

CHAPTER X.

PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

Foundations of Present System laid by the Caliphs—Decadence under the Mamlouks—Revival under Mehemet Ali—His Military Schools—His Neglect of Education after the Peace—Further Decline under Abbas Pasha—Greater Liberality of Saïd—Revival under the Khedive—Three Systems now at Work—The State Schools—Girls' Schools, their Great Success—The Blind and Normal Schools—Municipal Civil Schools—Mosque Colleges—The Azhar—Arab Primary Schools—Native Non-Moslem Schools—Foreign Missionary Schools—Aggregate of the whole—Educational Level of Egypt relatively to Europe.

THE foundations of the present system of public instruction in Egypt were laid by the Caliphs, who first at Alexandria and afterwards at Cairo—as in Syria, at Baghdad, and in Spain—fostered learning and the arts with a munificence unequalled by either their Greek or Roman predecessors, and which stands in still more marked historic contrast with the neglect of both by their Tartar successors of Stamboul. Besides themselves founding many great libraries and colleges for the higher education, they encouraged the endowment of secondary and primary schools by private liberality, till every town and almost every village of the country had its *medresseh* or *kouttabb*. In this way originated the system of *wakfs* (pious foundations) which threw the ægis of religious protection over all property devoted to these and other charitable uses, and secured it against the spoliation from which in after times no mere private estate was safe in either Egypt or Turkey. Thus it was that while Europe was sunk in the intellectual gloom of the Middle Ages,

Egypt again became the home of science and philosophy, which flourished there as, after the decline of the Baghdad Caliphate, they flourished nowhere else but in the Moorish colleges of Spain. With the fall of the Fatimites this splendid patronage ceased, and thence on through the turbulent Mamlouk dynasties that followed, and the still more anarchic times which succeeded the Turkish conquest, Egyptian learning steadily declined till the *savants* who accompanied Bonaparte's expedition found even in Cairo hardly a trace of even the letters or art that were rivalling those of Cordova and Seville when Peter preached the first Crusade. The wide learning once taught at the Azhar had dwindled to lectures on the Koran and the traditions of the Prophet, the study of the Arabic language, calligraphy, and elementary arithmetic, and geography; while most of the colleges attached to the other great mosques had sunk nearly to a level with the primary schools, which in their turn, although—thanks to their *wakfs*—still numerous, had ceased to teach anything beyond the recitation of the Koran. The French occupation was too short, and its main work too purely military, to leave room for any attempt at educational reform. The country was exhaustively surveyed, and many administrative improvements begun, but in the matter of public instruction Menou left it in 1801 as Bonaparte had found it three years before. Nearly a quarter of a century later, however, the ambition and military necessities of Mehemet Ali supplied the impulse to a revival which, although discouraged by Abbas Pasha and only feebly assisted by Saïd, has attained proportions during the present reign that fairly entitle it to be called the intellectual *renaissance* of Egypt.

The first difficulty encountered by Mehemet Ali, in resolving after his successful Wahabite campaigns to

complete the organisation of his army on a European basis, was the want of officers, both combatant and administrative; and to supply this he opened in 1825 a staff school at Cairo, under the direction of an intelligent young Turk, whom he had had specially trained in France with a view to this reform. This was followed by a medical school for the education of army surgeons, by special schools for military engineering, gunnery, veterinary medicine, languages, practical mechanics, and agriculture, the professors in which were mostly Frenchmen or natives educated in France, and the whole of the pupils, as they became fit, were drafted into the State service. The success of these institutions encouraged an extension of the experiment, and during the next two or three years many Government primary schools were opened in Cairo, at Alexandria, and in the chief provincial towns, as nurseries for the higher seminaries. Education in the whole was not merely free, but the pupils were lodged, clothed, fed, and even paid a small monthly wage at the expense of the Government. The result fully answered the expectations of the Pasha. Within little more than five years from the opening of his first school, a numerous staff of sufficiently-trained officers enabled him to complete his scheme of military reform, and in 1832 he began his rebellion against the Porte, with perhaps the best-organised Eastern army that had till then ever taken the field. The victories of Homs, of Beylan, of Koniah, and Nezib, again, on a larger scale than in the Hedjaz, proved the immense advantage of the new over the old system of tactics and drill; and while the war lasted the schools which had contributed so much to these results continued to receive liberal State support. With the reduction of the army, however, after the peace of 1840-1, these military seminaries lost their *raison*

d'être, and with it practically ceased the Viceroy's interest in educational reform. The schools themselves indeed remained open, but the movement languished till, from having numbered more than 20,000 pupils, they reckoned only 11,000 at his death. Under the reactionary Abbas the whole were closed, and for nearly six years public instruction in Egypt was again reduced to the elementary curriculum of the mosque colleges and primary schools. Saïd Pasha, more liberal, re-opened several of the special seminaries, and munificently assisted the foreign schools in Cairo and Alexandria, which, as we shall see, have rendered good service to Egyptian education, but he lacked the energy to prosecute the reform begun by his father; and at his death in 1863 the medical school in Old Cairo was the only one of the Government academies in at all prosperous operation. Like his predecessor, too, he had done nothing whatever to improve the condition of the old Arab primary schools, which remained as the Mamlouks—it might be said the Saracens—had left them.

In the matter of public instruction, therefore, as in much else, the present Viceroy, on his accession, found before him a wide field for reforming activity, and he soon disclosed a policy of working it, not merely in the interest of the army, but of the whole population. The military academies were reorganised on a basis of much greater efficiency than under Mehemet Ali, with the result, it may be here mentioned—as fuller description of these army schools does not properly fall within the scope of this chapter—that except such as were commissioned during the preceding reigns, there is not now an illiterate officer in the Egyptian army, nor is even a corporal promoted from the ranks without a knowledge of at least the “three Rs.” A brief sketch of the three sys-

tems of scholastic machinery now at work in Egypt, over and above these military academies, will convey some idea of what has been done thus far for popular education. These are (1) the schools established and wholly or in part supported by the Government; (2) the old mosque colleges and Arab primary schools; and (3) the schools belonging to the non-Mussulman native communities and the various foreign colonies which, although not under State control, are very liberally assisted by the Khedive.

The first of these groups comprises nine specially "Government Schools," the pupils of which being fed, clothed, and lodged by the State, are for the most part, at the close of their course, drafted into one or other branch of the public service; a School for the Blind; two Girls' Schools, a Normal School; and twenty-three Municipal Schools, which supply a good primary and secondary education gratuitously to those who cannot afford to pay for it, and at a very moderate cost to those who can. The nine special schools are—the Polytechnic, the Book-keeping and Surveying, the Law and Languages, two Preparatory, the Industrial, the Medical, and Pharmaceutic, the Midwifery, and a third Preparatory at Alexandria, the eight others being all at Cairo. Although registered separately, the first three of these and one of the two Cairene preparatory schools are located in the same building, and are in reality rather divisions of one great establishment than distinct institutions. In the Polytechnic section—the most advanced of the whole, but which last year reckoned only thirty-three pupils with thirteen professors—the course of study extends over six years, and includes the higher mathematics, chemistry and physics, geology, mechanics, Arabic, English or French (at the option of the student), geography, history, and drawing. The instruction given in

this school—which, and the next two, are grouped together in the spacious old building of the Garb-el-Gamamîs*—is in all respects thorough, and the results, as shown at the yearly examinations, do real credit to its teaching staff, only one of whom, the drawing-master, is a European. The Book-keeping and Surveying school educates another class of employés, who are instructed, as its name indicates, in account-keeping, land-surveying, Arabic, French or English, writing, and drawing. It last year registered only twenty pupils, all resident, with the disproportionate staff of twelve professors, of whom the same drawing-master as in the Polytechnic was the only Frank. In the Law and Languages School the course is four years, and comprises Mohammedan and comparative European law—with now especial reference to the mixed code recently framed for the new tribunals—history, the Arabic, Turkish, Persian, French, and Italian languages, and Arabic and Roman writing taught by eleven professors (the director and one other only being Europeans) to thirty-five students, of whom twenty were residents. Most of the native judges and subordinate officers of the new Courts have been educated in this school, which must acquire increased importance as a nursery for both magistrates and pleaders, as the reforms now in course of experiment take root and prepare the way for a purely national judicature.

* In the same building, which also lodges the Ministry of Public Instruction, is the splendid Oriental library, founded in 1871 by Ali Pasha Moubarek, which is especially rich in illuminated and other MSS. of the Koran and its commentaries, collected mainly from the principal Cairene mosques. "Toutes les splendeurs de l'arabesque," justly says Dor Bey, "tout brillant coloris des miniatures Orientales, tous les fantastiques caprices des majuscules Arabes se sont donné rendez-vous dans ces larges in folio, qui, par le fini du travail et la beauté des couleurs, surpassent de beaucoup les magnifiques missels ou livres d'heures qui font l'ornement de nos bibliothèques, les dessinateurs d'ornementation y trouveraient une mine inépuisable des richesses."

Of more immediate, both official and popular, value, however, is the Medical School at Kasr-el-Ain, which, founded in 1827 by Mehemet Ali, closed by Abbas Pasha in 1849, and reopened by Saïd in 1856, has since then, under the teaching of such celebrities as Professors Clot Bey, Reyer, Lautner, Bilharz, Griesinger, and other French and German specialists, restored Egyptian medicine to the rank of a science, and replaced the Frankish quacks of the last generation by a native faculty which has no equal in the East. The Mohammedan prejudice against dissection has here long been got over, and the latest results of Western pathology having been freely accepted, this college of Kasr-el-Ain now yearly turns out physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries, many of whom would not discredit our best European schools. Its curriculum extends over five years, the first two of which are devoted to further pursuit of the general education already begun in the lower schools, and the remaining three to exclusively medical studies. Last year its classes—taught by eighteen native professors, mostly educated in Europe—were attended by 195 pupils, of whom 175 were residents, bound at the close of their course to enter the army or the civil service, and twenty independent outsiders who, though paying nothing for their instruction, are free to follow private civilian practice where they will. Up till recently, a relic of the old militarism of Mehemet Ali still survived in this institution, in the manner in which its classes were recruited. The resident vacancies were annually filled by an arbitrary draft of youths from the preparatory *lycées*, three-fourths of whom were apportioned by lot to the medical, and the remainder to the pharmaceutical section of the school, without reference to individual taste or aptitude in any way. This method of impressment, which was

applied also more or less to the Polytechnic and Surveying Schools, may have been necessary forty years ago, when Government education meant only enforced preparation for the army, and was dreaded accordingly; but as this is no longer so, and education is now becoming every year more popular for its own sake, the practice operated injuriously alike upon the schools and on the branches of the public service of which they formed the nurseries. Amongst numerous other reforms, the present Minister has abolished this arbitrary method of allotments, and the pupils are now permitted to choose and specially prepare for their own careers. A large and excellently organised hospital in connection with this school furnishes ample means of clinical instruction to the students, and gratuitous medical treatment to all comers, irrespective of race, nationality, or religion. Attached to it also is the School of Midwifery, in which thirty young native women, also wholly maintained by the Government, are taught reading, writing, arithmetic, the elements of medical science, and obstetrics. After passing through a three years' course of instruction, they are certificated and sent into the provinces, where the common prejudice of Arabs and Copts shuts the door against male practitioners of this specialty. Next in importance to this flourishing medical college ranks the Industrial School at Boulak, the river port of Cairo, which though founded only in 1867, is already, as an agent of technical education, rivalling the success of its mature neighbour of Kasr-el-Ain. Just as the latter fitly adjoins the military and civil hospital, so this Boulak school forms part of the great establishment which groups together the Government printing-office, the cannon-foundry, and the railway workshops; and here again the instruction given, during a course of at first three, but now of five years, is

most complete. Besides mathematics, chemistry, drawing, topography, and English or French, the pupils are taught nearly every branch of practical mechanics, but especially engineering. Last year they numbered forty-four, all residents, with a teaching staff of six natives and three Europeans. The passed students of this school have already largely replaced foreigners as engineers and mechanical directors on the various public works and in the Government and Daira factories, in which also the working hands are now almost entirely natives. Of the two metropolitan Preparatory Schools whose pupils, after an elementary course of four years, pass to one or other of these higher institutions, that in the same building with the Polytechnic, Surveying, and Law Schools last year registered an attendance of 192 pupils, of whom 157 were residents, with a staff of thirty-four native and four European masters. The instruction here given includes rudimentary mathematics, geography, history, drawing—an accomplishment, it may be remarked, which is taught with great success in all these schools—Arabic and European writing, and the Arabic, Turkish, English, French, or German languages. The other school of this class, also in Cairo—in the old Mamlouk palace that lodged Bonaparte's short-lived Institut d'Egypte—was one of the earliest scholastic creations of Ismaïl Pasha, having been founded in 1864, the year after his accession, and in respect of organisation and efficiency is surpassed by no other school of its kind in Egypt. Its course, which also extends over four years, is similar to, but a degree more elementary than, that of the school last noticed, and for the Moslem lads of its lower forms includes instruction in the Koran. Its muster-roll last year showed the large attendance of 539 pupils, only sixty-nine of whom were non-resident; of its staff of thirty-

four masters but two are Europeans. The third of this triad of preparatory schools is at Alexandria, and also dates from 1864. In organisation and course of instruction it is a close counterpart of the second, with, however, only 298 pupils (twenty-three outsiders) and a teaching staff of twenty-one, of whom only the drawing-master is a European.

These nine special schools thus collectively educate 1,386 pupils, 1,218 of whom are residents—taught by a net staff of 136 masters, allowance being made for twenty-two doing double duty. For the year this is a diminution of forty-nine in the number of pupils as compared with 1874.

More interesting, however, than the whole of these male seminaries, as an evidence of progress and of the lead Egypt is taking in Eastern civilisation, are the two Girls' Schools, which, though not yet three years in existence, are now admirably educating nearly 450 Moslem, Coptic, and other girls as, since the Hegira, women in the East have never been educated before. It is to the Princess Tshesma Haft Khanum, the third wife of the Khedive, that the initiative of this great reform is due. Three years ago the only public schools for girls in Egypt were that conducted with exemplary self-sacrifice by Miss Whately, and another by ladies of the American mission. But these, although attended by a few Moslem children, were but as a drop in the ocean for the great mass of the Arab population. The deeply-rooted popular prejudice against female education had, however, baffled every attempt of the Government to supply this primary condition of social reform, till, in the spring of 1873, the third wife* of the Khedive lent the prestige of her sex and her

* It may be here remarked that although the Khedive himself, who was reared under the social customs of the old *régime*, has three wives, his sons