

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.

leon and Cafferelli, the antiquated windmills, the white palace of Ras-el-Teen, a score of minarets and factory chimneys, clumps of feathery palms, and a forest of shipping come full into view, and in little more than half an hour you round the great breakwater and are in Egypt—if not, as yet, of the Pharaohs and the Ptolemies, at least of the Caliphs and the Khedive. The motley scene that meets the eye on landing suggests at once the transition that is in progress from the semi-barbarism of the East to the civilisation of the West; and in its sharp contrasts of Oriental and European, its wealth and its squalor, its busy new life rising like a tide over its old conservatism, you have a fair symbol of modern Egypt as it is. Whirled away from the Custom-house in an admirable hackney carriage, as fast as frequent blocks by the way will permit, through the narrow and dirty alleys of the old native quarter, to your hotel in the fine square of Mehemet Ali, you find yourself on alighting amid all the surroundings of a lively French or Italian town, reminded that you are in the East only by the balmy atmosphere, the sapphire sky, the palm-trees on the other side of the square, and the Babel-like crowd of turbaned Arabs, jet-black Nubians, and many-raced Europeans passing and re-passing in noisy confusion below the hotel balcony—a hundred times more varied and picturesque than the street throngs of either Naples or Marseilles.

In size and commercial activity Alexandria is already the second port on the Mediterranean, and in point of antiquity was twelve hundred years old before the first brick of Cairo was laid. "Alexander," said Napoleon, "rendered himself more illustrious by founding Alexandria, and by purposing to transfer to it the seat of his empire, than by his most brilliant victories. This city should be the capital of the world. It is situated between Asia and

Africa, within reach of India and Europe: its harbour affords the only safe anchorage along the five hundred leagues of coast from Tunis, or ancient Carthage, to Alexandria; it is near one of the ancient mouths of the Nile: all the navies of the world might moor within it, and in the Old Port they would be sheltered from the winds and all possibility of attack." It may be true that the ancient city bequeathed to the modern one nothing but its ruins* and its name, but even these were an inheritance to which Cairo can boast nothing equal; while the imperishable advantages of its situation—which, 2,000 years ago and for centuries after, rendered it the chief *entrepôt* of the world—have availed to restore to the modern city, after a long decadence, if not the wealth and splendour of its ancient namesake, at least a measure of prosperity which, among the sea-ports of the Mediterranean, is now rivalled only by Marseilles. It may be idle to hope that the Alex-

* Almost the only ruins that now reward the curiosity of the traveller are the Catacombs, and three splendid monoliths, miscalled Pompey's Pillar and Cleopatra's Needles. The first of these are of great extent, and possess some architectural remains of rare elegance and symmetry. The Pillar, which had nothing to do with Pompey, but was erected in honour of Diocletian, is a Corinthian column of red granite 99 feet high, including capital and base, and is believed to be the sole existing relic of the famous Serapeion. It was erected on its present site, overlooking Lake Mareotis and the modern city, to commemorate the Emperor Diocletian's siege and capture of Alexandria in A.D. 296, after the rebellion of Achilleus. Of the Needles—which had equally nothing to do with Cleopatra, but were brought by Julius Cæsar from Heliopolis to adorn his own temple, the Cæsarium—one is erect, almost within reach of the sea-wash of the new port, while the other, which was presented by Mehemet Ali to the British Government, is at length being unburied from the rubbish of a stone-cutter's yard close by for transport to England. Both obelisks are of red Syene granite, and are respectively 71 and 66 feet long. They are covered with hieroglyphs of the reigns of Thothmes III., Rameses II., and Sethi II., and date, therefore, fully twelve centuries before the Christian era. Those who feel interested in Alexandrian archæology will find, in a *Mémoire sur l'Antique Alexandrie*, published last year by Mahmoud Bey, the Arab astronomer to the Khedive, a very scholarly summary of all that is now known as to the topography, monuments, and existing remains of the old city.

andria of the Khedives will ever renew the glories of the Ptolemaic capital, but it already symbolises the New Civilisation nearly as completely as the latter typified the Old. In architecture it has nothing, indeed, to compare with the palaces and temples, the public baths, the museums, theatres, libraries and obelisks of the city which was the scene of Cleopatra's strange wild history; nor in intellectual culture and activity with that in which Neo-Platonists and Christian fanatics, luxury and asceticism, literature and commerce, once dwelt together. But against these old-world glories it can show dockyards and arsenals, steam-engines and steam-ships, mills, factories, railways and electric telegraphs—instruments of human progress more potent than the Ptolemies or the Antonines ever dreamt of, and destined, it is reasonable to predicate, to raise Egypt to a higher rank than she has ever yet enjoyed as a civilised power.

Modern Alexandria occupies only part of the site of its predecessors, being chiefly built on the isthmus that connects what was once the classic island of Pharos with the mainland, on which the old city stood. Successive alluvial deposits have widened this mole—the ancient Heptastadium—into a broad neck of land, the seaward end of which is occupied by the palace of Ras-el-Teen, the Arsenal, and several other Government buildings, after which, mainland-wards, comes the modern town. East and west of this peninsula lie the two harbours, called the New and Old Ports. The former of these, being completely exposed to the north winds and encumbered with rocks and shoals, has long been disused except by small native craft; though it was not until the beginning of the present century that the much larger and safer western harbour was thrown open to Christian vessels. This latter is situated at the north-east end of the bay, adjoining

the southern and western sides of the city in a nearly semi-circular form, and extending from the palace of Ras-el-Teen, by the Arsenal dock, to the terminus of the Cairo railway, at Gabâri. It is off this part of the general port that the great works described in another chapter are now in course of construction, which when completed will provide Alexandria with a harbour containing an area of 1,400 acres of still water, and landing-quays nearly two miles long. Already, safely berthed on its eastern side, a splendid floating dock 500 feet long and 100 feet wide—built in France and placed *in situ* at a cost of 127,000*l.*—affords the means of repairing the largest vessels—the only accommodation of the kind as yet available to merchant shipping in the Levant. The old lighthouse still occupies the site of the ancient Pharos, on a rocky projection stretching north-east into the entrance to the New Port, but, in 1842, after the opening of the Old Harbour to Christian shipping, its distance from the latter and the lowness of its light induced Mehemet Ali to build a new tower on Eunostus (now called Ras-el-Teen) Point, at the south-western extremity of the peninsula, whence a 20-second revolving light of the first class, since erected by the Khedive, flashes its friendly warning twenty miles out to sea. Nearly a mile behind this stands the vice-regal palace built by Mehemet Ali, to whose ambition is also due the fine Arsenal that forms the next principal object of interest between the peninsula and the modern town. The development of this last has been mainly eastwards, towards the Ramleh railway station, which only seven years ago lay far outside the city, but is now connected with it by fine rows of boulevard-like houses, let out in shops below and flats above, at rents little below the average of similar buildings in Paris. In this direction, too, an admirable road along the Mahmoudieh

canal attracts on Fridays and other fête days crowds of private carriages, many of which might fitly figure in the Bois or Hyde Park. Of the whole city, indeed, it may be said that, although still "piebald," as Eliot Warburton found it a quarter of a century ago—"one half Europe, with its regular houses, tall, and white, and stiff; the other half Oriental, with its mud-coloured buildings, and terraced roofs, varied with fat mosques and lean minarets"—the municipal improvements effected by the Khedive have in respect of lighting, paving, police, and cleanliness, raised the large Frank quarter especially to a level with most second-class French and English towns, and placed it half a century ahead of even the Christian faubourg of Constantinople. These sanitary reforms have, of course, been fatal to much of the picturesque-ness that attaches to and half redeems dirt and dilapidation all over the East, but enough of these æsthetic elements still survives in the native quarters on the mole and near the walls to preserve for them much of their old Oriental *cachet*. If generally, however, the scene that now meets the eye of the tourist can no longer be called Arabian Nights-like, it is still such as no European city can boast of. The following bit of *genre* word painting, by a recent writer already quoted, may be seen in real life any day between the Custom-house and Mehemet Ali Square, in the centre of which, in defiance of the Koran and all its commentaries, stands an equestrian statue of the old hero in the garb of seventy years ago, and clustering round it the foreign Consulates, an English Protestant church, and the best hotels: "Here came a file of tall camels laden with merchandise, stalking with deliberate solemn step through the bazaars; there rode a grand-looking native gentleman, in all the pride of capacious turban and flowing robes; yonder

passed some ladies, on donkeys, enveloped in black *babara* and the more remarkable white muslin veil, which universal out-of-door costume of Egyptian only suffered two dark eyes to gleam from behind the hideous shroud. And if the carriages we saw had a smack of Europe, they were driven and attended by men in Oriental dress, and—even stranger still—were preceded, even at their best pace, by a bare-legged running Arab, who shouted to the passengers to get out of the way—the shrill cries of this active *avant-courier* resounding on every side; and fortunate is the stranger who is not run over in the narrow street by some cantering donkey, or knocked down by some tall camel laden with heavy boxes, as he stands staring at the unwonted scene—his whole attention riveted on the every-day life of an Oriental city. . . . But with all its novel sights and sounds—which, as his first specimen of an Eastern city, must leave an indelible impression on the stranger's mind—Alexandria is but semi-Oriental at least, and no more resembles Cairo than Calais is to be compared to Paris.* So again at the railway station, as sketched by another writer, is found a similar mixture of East and West, of the old and the new: "A motley crowd of wily Greeks, dusky Arabs, and soft-featured Syrians ferments before you; men, women and children in every variety of costume and no costume; water-sellers, bread-sellers persistently pestering everybody; ghostly women in white, visible as human by their flashing dark eyes and naked feet, flitting hither and thither in frantic search for a lost husband or friend. You will see solemn Turks and crafty-looking Jews, and perhaps a batch of recruits for the Khedive's army—Abyssinians, fine, brawny, powerful fellows in white tunics, with bare black legs, chubby faces,

* *The Nile and its Banks*, i. 20, 21.

and dark lustrous eyes” *—the whole jostling with an equally noisy if less picturesque crowd of resident foreigners, Cook’s tourists, or Indian passengers *en route* for the P. and O. steamer at Suez. The revival of the commercial prosperity of Alexandria has been followed by a corresponding recovery of its population, from 6,000—to which, according to Savary’s estimate, it had dwindled less than a century ago—to more than 212,000, the official reckoning in 1872. Of this total about 48,000 are Europeans, who only numbered some 7,000 at the death of Mehemet Ali, the motley remainder being made up of Arabs, Turks, Copts, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Maltese, and Levantines of every shade of mixed blood from Tunis to the Dardanelles.

Ramleh, which a few years ago was merely a summer village on the coast, four miles outside the Rosetta gate, has expanded into a suburban town, with two railways running into it, and is now the permanent residence of a considerable colony of Alexandrian Europeans, whose clustering villas and luxuriant gardens have converted what, little more than a decade ago, was a strip of desert sand, into one of the prettiest marine retreats in the Levant. Nearer town, along the banks of the Mahmoudieh canal, still finer mansions, embowered in yet greener gardens—here as blooming in January as any in England in May—lodge chiefly the Greek and Jewish magnates of the cotton market and the Bourse; while on Fridays and Sundays the excellent road in front is crowded with equestrians and carriage riders, as varied in their mounts—from donkeys to *demi-sang* Arabians and English highsteppers—as in nationality, creeds, and shades of colour.

The trade of Alexandria was expected to suffer greatly from the opening of the Suez Canal, but although the

* *Under Egyptian Palms*, pp. 3, 4.

greater part of the old overland traffic has been diverted into the new channel, the steady development in the general commerce of the country has more than maintained the flourishing statistics of this its principal port. Thus, while in 1868, the year preceding the opening of the Canal, the total number of vessels of all flags which entered Alexandria was 2,616, it had risen in 1873 to 2,736,* notwithstanding the rapid annual increase in the navigation through the Isthmus. The traffic inland, therefore, with Cairo and Upper Egypt, both by the Nile—through the Mahmoudieh canal to Atfeh, on the Rosetta branch—and the railway, now consists almost wholly of local imports and exports, and no longer in large part of transit trade with India. Of this, the weekly Brindisi mail and the passengers who accompany it now alone pass through Alexandria.

From Alexandria a morning “express” now makes the run of a hundred and thirty-one miles to Cairo in four hours and a half, the omnibus trains, at lower fares, taking six hours. After passing Ramleh, the line leaves the cultivated land, and runs through the eastern shallows of Lake Mareotis, which stretches away like a vast lagoon to the right—in winter, during full Nile, rising almost to a level with the embankment, but in summer presenting over nearly half its area a wide expanse of swampy marsh, peopled with pelicans, which rise like dense white clouds as the train rushes past. Again out on *terra firma*, the track lies through a perfectly flat expanse of teeming corn and cotton land, reticulated everywhere with irrigating channels, and dotted at frequent intervals with the clusters of mud huts and their sheltering clumps of palm-

* Numerically falling, however, in 1875 to 2,473; but as nearly half of these were large steamers, there was a considerable actual increase in the tonnage. These figures also exclude the Khedivieh steamers.