

trees that form an Arab village, with or without, according to their size, the relief of little white-washed cupolas and dumpy minarets, but all with their raised dove-cots to collect the precious pigeons' dung. Two other stations are rapidly passed, but no halt is made till Damanhour is reached, thirty-eight miles from Alexandria; and then again twenty miles further on, over another dead level of highly-cultivated plain, the Rosetta branch of the Nile is crossed, and the actual Delta entered. Thence, on past Kafr-es-Zayat and Tanta—famous, besides its thriving trade, for its annual fairs and fêtes in honour of Sheikh Achmet, a renowned santon—over a dozen more miles of the richest country to the Damietta branch, crossed at Benha junction, beyond which the express does not again stop before reaching Cairo, nearly thirty-two miles further on. But long before this the desert is sighted, stretching eastward to the great canal, "like a coast of cloud-land veiled in an amethyst light;" and westward, beyond the main channel of the Nile, away over the sandy wastes of Libya to Tripoli and the Fezzan. And then the Pyramids, looming against the western horizon, disappointing at first in their seeming littleness fifteen or twenty miles off, but, when approached nearer, overpowering in their massive and solemn grandeur beyond any other sight in Egypt. Simultaneously, to the left, come into view the Mokattem hills, on the last spur of which the Citadel and the tapering minarets of Mehemet Ali's mosque first attract the eye; and ten minutes later, past the lonely obelisk of Heliopolis, and through a suburban approach of pretty villas and luxuriant gardens, the train rolls into the "great Al Cairo."

In no part of Egypt are the changes effected within the past score of years so striking as in and around the capital. During the journey up from the sea, the sights and

sounds that meet the eye and the ear are much the same as of yore, but on nearing Cairo a complete transformation scene begins. What in Saïd Pasha's time were cropped fields round the desolate railway station, are now enclosed ornamental gardens, crowded with bijou country houses, and, from the terminus itself into the city, a new town with well laid-out streets flanked by handsome European houses and busy second-class shops. Inside what was formerly the old mural gate, the changes are greater still, and the surprise of the returning *habitué* culminates as he alights from Shepheard's, no longer from donkey-back—though donkeys are as numerous as ever—but from a well-appointed hotel omnibus or hackney-carriage, or proceeds a few hundred yards further on to the rival hostelry of the New Hotel. Rip Van Winkle rubs his eyes, but can hardly recognise the once familiar scene; the old has everywhere given way to the new, and where, twenty years ago, stretched the Esbekieh of those days with its huge sycamores, its stagnant canal, and its fringe of tumble-down native houses, he now sees files of imposing stone buildings, broad macadamised streets, and—enclosed within half its former dimensions—a new Esbekieh, so transformed, that if the ghost of Mehemet Ali could re-visit glimpses of the Cariene moon, it would be hard set to recognise the old *meidan* in the new public garden that now occupies its site.

Though inferior in historical interest and commercial importance to Alexandria, Cairo much exceeds its great sea-port in size and number of inhabitants, and excels it still more in all the attributes of an Oriental city. Founded in A.D. 969, by Gowher, a general of the first Fatimite Caliph, it lies in a sloping plain between the east bank of the Nile and a spur of the Mokattem hills, about a dozen miles above the fork of the Delta. Five years

later it became the capital, instead of Fostat, which Amrou, three centuries earlier, had built close by on the site of the Roman town and camp of Babylon, and which, for distinction, then received its still retained name of Masrel-Ateekah, or Old Cairo. Boulak, the river port of the new town, was formerly more than a mile distant, but the separating space has been nearly all built over, and the city now covers an area of about four square miles. Although nearly a third of this has been modernised by the improvements effected during the past dozen years, and which are still in progress, the new harmonises sufficiently with the old to leave the whole still indisputably the queen of Eastern cities. In some respects less purely Oriental than Damascus, it yet presents a much more lively and varied picture of Eastern life than the solemn and secluded capital of Syria, and in this regard also as far surpasses Constantinople as Bagdad excels Smyrna. In Cairo only are now to be found the scene and most of the *dramatis personæ* of the "Thousand and One Nights," within stone's throw of nineteenth century civilisation in many of its latest results. The short quarter of an hour's drive from the railway station transports you into the very world of the Caliphs—the same now as when Nouredin, Abou-Shamma, Bedreddin Hassan, Ali Cogia, the Jew Physician, and all the rest of them played their parts any time since or before Saladin. The old city itself is still a labyrinth of dark, dirty, intricate lanes and alleys, in many of which two donkeys can hardly pass abreast, and whose toppling upper storeys so nearly meet as to shut out all but the narrowest streak of the cloudless sky; while the masquerading-looking crowd below differs in nothing from that which Warburton saw a quarter of a century ago: "Ladies wrapped closely in white veils, women of the lower classes carrying

water on their heads, and covered only with a long blue garment that reveals too plainly the exquisite symmetry of the young and the hideous deformity of the elders; here are camels perched upon by black slaves, magpied with white napkins round their head and loins; there, are portly merchants, with turbans and long pipes, smoking on their knowing-looking donkeys; here, an Arab dashes through the crowd [not quite] at full gallop, or a European, still more haughtily, shoves aside the pompous-looking, bearded throng; now a bridal, or a circumcising procession squeezes along, with music that might madden a drummer; now the running footmen of some Bey or Pasha endeavour to jostle you to the wall, unless they recognise you as an Englishman—one of that race whom they think the devil himself can't frighten or teach manners to."*

The whole city is divided into ten quarters (*toums*), under the immediate supervision of as many sheikhs, and for the most part separated from each other by gates that are closed at night. They are—the Esbekieh, or modern European quarter, in which, with the adjoining new district of Ismaïlieh, the chief municipal improvements and embellishments have been carried out; the Bab-Sharyé quarter, Abdeen (the Cairene Sublime Porte), Darb-el-Gammamiz, Darb-el-Ahmar, Gemelyé, Chessun, Kaliffa, Boulak, and Old Cairo. Of these the Esbekieh, with the Ismaïlieh and part of Abdeen, now forms a handsome European town, intersected by broad, well-paved, and gas-lit boulevards, flanked by shops and villas worthy of the Riviera, owned for the most part by Pashas, Beys, and wealthy foreigners to whom the Khedive has granted free building sites on the sole condition of the houses erected being of a certain architectural merit. Up to the

* *The Crescent and the Cross*, p. 46.

time of Mehemet Ali the whole of this great square was a marshy waste, submerged during the inundation and a half dry swamp during the remainder of the year. The old reformer drained it by means of a circular canal, and raised the enclosed area above the level of the yearly flood. But during the reigns of Abbas and Saïd nothing further was done to improve the quarter, and it failed to attract a reputable population until, in 1867, the complete transformation of the neighbourhood was begun by the present Khedive. Under the hands of a skilful French landscape gardener the Esbekieh itself was entirely remodelled; the narrow canal gave place to an ornamental lake, and the whole grew into a miniature Parc Monceaux, in which the rare luxury of green turf, well-kept shrubberies, shady walks, artificial grottoes with cool rippling cascades, cafés—native and European—*al fresco* theatres, and capital military bands, now make up incomparably the finest public garden in the East. Concurrently with the embellishments of this little central park, new streets, boulevards, and public building sprung up all round it. On the western side already stood Shephard's hotel, no longer British but in name, and a few hundred yards beyond an English company had built the New Hotel, since purchased by the Khedive, and now under French management rivalling its older neighbour as the second best hostelry in Egypt. North and east imposing blocks of European shops and private houses, fronted mostly by deep shady arcades, overlook the garden on these sides; while southwards, the new opera-house and the French theatre behind it, with a still finer pile of private buildings and the joint Ministries of the Interior and of Public Works, complete an architectural circle worthy of any second-class European town. The principal new streets are the Boulevard Mehemet Ali,

which runs from the western end of the Moskee to the Citadel, through nearly a mile of old Arab rookeries, whose bisected interiors have been walled in by rows of well-built shops and private houses on either side; a second, which now forms the chief thoroughfare of new Cairo, from the opera-house to Abdeen; a third, at right angles to this, down through the new quarters of Ismailieh; and a fourth, past the northern end of the New Hotel, and the English church to the Nile at Boulak, where, pending the erection of the new museum, a temporary building on the river bank contains the richest and most instructive collection of Egyptian antiquities in the world, the result mainly of the labours and researches of Mariette Bey since the accession of the Khedive.

In Abdeen, the favourite winter-palace of the Khedive, his Highness has virtually the whole administration focussed into his own private cabinet, from which he may be said to personally direct the entire government of the country. His other palaces are those of Ghizereh on the left bank of the Nile, opposite Boulak; of Kasr-en-Nil, higher up on the right bank; of Ghizeh—not yet completed—near the village of the same name, opposite the island of Rhoda, which contains the famous Nilometer; of Kasr-en-Noosa, on the Shoobra-road—the long and beautiful avenue of sycamores and acacias that forms at once the “Drive” and the “Rotten Row” of Cairo—which is generally devoted to the entertainment of distinguished foreigners; and that of Shoobra, formerly the favourite residence of Mehemet Ali, from whose only surviving son, Halim Pasha, the Khedive purchased it a few years ago. The fine gardens attached to this last are one of the “sights” of the Egyptian capital.

Besides the Esbekieh, Cairo has three other large open spaces within the city boundaries—the Birket-el-Fyl,

which gives its name to one of the old central quarters ; the Roumeyleh, between the mosque of Sultan Hassan and the Citadel ; and the Kara-meidan, the chief market-place for horses, donkeys, and camels. All three of these have been cleared of the ruins and dirt that formerly encumbered them, and are now neatly-kept public squares. In another chapter mention will be made of the canals intersecting the city, of the two fine iron bridges which have been thrown across the Nile, and the massive embankment beyond the second of these along which runs the new carriage road to the Pyramids. It may be added that, besides numerous special bazaars for the different trades and handicrafts, Cairo further contains no fewer than 523 mosques—many of them *chefs-d'œuvres* of Arabian architecture, but mostly in a sad state of dilapidation—30 Christian churches, 10 Jewish synagogues, 1,300 khans, 1,200 cafés, and 70 public baths. Of the mosques, the most remarkable in point of architectural merit are—to mention them in order of age—those of Amrou, in Old Cairo, built A.D. 640 ; that of Sultan Ahmed-ebn-Tooloon (879), which embodied the principle of the pointed arch three centuries before its introduction into Europe, and which the late Lady Duff-Gordon—with characteristic gush, though hardly with exaggeration—calls “an absolute jewel of perfection and purity, perfectly simple, and yet with details of *guipure* and embroidery in stone which one wishes to kiss, they are so lovely ;” but this mosque is now in so ruinous a condition that it is no longer in use ; those of Seté-el-Zeinab (910) and the Sultan Hakem (1007), the fanatical patron of the Druses ; the Hassaneyeh (1354), the grandest mosque in Cairo, which is said to have cost 700,000*l.*, and is perhaps the most perfect specimen of Arab architecture to be found anywhere in the East ; the El-Ghouny (1522), which gives its name to the fine

bazaar at the extremity of which it stands ; and, most famous of all, the El-Azhar, which, originally founded by Gowher, the general of Moez, in 970, has been several times rebuilt and enlarged, till its last restoration in 1762 ; it is now the chief university of Arabdom, and the great divinity school for all Islam. The scandalous abuse of the Wakf trusts has so reduced the revenue for the support of these once splendid buildings, that most of them are now in a sad state of dilapidation and decay—to the lover of art, one of the tristest sights that strikes the eye in the Egyptian capital.

High over all these towers “El-Kaleh”—the Citadel—built by Saladin in 1166, on the last rocky projection of the Mokattem range, which here terminates abruptly, close by the Roumeyleh and Kara-meidan squares. This fine fortress is in itself a small town—comprising besides the barracks for a strong garrison, the Ministry of War, the old palace of Mehemet Ali—now only used for State receptions—the large rather than elegant mosque of Oriental alabaster built by him on the model of those of Constantinople and which contains his own tomb, the famous Joseph’s well, the mint, a cannon-foundry, workshops, magazines, and all the other adjuncts of a great military establishment. Here, immediately inside the “Arab’s Gate,” the northern entrance to the fortress, was the scene of the Mamlouk massacre in 1811, respecting which political moralists have pronounced such conflicting judgments, but the practical effect of which was to replace the anarchy of centuries by order and settled government. To most visitors, however, the chief attraction of the old stronghold is the magnificence of the view obtained from its ramparts. Immediately below lies Cairo in all its Oriental picturesqueness, its domes, minarets, and feathery palm-clumps rising clear and sharp in this most pellucid of atmospheres ; be-

hind, the chain of the Mokattem, trending in broken links to the Red Sea: northwards, beyond the solitary obelisk that marks the site of Heliopolis, the luxuriant vegetation of the Delta stretching away to the lakes that separate it from the Mediterranean; while, west and south, the eye takes in the sacred and mysterious Nile, dotted far into the distance with sails that flash in the sun; the time-defying Pyramids standing out phantom-like against the grey background of the Libyan desert; the palm-groves that wave over buried Memphis and its sole relic, the prone statue of Rameses; the smaller but still older pyramids of Abousheir, Sakkara, and Dashour; and, beyond these, the winding valley of Upper Egypt losing itself in the hazy distance half way up to Thebes. The splendour of this panorama, as seen by daylight, is only surpassed by the incredible beauty of a sunset viewed from the same spot, when the crimson haze of the short Egyptian twilight bathes the whole in that wondrous "after-glow," to which neither Hildebrand nor Holman Hunt have done complete justice. There is, indeed, no other view in Egypt, and few in the world, to compare with that which delights the eye and feeds the imagination from this spot.

Since the establishment of order in Egypt by the suppression of the Mamlouks, the population of Cairo has greatly increased. During the French occupation it numbered only 260,000, but before the death of Mehemet Ali it had increased to nearly 300,000, and at the date of the latest official returns, in 1872, it had further swelled to upwards of 350,000; of whom about 260,000 are native Muslims, 30,000 Copts, some 20,000 Abyssinians, Nubians, and other Soudanis, 5,000 Turks, 10,000 Jews, 30,000 Syrians and other Levantines, and nearly 20,000 foreigners. As already mentioned, Cairo forms a separate government, administered by a governor and deputy-governor, with the

aid of a chief Cadi, a correctional magistrate—the Zabit—and an efficient municipal police. All the modern parts of the city are now well lit with gas (introduced in 1870), and a French water company pumps water from the Nile near Old Cairo, and at Boulak into reservoirs at Abbasieh, and distributes thence an abundant supply of excellent water, ample for all purposes of domestic uses, street watering, and garden irrigation. The sanitary police is however still very defective, and not alone in the old town, but even in open spaces of the new quarters, both the eye and the nose meet with constant cause of offence. The public cost of gas and water, as also the deficit on the theatres, is defrayed out of the city octroi, which produces nearly 350,000*l.* a year.

The social attractions and conveniences of Cairo have kept pace with its municipal improvements. Travellers are now no longer dependent on a single hotel, nor are foreign residents forced to burrow in the old tumble-down tenements of the native town. For the former, Shephard's has been supplemented by the New Hotel, the Hôtel du Nil, the Hôtel d'Orient, and half a dozen other minor guest-houses, adapted to all pockets and national tastes; while for the latter, the villas in the new Ismailieh quarter, and the more massive piles round three sides of the Esbekieh and down the Fagála on the road to Abbasieh, afford every sort of residential accommodation, from a detached modern house *entre cour et jardin* to a spacious family flat, or a modest bachelor *appartement* of two or three rooms. Good carriage roads, too, lead everywhere from Abbasieh and Heliopolis to Old Cairo or the Pyramids, and on Fridays and Sundays especially the splendid drive through the long avenue of arching acacias and sycamores on the Shoutra road is as lively as, and a hundred times more picturesque than Hyde Park in May or