and hair are similar, and both are alike slim and small-boned. As most of the Abyssinians in Egypt have been imported as slaves, the women are in great majority, and many of these are remarkable for their splendidly lustrous eyes, their finely-cut features, and general elegance of figure and carriage. In all but the very wealthiest households these dusky beauties of Habesh have superseded the fair-skinned but costlier houris of Georgia and Circassia; but the trade in both is now contraband, and in a few years they may be expected to count for little in any census returns. It may be remarked that the Abyssinian slaves of both sexes—the males are mostly eunuchs—generally follow the common example of their class on reaching Cairo, and embrace the dominant creed. Only the few of their free countrymen who come north for trading or other purposes can, consequently, be claimed as within the pale of Egyptian Christianity.

The rayah *Greeks* pride themselves on being the descendants of the ancient Greek colonists; but, in the matter of religion, this community of origin has not prevented their splitting into two sects. Of these, the more numerous belongs to the "Orthodox" communion of Constantinople, and receives its Patriarch from the Fanâr; while the other, though still retaining the dogmas and ritual of the mother church, has, like the Catholic Armenians of Turkey, accepted the spiritual headship of the Pope. To this sub-sect are affiliated most of the Syrians domiciled

in Egypt, who being chiefly Maronites, stand in a similar situation to Rome; Arabic, too, is the common vernacular of the whole.

The *Armenians* in Egypt nearly all belong to the "United" communion, and, except in here speaking Arabic, they differ little in character or social habits from their co-religionists of the same rite in Turkey. They are, however, ecclesiastically independent of Constantinople, having their own Patriarch and episcopate; but their relations with the Balata hierarchy are still intimate and cordial. The few "Catholic" Armenians in Cairo and Lower Egypt differ from their compatriots of this "nation" only in the point of spiritual allegiance to Rome; and as this in their case is rather Gallican than Ultramontane, its chief, if not only, outward effect is seen in the Frankish dress of their women. In all else both sections of this community are, here as in Turkey, as Semitic as the lost Ten Tribes, from whom some ethnologists not unplausibly derive their descent.

Last, and socially lowest in the census-roll of the Khedive's non-Moslem subjects stand the *Jews*, most of whom still occupy a special "quarter" in Cairo, as dirty and as isolated as the old Ghetto at Rome. Until the reign of Mehemet Ali they were the pariahs of Egypt, oppressed and plundered by the dominant class far beyond the worst experience of the Christians, and treated with ignominy by all. The even-handed tolerance of the old reformer much improved their condition, and at present they are more effectively protected by the Egyptian Government than in any other part of the Levant. But forty years' humane treatment has as yet done little to morally improve or socially elevate the victims of so long a degradation; and the Jews of Egypt are, therefore, perhaps the lowest types of their race in the East. They are dirty,

greedy, and bigoted beyond the average of their fellows elsewhere, and in return for their fanaticism they are still despised, and when possible abused, by both their Moslem and Christian fellow-subjects. A few of them have risen to the foremost rank among local bankers, and in the wholesale trade; but the great majority are petty money-changers, subordinate clerks in government and merchants' offices, and handicraftsmen in the lighter skilled trades. About 2,000 are Caraites, who adhere to the strict letter of the Old Testament, and the remainder Rabbinites, who follow the traditions of the Talmud. Physically, by strict abstinence from intermarriage with other races, they have preserved the peculiar features of the pure Eastern Jew—the fair complexion, the blue or grey eye, and the light chestnut beard and hair which differ so markedly from the heavy Armenian physiognomy of most of their co-religionists in Western Europe; but owing to the use of a gross diet, of which sesame oil forms a large ingredient, they have a flabby unhealthy look that still further distinguishes them from both the Arab and the Christian population.

Of the 90,000 or more *Foreigners* domiciled in Egypt, the large majority are Roman Catholics and Greeks, of whom it is no libel to say that a minority at least are the very dregs of the Levant. Of the gross total about 25,000 reside in Cairo, and 50,000 in Alexandria, the remainder being distributed along the Isthmus and among the other principal towns of Middle and Lower Egypt. More than nine-tenths of these foreign colonies—as they are locally called—have settled in the country since the reign of Mehemet Ali, who offered every encouragement to the immigration; and the latest official returns show a steady annual increase in their numbers. These are now respectively reckoned at—40,000 Greeks, 15,000 French, 16,000

Italians, 7,000 British, 7,000 Austro-Hungarians, 1,500 Germans, and 4,000 of other various nationalities. Under the anomalous *régime* of the Capitulations, these foreign communities have hitherto been wholly independent of the native authorities, each being governed exclusively by its own Consul, with the result of there being some sixteen alien jurisdictions in the country, all more or less antagonistic to each other and to the native tribunals. The mischief worked by such a system may be conceived; but a reform introduced last year, and the details of which will be explained in a subsequent chapter, has already done much to remedy many of the resultant abuses, and to bring this section of the population into juster relation to the Government. Most of the foreign trade and banking business of the country is in the hands of this class, to which also belong the wealthiest retail dealers and best paid artisans in both Alexandria and Cairo.

The present population of Egypt proper is thus composed of elements as various as the castes of India, and is engaged in occupations as separate as the races themselves are distinct. The agriculture of the country is mainly in the hands of the Moslem fellahen, its account-keeping in those of the Copts, the Turks are for the most part proprietors and officials, the Negroes domestic servants, and the Levantines and Europeans, in their multitudinous varieties, traders, shopkeepers, and dealers in money. Estimating the whole at 5,500,000, we have about 484 inhabitants per square mile of its cultivable area; or, in other words, in ratio of population to arable surface Egypt ranks before Belgium, the most densely-peopled State of Europe.

### CHAPTER III.

#### CITIES AND TOWNS.

Cities and 'Mohafzas'—Towns and Villages—Alexandria—First View of Egypt—Napoleon's Estimate of Alexandria—The Old Civilisation and the New—Topography of the Modern City—Its Commercial Revival—Ramleh—To Cairo—The Queen of Eastern Cities—Hausmannisation—The Esbekieh—Cairene Mosques—The Citadel—Social Attractions—Heliopolis—The Pyramids and Sphinx—"Eothen's" Prophetic Rhapsody—The Nile Voyage—Cairene Trade—Helwân—Rosetta—Damietta—Port Saïd—El-Arish and Ismaïlia—Suez—Souakim and Massowah—The other Provincial Chief Towns.

ALTHOUGH eight Egyptian towns are officially classed as "cities," and form distinct governments (*mohafzas*) apart from the provinces to which they geographically belong, only two—Cairo and Alexandria—can be strictly called so in our European sense. The other six\* do not properly rise above the rank of towns, while of the 113 to which this secondary grade is given, many differ but little from the larger of the 3,339 villages scattered throughout Egypt proper. In size, population, and importance, the capital and its great sea-port stand alone, even the smaller of them far exceeding in all three of these respects the whole half-dozen of its administrative compeers grouped together.

The latter—Alexandria—it is that usually forms the stranger's first glimpse of the land of Egypt, for so low is the long alluvial coast-line from the Arab's Tower to Aboukir, that hardly has it risen above the azure sea before the Pharos lighthouse, Pompey's Pillar, Forts Napo-

\* Rosetta, Damietta, Port Saïd, El-Arish, Ismaïlia, and Suez.