

me—the ear of God hear me—the Word of God give me sweet talk—the hand of God defend me—the way of God guide me. Christ be with me—Christ before me—Christ after me—Christ in me—Christ under me—Christ over me—Christ on my right hand—Christ on my left hand—Christ on this side—Christ on that side—Christ at my back—Christ in the heart of every person to whom I speak—Christ in the mouth of every person who speaks to me—Christ in the eye of every person who looks upon me—Christ in the ear of every person who hears me to-day.”

H. LAW.

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ART. II.—EGYPT AS IT IS.

THE interest felt in Egypt is much greater now than it was some twenty or thirty years ago; and of course the facilities for travelling, and the influx of tourists, make it far better known. Yet a cursory view of a country, taken by strangers ignorant of the language, &c., gives but a very faint idea of anything beyond the merest outside; and besides, thousands of our countrymen cannot obtain even this cursory view. English libraries, however, abound in works on Egypt—works of every degree of merit, from the admirable and reliable volumes of Sir Gardner Wilkinson, Lane, and others of the same class, down to the shallow observations of some youthful traveller who has accompanied a “Cook’s party” of excursionists for a three weeks’ trip on the Nile.

How is it, then, that after all, we know but very little of the people and their ways, or even of the country? Probably it is the rapid life and the less studious disposition (of the average class, that is to say) in this generation; so this number, especially of young people, scarcely ever really *read* anything longer than a magazine article. A solid book is merely glanced over. Otherwise, how should we hear such questions as these—“Are the Egyptians a black race?” “Do they speak always in Coptic?” “Do you understand the Egyptian language?” “Are Copts Mohammedans or Christians?” &c. &c. A few observations from one resident more than eighteen years in the country may therefore be not without interest, in spite of the mass of information within reach.

The people demand our first attention. They consist (besides the foreign inhabitants, who are very numerous, and quite distinct from the natives and from each other), of three divisions: namely, the Copts, the remnant of the old Christian Egyptians who escaped the sword of the Moslem invaders, and remained faithful to their religion—the Mohammedan Egyptians, and the Turks. The second of these classes, the Moslem Egyptians, constitute by far the greater number of the inhabitants, and are

descended from the Arab invaders, mingled with the native Egyptians who conformed to the religion of their conquerors through fear, and who must have been very numerous. The pressure on them was strong, and their language was driven out of the country by the enforced use of the Arabic tongue, not only in all legal documents, &c., but in the schools; so that Coptic soon became a dead language, only kept up by a few learned men; and though used in the Coptic churches, it is even less generally understood than Latin among Roman Catholics.

The generality of Moslem and Coptic Egyptians are not outwardly different from each other in type. They are dark-complexioned; in the northern provinces not more so than Italians or Spaniards, though black eyes are more universal. In the "upper country," as it is called, the peasants are much browner, almost approaching to mahogany-colour in skin, especially when exposed to the sun. In the cities a fair-haired person is now and then seen among the Egyptians, but it always appears that such are the children or grandchildren of a Circassian slave-wife; or if Christians, descended from an intermarriage with a Greek family, which, though not very common, does take place occasionally, as the Coptic and Greek Churches resemble one another closely.

There is a branch of the Coptic Church which has entered into communion with the Church of Rome, retaining, like the United Greeks, the marriage of priests. The greater number of Copts, however, are under their own Patriarch, who is always chosen from the inmates of one of the monasteries, and is also the head of the Abyssinian Church.

Formerly, the Copts were very much oppressed, and subjected to humiliating restrictions, even their dress being ordered by law (they were obliged to wear black turbans, instead of white or coloured); but these things are of the past: the Copts now having almost, if not quite, the same advantages as the Moslems.

The Turks, though a smaller minority by far than the Copts, are yet a very important one, as they are the latest conquerors of this oft-conquered land; and the "lion's share" of wealth and the richest portions of land are accordingly retained by them. But it is strange how little they have intermingled with the people of the country. They speak Turkish still in their families, and retain their dress and habits of life with scarcely any modification. The harems of wealthy Turks are supplied with Circassian slaves, and when a free wife is taken, she is almost always a Turkish lady. Being the dominant Power, they are looked on as a sort of aristocracy, and everything Turkish is considered fine and grand; but it is singular that their admiration does not lead to assimilation. The Arabic language reigns in every school, and Turkish is only learned by a few: French in fact, is more used latterly, in many ways.

There are in the larger cities, as before observed, a considerable number of foreigners, especially at Alexandria; but for the most part they keep entirely distinct, the Syrians excepted, who having the same language (Arabic), of course mix more with the natives of the country, though intermarriages are not very frequent. The Arabic-speaking Jews are a large body, and are similar in dress and many of their habits to the Egyptians, but their belief keeps them, as ever, a people apart.

Egypt is a country full of interest, in spite of the monotony of a great part of the scenery. The northern provinces are all a dead flat, which in a cold, grey atmosphere, would be absolutely dreary. Not a hedgerow to break the level, as in flat parts of England—no smiling village, with its church-spire peeping from among venerable yew-trees, and its white parsonage house clustered over with roses, to enliven the monotony; the vast plain, broken only by groups of miserable mud huts, stretches before the eye, scorched with heat in summer, and flooded in autumn till it looks like a marsh. Yet such is the magic of the atmosphere, that colour, light, and shade make a considerable degree of beauty where one would not expect it. The purple shadows on a half-ruined mosque—the group of palms waving their feathery foliage near the poor mud village—the rich green of the clover-fields, glowing like emeralds in the sunshine—the clear blue of the sky, and the soft pink and amber of the desert in the far distance, delight the painter's eye. Further south there is more variety; the Nile valley is bounded by cliffs on one side, and the Mokattern range stretch away into the desert, presenting all the changing hues that exist in dry, pure air at different times of day. In the neighbourhood of the cities, or wherever there are *abbadeyehs* (or farms), there is foliage enough, for trees grow rapidly; and the mulberry, and sycamore fig, and an Indian tree called *lebich* (introduced by Mehemet Ali, and prized for its quick growth and delightful shade), are abundant, as well as gardens of oranges and other fruits, and countless groves of palms, which in the early autumn (when very few travellers come to Egypt) are extremely beautiful, hung with immense clusters of dates, some kinds of a rich gold colour, others like polished red coral. Later in the year the luxuriant fields of maize, cotton, and sugar-canes, make the landscape rich with "garlands gay, of various green."

But it is the Nile on which the special charms of Egyptian scenery are concentrated, and not scenery alone, but the interest of the whole country. The Nile is its pulse, on which the well-being of the whole frame depends. In summer the people's talk is of their hopes and fears as to whether it will be a high or a low Nile; from the wealthy pasha with acres upon acres of sugar and corn and cotton, down to the peasant whose little

plot is cultivated in the sweat of his own brow, all the root crops depend on the Nile,—or, as the common people always say, “the sea;” for they denominate the ocean by the name of “the salt sea.” The word “river” is rarely used among them at all, many of the ignorant women especially do not even know the word in their own tongue; and the name of “Nile,” though understood, is rarely heard from a peasant. It is a wonderful river, coming down from its distant mountain birthplace, far beyond the dominion of Egypt, and overflowing its banks just at the time when the land would be a desert but for its fertilising streams. The canals that intersect the Nile valley might be extended over a far larger space, and no doubt were so in ancient days, as the district now under cultivation is far too limited to make it conceivable that other countries should have been so largely supplied with corn from Egypt as appears to have been the case. But the desert sand creeps over the country, unless kept at bay, as surely, though more slowly, than water flows; and wherever canals are not kept up, if the land be *higher* than the level of the water-flow at the inundation, of course the “fruitful land becomes a desert,” as says the Psalmist.

It seems to the observer who can judge of the art of irrigation merely by observation, as if a better opening for reclaiming waste lands, and both giving and imparting to others valuable property, could hardly be found than by introducing some more widespread system of irrigation in the desert land bordering the rich but narrow valley of the Nile. It would, however, be necessary to carry on such an enterprise with the aid and counsel of Egyptians, as they understand better than any stranger their own soil and river, and the many peculiarities of both.

The principal cities of Egypt—Alexandria, its seaport, and Cairo, its capital—have been described so many times, that it is superfluous to add anything, perhaps, to the volumes of descriptions already existing. The foreign element has of late altered the aspect of both these towns; the first has long been swarming with foreigners from every country of southern Europe, Italy especially; but it is only of late years that Cairo has been filled with European shops, and that natives engaged in Government employments, as well as many of the better class of Copts and Syrian residents, have laid aside their gay costumes and appear in the dull greys and blacks which Europeans seem to think most suitable for this world of care and woe, and try to spread among their fellow-men with greater perseverance, or, at any rate, greater success, than they do with the extension of learning and civilisation. There are however vast multitudes, even in modern Cairo, who still don the rich and graceful garb of their ancestors.

A visit to the law courts shows a very picturesque assemblage of this kind, and amused me in its contrast to our sober black

gowns and grey wigs. The building is ancient, and the arched doorways, and long wide gallery where a crowd of persons were waiting their turn to go inside, made quite a picture.

There were a very few in European dress, but most of them wore their own costume—Arabs from Jeddo, in robes of deep crimson cloth and snowy muslin turbans—peasants from the villages, with huge mantles of brown homespun, sturdy bare arms peeping out from under them, and generally fine, handsome, bronzed faces—countrywomen, muffled in dark blue linen sheets with only the bright black eyes peering curiously at the spectator above the black face-veil: these were usually accompanied by a son or brother, but two or three were alone, except for some half-clad little children crouching at their knees as they sat in the corners of the gallery.

These lonely ones were no doubt widows, coming to besiege the judge day after day, to try and get their little rights, like the importunate widow of our Lord's parable. All over the East, a widow has hard work to get or to obtain any property at all; her brothers-in-law and all the husband's relatives generally taking the chief, if not the whole. The expressions in the Scriptures about "oppressing the widow and fatherless," are much more *realised* in the East than they can be with us. Passing through the gallery we come to a hall, with numerous rooms, small and large, opening into it, some up short flights of steps, all occupied by scribes and officials seated on divans with writing materials beside them. Small tables, indeed, there were in plenty, covered with papers, &c.; but each scribe writes on his hand, and folding back the paper, or, if it be a book, holding it up as he writes. To avoid blotting and to be able to write so beautifully as most of them do, seems quite a feat. If it be near noon, servants, black slaves, and even ragged street-sellers of provisions, enter the rooms quite freely, and deposit small trays of bread, cheese, pickles, eggs, &c., before the officials. I observed one who was in the midst of apparently an important piece of business, pause and keep the persons who were engaged with him waiting, while he coolly shelled a hard egg, and leisurely devoured the same. After which, and a draught of water, he resumed his pen and beckoned them forward again. There was not, in the three or four rooms I visited, a single European or Turkish official to be seen—all were genuine Egyptians; the chief was a fine-looking man of colossal proportions, wearing a robe of apple-green cloth with embroidered pockets, and a turban that might have been a roc's egg for size.

The leisurely way of transacting business is a disadvantage, which has, however, been modified in some degree, by the introduction of railways; and it is curious that though used to such slow ways, the people are very rarely behind time at a train, but,

on the contrary, are usually waiting long before it starts. Groups of ladies, slaves, and children, with goods tied up in cloths or great pocket-handkerchiefs, are seen sitting in corners for hours before the time; and men, literally as well as metaphorically, "smoking the pipe of expectation," sit calm and unruffled watching the bustling Frank come along with his leather portmanteau just in time to save the last bell.

In spite of slowness and waste of time, and of much mismanagement in many ways, there is a vast amount of wealth and prosperity in Egypt. The climate and soil make it extremely productive, and the distribution of property, though very unequal of course, is not more so than in other countries; while a native youth of average intelligence and very moderate education, can get employment and good wages with half the trouble and ten times the certainty, that an English lad similarly endowed can in any part of the British Isles. But the chances of being left *unpard* by some irregularity of Government—the chances of being, if a peasant, oppressed, falsely accused, overtaxed, made to pay twice over, and even cruelly beaten to extort a bribe—all this makes the condition of the working-class far less advantageous in reality than it seems at first sight, or than it *ought* to be in a land blessed with so fine a soil and climate, and where the expenses entailed by cold and wet and variable seasons do not exist.

The peasant class of modern Egyptians are naturally a quiet, cheerful, and patient race—hardworking and affectionate, and susceptible to kindness. When their fanaticism is aroused, indeed, they are violent and savage; but this is always the case with ignorant fanatics of every race.

The poorer people can rarely afford more than one wife at a time; but the extreme facility of divorce is a source of much misery. A woman is not safe from being turned out to make room for a younger wife, when her only fault is getting old; and also on a trivial quarrel a divorce often takes place, or the ill-will of some of the husband's relatives drives away a woman without any real cause. I once met a touching instance of this in a village on the Nile, when reading aloud from the Gospel to a group of women in the court of a house belonging to a Coptic family, almost the only one in that village. The master of the house had assembled his relatives and the few other Copts, who with some neighbours of the Mohammedan faith were willing to hear the Scripture; the missionary was outside the house with these men, and the female part of the household within the walls with me. But some neighbours from curiosity scrambled over the wall to see and hear what was going on.

Two or three observed,—“She is reading a Christian book,” and withdrew; others said, “These are good words,” and stayed

to listen. One, a woman looking about thirty years of age, but probably younger, seated herself beside me, and kept gazing at me with the most beautiful black eyes I had seen, whenever I paused in the reading to explain and talk about the meaning. Seeing her interest, I addressed her, when the hostess pulled my sleeve and said, "She is a Moslem—don't talk to *her*; the Gospel is not for her!" Before I had time to expostulate, the woman said with tears on her sunburnt cheek—"I too like to hear the good words;" and she gave a deep sigh as she spoke. I hastened to assure her that the good Lord loved all sinners, and wanted to save and pardon all, and to comfort their sorrow; adding, "I am sure you are not happy." She rubbed her eyes with the end of her veil, without replying; but a girl on the other side whispered her story. It seems her husband and she had been particularly happy and attached, till a sister of his became jealous and at last contrived to poison his mind against her, and to get him to divorce her; "though," said the girl, "every one knows she was really a good wife, and she won't marry again, though *he* has taken another, and it is two years ago now, and she works hard and lives alone." The poor woman heard, for the whisper was not a very gentle one, and said, looking at me, with such a touching expression, "I *can't* marry, for I *loved* him—oh, how I loved him! my heart! my heart!" and she hid her face, sobbing softly, and trying to hide her grief as if every one did not know it, poor thing! Of course, I did my utmost to cheer her by telling of that Friend who is "above all others," who never forsakes and who never forgets us! I did not see her again, and do not know her subsequent fate; but doubtless the story is only too common.

Some families, however, make a rule never to divorce, and hold their heads rather high, and justly so, for not giving in to this odious custom.

The man's power is of course greater here than in Europe, as not only the strong arm, but public opinion and law, agree in giving him power, among the lower class especially—almost of life and death; in rich or influential families, on the contrary, the wife has great power, as her own people support her. A curious little tragedy happened in my own neighbourhood not many years ago, which reminded me of the old tale of "Blue Beard." A certain man had married two or three wives in succession, but, being reported well off, found no difficulty in obtaining a successor, and married a very pretty young widow, who was specially noted among female friends for her magnificent long and silky hair. Her new husband said he was but moderately well off, and so excused himself from bringing her the customary gift of jewels; however, they had not been married more than a few weeks before he was called away for some business, which

would detain him a few days away from home. The wife happened that morning to see a certain chest which she had often been vainly curious about, with the key in the lock—in his haste to start, her husband had forgotten it! she quickly unlocked it, and found it nearly full of gold.

“Now,” thought she, “I see he is a miser, and this is why he never gave me bracelets;” so she resolved to get them for herself, and in her childish ignorance (for many Eastern women are not able to count beyond a very low rate, and have no practical knowledge) it never struck her that he would *count* his money, and thus detect her theft. She took a handful of the glittering coins, and immediately went to a jeweller and ordered a pair of gold bracelets; the man took the money, and promised to bring the articles next day. The husband was not expected for some time, but returned the very next day, and the first person he saw was a jeweller at his door; on being asked his business, he replied he had brought the bracelets his honour’s wife had commanded for the fifteen guineas! Seriously the husband abused both the innocent jeweller and his unhappy wife; he flung the bracelets into the mud, and told the man to give him his money and begone, which he hastened to do. Then the house was in a turmoil with inquiries, curses, &c., and an old woman who was used to come occasionally, betrayed the poor wife; it seems she had spied her unlocking the chest, and feared to be herself suspected, unless she told what she knew. The man’s fury now knew no bounds; seizing the plaits of long and beautiful hair he twisted them round his hand, and thus holding his victim, struck her with his stick while she screamed for mercy in vain. When he had dragged her round the room and beaten her till her shoulders and arms were black with bruises, he left her; but her little daughter had run in and seen all, and alarmed the neighbours; and her own friends, who found her nearly dead, insisted on bringing the doctor of the district. He came; but it was too late to save the unhappy woman, who died in a few days, and the husband then gave a bribe of twelve guineas to the doctor to conceal the truth and prevent him from being summoned for murder. The miserable doctor pocketed the bribe and told some lie in his certificate, which set all *right*. A year or two later the “Blue Beard” husband found another pretty bride—an innocent sweet young girl, sister-in-law to an old pupil of mine (which is how I know all the details). What her fate will be is still unknown; when I saw her before the marriage she had not yet seen her delightful bridegroom, the custom here making that ceremony subsequent to the one that ties the knot.

It may seem as if I were giving the dark side only in these stories, and it is quite true that I know several families where



there is a fair amount of domestic happiness; but they are the exception certainly, and though actual tragedies may not be the rule, wife-beating, quarrelling, and frequent divorces *are* the rule, and that not among the lowest of the people; the law of Mahommed gives a licence for these things, and man's nature is ready enough to take advantage of it, of course. There are some noble examples among the highest class of men who, instead of filling their palaces with scores of poor young white slaves purchased from Circassia, are married to a single wife and treat her with due respect and regard, and we must hope that, though as yet quite exceptional, their example will be followed by many, and the women given their right place as mistresses in their husbands' homes. But as yet it seems far enough off, and the example set by Europeans is not such in too many cases as to give a just and true idea of Christianity and Christian homes to uneducated Egyptians, or even to such as have some degree of European cultivation. The number of low people who come from Italy, the Greek islands, Malta, and France, &c., to get employment here, because they failed at home, give a bad impression to the natives. The recent introduction of French theatrical amusements, &c., are also calculated to do harm *even* greater here than in Europe, for various reasons. The higher class of modern Egyptians are frequently good French scholars, and some are unhappily imbued with French rationalistic views, but all profess strong attachment to the creed of their race and country, probably more from patriotic than really religious feelings.

The mass of the people cling fondly and blindly to the Moslem faith, however—that very faith whose tenets were forced on their ancestors by fire and sword—and are very far from imagining on how rotten a foundation its doctrines stand, or how their venerated book contradicts itself, and says things that may be differently interpreted from the ambiguity of some of the words used. Many who can read its fine flowing sentences with fluency, have but a faint understanding of the meaning conveyed, being accustomed to a more homely dialect in daily life. The students at the great college of the Azhar, indeed, are very learned, so far as the narrow round of studies permit men to be so, either the Koran itself or treatises upon it being the only books; there exist histories and other works, indeed, of great antiquity, but comparatively few read these, and copies are scarce. The oral traditions, like the Jews, “traditions of the Elders,” are nearly as much venerated as the book itself; and among the women, oral tradition is, generally speaking, all that they know of religion. They do not go to the mosques, and rarely pray, but rich devout women have, during the fast month—or at periods of bereavement in the family—a sheikh or

learned mollah to read aloud and recite passages of the Koran ; he sits behind a curtain, and the females assemble to hear him.

I have had a good deal of personal experience among Egyptian Moslem women, and have found that most have very faint and vague ideas of a future state, and *many* have none at all. "Only think!" exclaimed a devout Moslem woman of the wealthier class, who had visited Mecca in pilgrimage many times, addressing a sister when I was visiting her one day : "only think, this lady believes she has a *home* in Heaven ! is not that wonderful ? and very good also," she added. If you ask if they have such hope, they will not say plainly "*no*," but with an air of either indifference or of sadness will reply, "Inshallah !" (please God), "by the Prophet's help"—often adding, "Who knows?" and shrugging the shoulders expressively enough, try to leave the subject. As to a sure and certain hope there is really none : fatalism may give outward calm, and does sometimes ; but joy and peace belong only to those who have an unction for the soul.

Some English persons have a notion that the remnant of the old Egyptian Church ought to be the missionaries *par excellence*, to bring their countrymen to the knowledge of the Gospel ; but that Church needs reform itself as much, or very nearly as much, as ours did when the glorious Reformation brought the forgotten Gospel to light in the days of Ridley and Latimer ; and the corruptions of the Coptic Church are peculiarly offensive to Mahomedans, who among many errors of their own, are free from that of bowing down to pictures and similar things. They have, indeed, a good deal of saint worship in their own way, but both they and their Coptic neighbours need to be pointed to God's way of salvation in simplicity, and to put aside whatever is not found in His inspired Word. That Word is not now actually out of their reach, as in times past. The Church Missionary Society formerly, and the American now existing in Egypt, have been the means of making the Scriptures attainable at a reasonable price, as well as of instructing many young persons in reading and in the truths of the Gospel. This work has been carried on now for many years, chiefly among the Copts, and latterly among other Oriental Christians settled in Egypt, a few Mahomedans being occasionally reached also. My own schools and mission were specially directed originally towards these last, although after a time Coptic scholars joined the Moslems at my first little school, and at present, when we have upwards of 500 children in the Cairo school, usually called the Egyptian Mission, there are a good number of different Christian denominations and a few Jews, but the greater number are Mahomedans. On the short Nile trips, which I make in the winter with some of my missionary assistants and the missionary superintendent, the poor Moslem villages are

the places we chiefly visit, and most interesting meetings have been held in some of these among the peasantry. But it is not listening to the Scripture, or even reading it for himself, that is enough to make a Moslem give himself to Christ. The Spirit of God must work in his soul until he is ready to make real, and to him often terrible, sacrifices. He must give up his family and friends, be looked on as a man false to his country as well as his creed; for there is as much of patriotism as of religious belief in Islam here. In many cases he runs a real risk of either secret poisoning, or open persecution and imprisonment, if he makes the profession by baptism. He is, however, far better off than the seeker for truth in the days of the Inquisition, as no hindrance is put in the way of his obtaining and studying the Word of God. Some, we know, who from their youth and other circumstances could not enter the earthly fold by baptism, *did*, we feel sure, enter the heavenly fold by faith, and are now with the Lord, doubtless blessing the school where they learned to trust in Jesus. Others yet struggling with the difficulties of earth, are divided between love of truth and fear of man, and for such much prayer and much patience are needed. English travellers who visit the English Mission Schools can hardly fail to be pleased to see so many little ones with the Gospel in their hands, and learning to sing the praises of God in their native tongue, as well as receiving a secular education better than they could obtain at native schools; because, however large their pecuniary means are compared to mine, they need the constraining love of Christ and the blessing which accompanies the study of His word.

The Medical Mission which I have lately been privileged to add to the work in Cairo, is the first that city has yet known, and promises to be a great means of blessing. Already, though only a few months in existence, the poor gladly come in numbers to avail themselves of free medical aid—as much as possible they have their souls attended to as well as their bodies. The teaching can only be of a desultory kind from the circumstances, and much of the seed, no doubt, falls by the wayside; but some will, we feel sure, bring forth fruit one day for the Master, some thirty, and some a hundred fold.

M. L. WHATELY.