AMEDEE B. DE GUERVILLE

NEW EGYPT

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INTRODUCTION

IN the autumn of last year, whilst spending a few days at Caux, that ideal resort overlooking Territet with its lovely bay on Lac Leman, I chanced to meet an old friend of mine, a diplomatist, who had passed some ten years or so of his life in Egypt.

“I have just been reading ‘Au Japon’,” he said to me, “and my mind is now made up. I can resist no longer. I am off for a trip to the land of the Chrysanthemum. Won't you come and have another peep at your old loves?”

“No, my dear fellow,” I replied. “I am going to flirt with yours. You are bound for the land of the ‘Mousmé,’ I am bound for the land ‘of mummies.’”

“Egypt?”

A far off look came into his eyes, a sigh escaped his lips, whilst he added:

“I envy you. It is an ideal winter spot. But you will find yourself greatly mistaken if you expect to meet only mummies there. As to the fair sex, I can tell you … But what's the good? … You will have the pleasure of discovering for yourself all the treasures which Egypt offers in winter to those who have eyes to see and the wisdom to understand. I have half a mind to come with you, but Japan is too seductive. Go, my dear chap. Not your first visit, is it? Ah! you will find the proverb says truly: ‘He who has once tasted of the waters of the Nile will surely return to drink thereof.’ But tell me, what are you going for—amusement?”

“To amuse myself? Rather not. I'm going to write another book.”

“What! on Egypt? … Poor fellow!”

It would be impossible to describe the expression of pity, half surprised, half amused, of my friend the diplomatist.

“I envy you no longer,” he said. “I only pity you, The most terrible, brain-splitting Chinese puzzle is simple as A, B, C, compared with the Egyptian question.”

“But I don't intend to have anything to do with the Egyptian question. It is the country, its inhabitants, their customs, which—”

“Yes, but that's the rub. I defy you to write of all that without touching on the thousand and one financial and political questions in which Egypt is to-day head over ears. Listen! I have passed years there, and behind the scenes, as you know. Very well. I tell you frankly I cannot say that I know Egypt a whit better now than before I went; in fact, I believe the longer one lives there the less one sees clear. We no more understand the Egyptians than we understand the Japanese; and, besides, there is this difference that, whereas the latter understand themselves, the former do not, any more than we do. Ah! It is a pretty mess, as you will see for yourself.”

There is no mistake; my friend was right. I had no idea as to the difficult task I had undertaken.

To understand Egypt, to describe in a single volume its past glorious but in ruins, its present full of energy and work, its future of hope and promise, is humanly impossible. “New Egypt” has not been written for my Egyptian friends, for those who know thoroughly this lovely land. Herein will be found only impressions, such as may strike the traveller as he makes his way from Alexandria to Fashoda, with here and there some remarks on matters political, financial and religious, which I have been able to obtain from good sources. These sources are the highly placed personages in the Egyptian world, English, French, native and others; these men, keen and talented, who, in palaces, ministries, legations, schools, hospitals, banks or large industrial concerns, are working without ceasing for the regeneration of Egypt. I have knocked at all doors, rich and poor, high and low, and everywhere a warm welcome

has awaited me. “Enter, observe, criticise. Here are our attempts, and, alas! here also are our failures.”

And to-day an easy task would await me if, instead of twenty chapters, I could write twenty volumes. On each subject, on each page, the fear is always with me that I may not have written enough to give a clear idea of Egypt to those who know it not, and yet I fear also to overstep the limits I have set myself in this small book.

To all those who have aided me, in Egypt and in the Soudan, I now express my most sincere gratitude and thanks. I give no names: they are modest folk, and, besides, have no need of my little advertisement.

Amongst the illustrations are a certain number of photographs taken either by myself or by friends, and others kindly placed at my disposal by Messrs. Dittrich and Lekégian of Cairo, M. Béato of Luxor, M. Fiorillo of Assouan, M. Veniéris of Khartoum, and Herr Turstig of Omdurman.

There are very few good photographers in Egypt, and I should advise those amateurs who do not develop their own work to be very careful. I have had many plates and films absolutely ruined by ignoramuses calling themselves “prize photographers.” To those in Cairo I can thoroughly recommend either M. Lekégian or M. Dittrich, photographer to the Court. The latter has a wonderful collection of portraits, admirably done, of all the more important persons. His rooms are a real museum of all the celebrities, masculine and feminine, whom Cairo has known in the last five-and-twenty years. As to M. Lekégian, he has, besides some remarkable portraits, a unique collection of views and native types both in large prints and in post-cards.

And finally, amongst the other illustrations, will be found many photographs, veritable little gems, signed by Mr. David Gardiner, of New York, an amateur whom I do not hesitate to call a real artist.

My only regret is my inability to make use of all the negatives kindly placed at my disposal by Mr. Gardiner. However, I trust that some day he will take my advice and publish an album of “Egypt Illustrated,” unless, indeed, I can avail myself of them in a future work. In fact, in the present volume I find that I have not been able to include all that I could have wished, and therefore I hope at some future date to supplement the present book with another entitled “Egypt Intime,” which I hope will not be without interest to my readers.

At present my object will be attained if those who read these pages, and who have not already seen the Nile, will feel a desire to pass a few months in the land which, without doubt, for a winter holiday is one of the most charming, agreeable, and interesting.

CHAPTER I ALEXANDRIA

First impressions—East and West—Poverty and riches—The Stock Exchange—Every man a speculator—Rolling in money —Wild extravagance—Women's hearts and men's purses— Place Mohamed Ali—The statue of a great man—How he founded his dynasty—English soldiers—Here since 1882—The bombardment of Alexandria—The rôle of France —Did Admiral Seymour exceed his orders?—Kitchener's presence —An admiral's fears—The decline of French influence.

"WHAT! you miserable person, sailing for Egypt under the German flag?"

Such was the greeting of one of my friends at Marseilles, whilst he added ruefully:

"Heavens! What are we coming to? After having abandoned Egypt to the English, we allow the Germans to make themselves masters of the Mediterranean, the famous French lake, and these Teutonic devils have actually the audacity to start a line of fast steamships between Marseilles and Alexandria."

This loyal son of Marseilles was deeply in earnest, and not without cause. In fact, whilst ever renewed strikes are threatening the large French ports with certain ruin, paralysing all their efforts, all their energies, and all their schemes, the English, the Germans and the Italians are working continuously to gain a footing where the French were yesterday supreme.

In establishing this new service between Marseilles and Alexandria, with a stay of twelve hours at Naples, and in setting aside for it two of their finest boats, the Schleswig

and the Hohenzollern, of 8000 tons, the Norddeutscher Lloyd of Bremen have made a master-move.

It was because I had heard so much said of the pleasure and comfort of this new line that I determined to try it myself and find out how far it was true. I can now say that, from every point of view, all the praise was thoroughly deserved, and it must be admitted that, for the present, it is undoubtedly the service de luxe of the Mediterranean.

Before even arriving at Marseilles, I had proof of the energy and enterprise of the German shipping companies. I travelled down by the new P.L.M. express train, the “Côte d'Azur,” the finest and most rapid train, I believe, not only in France, but in the world. As usual, the restaurant car attached was divided into two compartments, for smokers and non-smokers, between which was a door with a large glass panel. Here, on the glass, a magnificent picture of a huge steamship had been engraved, with, surrounding it in letters of gold, the name of a German Company, the “Hamburg-American Line.”

So, whilst from Marseilles to Cairo the best service to-day is that of Lloyd of Bremen, the other powerful Company will not allow itself to be forgotten; and to the thousands of strangers making their way South for the winter, they draw attention to their magnificent steamers, and their motto, “Remember.”

After five days of wind, rolling and pitching seas, came absolute calm. We had just entered the outer port of Alexandria, the famous town founded by Alexander the Great, the town which, in the time of Cleopatra, reigned queen of the Mediterranean.

The calm was of short duration. A noise, atrocious, infernal, indescribable, rose on every side. The Schleswig had hardly cast her anchor before she was surrounded by hundreds of small boats crammed with Egyptians, Turks and Arabs, who howled and gesticulated frantically. In a few seconds the boat was invaded by this extraordinary

crowd, dragomans, interpreters, porters from different hotels, boatmen, touts from different agencies, &c. &c. It was pandemonium, a Tower of Babel gone mad; whilst the poor tourist, at his wit's end, saw fifty devils, black or brown, throw themselves on to his luggage. But at this moment a stentorian voice was heard: “All right, gentlemen, all right! Here are Cook's men, they will look after everything.” And on the deck, a huge Arab, in a superb costume, suddenly appeared, surrounded by a crowd of sturdy porters. Tight red jerseys covered the chests of these men, on which in white letters was sewn “Thos. Cook and Sons.” As if by magic quiet was restored: like a general on the field of battle, Cook's agent took command, answering politely the numerous questions put to him by the travellers; and to those anxious about the formalities to be gone through at the Custom House, he explained that, severe as these were, they need not trouble: “There is no Custom examination for you,” he said, smiling quietly; “we have obtained special permission to pass the luggage of all our passengers without being opened. You have only to give us your luggage tickets and let us know where you wish it sent, either to your hotel or to the station, and you will find it there awaiting you.”

Nothing could have explained better the justice and appropriateness of the title given to the directors of Messrs. Cook, “the uncrowned kings of Egypt and the East!” Was not the Emperor William himself, when he wished to visit the Holy Land, obliged to confide himself and all his belongings to Messrs. Cook, like the most ordinary of tourists? The white boats of the Agency lay alongside the Schleswig, and we soon found ourselves installed in one of them with all our baggage.

A few minutes later, a victoria with a couple of excellent little horses, took us swiftly along the streets of Alexandria.

First of all came the Arab quarter: its streets muddy and filthy, its shops open to all the winds of heaven, its houses

dark and mysterious, its swarming crowd, the negro, the brown-skinned, and the white; its beggars, its cripples, its children almost naked, crying, running, shouting; its veiled women; and above all, its smells, acrid and indescribable, the odour of the East, which at first sickens and disgusts.

But our little horses going hard, all that was soon passed, and the quarter inhabited by the Europeans and the rich Egyptians came into view, with its large and beautiful streets, its huge houses, superb palaces, its gay cafés, and its shops, worthy of the Parisian Boulevards.

More than anything else, this is the land of contrasts. Here a palace where reigns unbridled luxury, there a hovel swarming with beings scarcely human.

We slacken our pace as we enter the famous “Place Mohamed Ali,” in the middle of which rises the equestrian statue of the founder of the reigning dynasty, a fine piece of work by Jaquemart. This is the centre of the European life, the Hyde Park Corner of Alexandria, where at certain hours of the day all the rank and fashion of the town may be seen.Here and there, in passing, I get a shake of the hand from some old friend, business man, banker or broker. As for speculators, every one, more or less, is that.

For several years the mania for speculation seems to have attacked the whole population, and the Stock Exchange at Alexandria is, as it were, the heart of the body politic, full of life, of hopes and fears, where every one large and small, rich or poor, strong or weak, meets on common ground. Cotton, its rise or fall, that is the predominant thought in the minds of all those men amongst whom are so many familiar faces.

Indeed, after nine months' scraping and hoarding, these good Alexandrians troop across to Paris and the best known watering-places on the Continent, to disgorge in the remaining three their accumulated gains.

All have the look of men well pleased with the world, and all explain themselves thus: “My dear fellow, business is A

1. Egypt has entered on an era of prosperity hardly credible. We are making money hand over fist, every one is in the swim. You will see for yourself, from one end of Egypt to the other you will hear the same story. The Government has been able to reduce taxation and increase the salaries of its employees, big and little. The golden age has arrived!”

Can this be possible? Can it be that, whilst in Europe and America every one cries poverty, there is only prosperity here, in this land of Egypt, which scarcely twenty years ago was in a state of bankruptcy?

And, strange as it may seem, not one of these men will speak to you of Egypt, of its history, of its artistic treasures, not one of them will advise you to visit a museum, a monument, or a park.

The Stock Exchange and Cotton, these are the be-all and end-all of existence. If by chance they do advise you to go to the theatre, it will not be because there is something particularly good to be seen, but simply because “X receives £4000 for three performances, and that the stones and jewels in the hair or round the necks of the élégantes represent a sum of £10,000,000 sterling!”

When he talks cotton or diamonds, your Alexandrian is a bit of a braggart. In a word, his head is a money-box, and his heart a purse, and they are both crammed to repletion with bank notes. All the same he is a good fellow, pleasant, hospitable, and generous. If he has the faults of the confirmed gambler he has also his good qualities.

As to his better-half, it is difficult to judge. Admiration has perhaps blinded me, for the “Alexandrine” is so pretty, so elegant, and so chic, that criticism is quite disarmed. One would have to travel far to find a town where there are so many young women whose good looks and perfect elegance continually charm the eye. It may be said, of course, that they are somewhat shallow, that their dresses, their jewels, and especially their flirtations are of more

interest to them than the graver questions of life; but what does that matter when they are so charming, and so deliciously feminine?

Certainly we are far from the time when in Alexandria there was a famine of femininity either “d'un monde ou de l'autre.”

In a town in which the upper classes are composed of so many different nationalities, Egyptians, Greeks, Levantines, Italians, French, English and Germans, there are as a matter of course many cliques, more or less jealous of one another; but there is one common ground where all unite and all help—Charity, which, here as elsewhere, seems to bring out all that is best in our common humanity.

The Greek colony, rich, numerous and powerful, is at the head of all those good works whose end is the alleviation of human suffering; and amongst those whose efforts in welldoing are continuous I would mention the Salvagos, the Zervudachis, the Em. Benackis and the Sinadinos.

The first-named family has just given to the town the sum of £20,000, in order to found a School of Art, a step in the right direction, and one which, I trust, will help considerably to raise Alexandria from its present state of rather sordid money-making.

Immense as the progress of the town has been in the last quarter of a century, and brilliant as its present position is, I have not a doubt that, in the near future, it will be called upon to occupy a position much more important.

To do so, however, it must, above all, render its port safer and more accessible, make its quays and docks considerably larger, its facilities to international trade greater, and reduce its port dues, to-day standing at much too high a figure.

Great efforts have been made, I know, and the Egyptian Government have already expended a sum of over £200,000 on important works, whilst an equal amount has just been set aside for new works. Only last winter, the

situation was such that ships, after having tried in vain to unload their cargoes, were obliged to leave without discharging. There was no room on the quays. This state of things, deplorable as it seems, is not due, as one might think, to any slackness on the part of the Government, but simply to the fact that the trade of the port has grown so enormously and so rapidly that it has been impossible for the Minister of Public Works to keep pace with it with the means at his disposal.

If Alexandria cannot assert the possession of the remains of her founder (Alexander the Great), she can at least boast of having a statue of the greatest man which modern Egypt has seen. I refer to Mohamed Ali, the founder of the Khedivial dynasty, and a hero of whom his descendants and Egypt have every reason to be proud.

The story of his life reads like a most captivating romance. This man, of humble origin, thanks to his extraordinary talents and iron will, became Pasha of Egypt at a time (1805) when the country, a Turkish province, was governed and sucked dry by the Mamelukes. With a small sum of money, lent to him, it is said, by an Armenian, uncle of the future great Egyptian Nubar, and accompanied by a handful of adventurers as hardy as himself, he landed in Egypt, and commenced that epic which lasted forty years, and in which he made himself, in a way, the arbiter of the destinies of the Mussulman world.

Thanks to him and to his genius, Egypt played the part of a great Power and made Turkey tremble.

Great diseases sometimes require drastic treatment, and, without hesitation, he caused the Mamelukes to be massacred, and commenced the pacification of Upper Egypt. Whilst he thus waged war in a far country the English landed at Alexandria (1807), and advanced on Rosetta. But Mohamed Ali was cast in a different mould from Arabi and the insurgents of 1882. Returning rapidly he fell like a thunderbolt on the English, driving them back

on Alexandria, where, thanks to the protection afforded them by their fleet, they were enabled to re-embark.

A faithful vassal of the Sultan, he helped him in his wars against Greece, and also against England. For Turkey he conquered Crete (1823), and recovered Morea (1824). His army, at one time only 20,000 strong, had now been raised to 100,000.

His son Ismaïl, ascending the Nile, had planted the Egyptian flag at Sennar, at the junction of the White and Blue Niles, and conquered the rich Sudanese province of Kordofan, whilst for the first time Egypt possessed two powerful fleets, one on the Mediterranean and another on the Red Sea.

In the interior the country was quiet and prosperous, whilst this great man, unable himself to read or write, founded schools and universities.

Round him he gathered a number of talented Frenchmen, of whom one, Colonel Sèves, known in Egypt under the name of Soliman Pasha, worked hard to improve the army; whilst another, the engineer Bessan, directed his energies to increasing the fleet, of which he was the founder.

Placed at the disposal of his Sovereign, Sultan Makmoud, this fleet was entirely destroyed at Navarin (1827) by the united navies of France and England, to the great surprise of Mohamed Ali, who could not understand that the former should ally themselves to the latter in order to sink the very ships which they had just sold to him. With each year the power of the Pasha increased, and with it the jealousy of the Sultan. At last the Sovereign thought that the “removal” of the vassal would be decidedly for the best, and war broke out between Egypt and Turkey.

It was then that these Egyptian soldiers, so despised by Turks and Europeans, astonished the world.

Commanded by a man endowed with true military genius, Ibrahim, son of Mohamed Ali, they invaded Syria, captured St. Jean d Acre, routed the Turks at Damascus and Aleppo,

invaded Asia Minor, and finally crushed the enemy at Konieh (1832).

The road to Constantinople was open and the Turkish Empire at its last gasp … but the Powers, the famous Powers, were there, full of their pitiful ambitions, and ready to sacrifice Egypt, as well as Armenia, Crete and Greece, in order to maintain the Ottoman Empire and all the crimes committed in its name.

Thus then the Powers stopped the victorious Egyptian army at the very doors of Constantinople, as in 1897 they stopped the Greek troops at the frontier of Turkey, at the moment when they were about to enter Ottoman territory, a move which would undoubtedly have led to a general rising in the Balkans against the Sultan. Thanks to the Powers, the latter had time to concentrate a formidable army and crush Greece.

Even so in 1832 the Egyptians were held back at the time the Empire of the Sultan was about to succumb; but the Powers, as usual, could not agree amongst themselves, and for seven years the negotiations continued. Taking advantage of the delay, the Sultan massed his troops, and at last, believing in certain victory, he threw them suddenly against the army of Ibrahim (1839). The result was disastrous. The Turks were once more overwhelmed, whilst 15,000 prisoners and all their artillery fell into the hands of the Egyptians. At the same time the Turkish fleet surrendered to the victorious Pasha.

The Sultan Makmoud died of rage; but once more Egypt was cheated of the just fruits of victory, and, after negotiations and conferences without end, Mohamed Ali was obliged to renounce Syria and Asia Minor, to restore the fleet, and content himself and his descendants with the Vice-Royalty of Egypt under the generous, enlightened, and civilised Sultans of Turkey!

Superb on his horse of bronze, Mohamed Ali dominates the grand Square, where all the busy life of the town

concentrates. Some few steps further on another statue, this time a living one, caught my eye. On a beautiful well-groomed half-bred, an Egyptian cavalryman, erect and unmoving, stiff in his sombre uniform, mounted guard. A finer soldier one could not wish to see. His bronzed skin, black moustache, dark eyes, slender body, straight and supple, made up the ideal of a cavalry soldier. It was with men such as these that the great Pasha made of Egypt a Power.

My thoughts are quickly disturbed. Across the Square, with the dull tread of marching feet, comes a company of English soldiers. They are boys, beardless boys, almost delicate looking, clad in unbecoming khaki, and their childish faces almost swallowed up in immense helmets. Can it be that these youths are the conquerors of this dark and warlike figure seated unmoved on his lovely steed?

Whilst the khakiclad company file smartly past him, I take a keen look to see if any trace of feeling is shown on his dusky face. In vain, not a muscle moves; and if the sight of these foreign soldiers, trampling with their heavy boots the soil of his country, awakens in him any sense of bitterness, it is carefully hidden in a heart where for long the spark of patriotism has been if not extinct at least deeply hidden.

As I glanced once more towards the statue of Mohamed Ali the thought struck me: if only your spirit could return and endow the bronze with life, what spasm of fury would seize you at the sight of these alien soldiers wending their way at your feet! But against whom should your wrath be hurled? Against the English, who have established order in Egypt, who have snatched the country from certain ruin, and who, by means of an extraordinary administration, wise, prudent and energetic, have assured her present, and, I dare hope, her future also; or against those fools, imbeciles, criminals, all that line of Pashas, greedy for gain and feeble of character, who, having sucked the land dry, threw her madly into the adventures of 1882? There can be

no doubt that the interior situation of Egypt at that time was such that some kind of intervention on the part of the European Powers was absolutely necessary to re-establish order and protect foreign interests. But if this Concert des Impuissances had discussed and shuffled less, and had acted with a little more energy and decision, it is certain that the famous massacres of Alexandria and other events would have been avoided.

As to the massacres, they have been considerably exaggerated. A scuffle between an Arab and a Maltese, followed by a general row leading to a riot, in the course of which a band of Arabs

pillaged several houses and killed forty or so Europeans. Worse has happened in many a civilised town in Europe. It was in no sense a general rising against the foreigners, and the Egyptians themselves restored order. But whilst for weeks and months the Powers were discussing the best method of interfering in Egyptian affairs, and whilst France urged an Anglo-French military expedition, it is natural enough to find that the Egyptians wished to leave nothing to chance, and began therefore to take precautions.

The defences of Alexandria were put in order and the building of new forts commenced.

It was then that the French and English admirals summoned the Egyptian authorities to cease constructing all works, under pain of bombardment.

And now, as to subsequent events, we find two versions: the Egyptians declare that work was stopped; the English admiral, on the other hand, declares that, from reports received by him, he learnt that the Egyptians had mounted new guns in other positions. From whom did these reports come which decided Admiral Seymour to open fire? From a Scotchman, Mr. John Ross, who lived in Alexandria, and who supplied the two fleets with coal. Intimate with the admiral and the English officers, he kept them informed of all that took place on shore, and it was he who, in

describing the new defences, more or less imaginary, was the cause of the bombardment. It was he also who, called in regard to coaling arrangements on board the French vessels, assured Admiral Seymour, up to the last moment, that the French were ready to back him up, and it was with the greatest astonishment that the latter saw the French squadron up anchor and go.

It is whispered in certain usually well-informed circles that, several hours after the bombardment, Admiral Seymour received orders from his Government not to open fire unless he considered his ships in danger from the new works made by the Egyptians, and that he passed a very bad quarter of an hour, wondering anxiously whether or not his action would be approved.

Few people are aware that Lord Kitchener, who, seventeen years later, was to vanquish the Dervishes and reconquer the Sudan, was on board the flagship as a simple spectator. Immediately after the bombardment which opened Egypt to the English, he landed with Mr. John Ross, and going to his house indulged in a brandy and soda, just as he drank another with Captain Marchand at Fashoda on the morrow of the events which definitely assured the supremacy of England in the Valley of the Nile.

The bombardment was the first act, as Fashoda was the last, marking the decline of French influence, the decline which began on that memorable day when the French fleet disappeared on the horizon, and, abandoning Alexandria to the English cannon, carried with it the last hope of those who dreamt of an Egypt, great, strong and prosperous, under the guiding hand of France.

CHAPTER II ALEXANDRIA TO CAIRO

Country villages and inhabitants—Story of the ghamousah— Curious sights, fortifications built to check the English army —Arabi's Revolution—Was he the cat's-paw of England?— Condemned to death, reprieved, exiled to Ceylon, pardoned, and now living at Cairo on a pension of £1000 a year!—In the train—Anecdotes—Japanese and Egyptians—Why the latter, like the Turks, are pro-Japanese.

AT midday the assault on the express for Cairo takes place. The train is thoroughly up-to-date: corridor carriages of the most comfortable type, and a restaurant car of the International Sleeping Car Company. One might imagine oneself in Europe if it were not for the numerous passengers wearing the fez, the Arab passing us the hors d'œuvres, and above all the extraordinary racket made by the servants. Through the small opening by which the dishes are passed, the cooks and waiters apostrophise one another, dispute and discuss in an outlandish gibberish. This noise seems all the stranger as the Arab as a rule goes about his work almost as silently as a Chinese or Japanese. Their chief failing, however, is the insatiable curiosity which the presence of a white woman in the house arouses. To enjoy a glimpse of beauty unadorned in the form of a fair European, be she young and beautiful, or old and ugly, they have recourse to every ruse and every stratagem. The key-hole is the point of observation most in vogue, but when that has been carefully plugged by the wily person au courant with their little ways, a hole drilled with a large gimlet in a quiet corner does equally well. The door of the bath-room is naturally most frequently threatened.

At my table, three gentlemen, each wearing the fez, and evidently well educated men, were discussing the Russo-Japanese War. I took part in the conversation, and had not done so long before I became aware that all three Orientals were strongly pro-Japanese. Questioned as to the reason for their feelings, one of them said to me:

"We are pro-Japanese because the Japanese are an extraordinary people, young, brave, and full of energy, who have already done marvels, and who are struggling now for their existence." Undoubtedly these are good reasons, but there were others which he was careful to keep to himself, which I shall take the trouble to put into words for him: "We are pro-Japanese, we Mussulmans, Turks, Egyptians, because the Japanese are an Eastern people, whose religion is not that of Christ; because they are struggling against a nation which represents the two things in the name of which we have undergone most humiliation and most suffering, Western civilisation and the Christian faith."

That, in a word, is the thought of every Asiatic, every African; and the Japanese victories are awakening in Asia and Africa feelings which have long lain dormant,—the hope, lively but carefully hidden in their heart of hearts, that the day will yet dawn which shall see their final victory, and our final fall.

Moderate in speed, the train crosses the vast highly cultivated plains where the maize crop predominates. One might almost imagine oneself on the Western plains of America, if from time to time high palm-trees, like huge feathers, did not raise their tufted heads. Then there are the little villages of yellow mud-built huts, of which the flat roofs, covered over with thatch, serve as stable and poultry-yard; goats, sheep, chickens, dogs and pigs, all seem to prefer this exalted position, from which indeed the view is much finer than from below. Over the wretched roads come the camels, loaded in fearsome fashion, with

step slow and measured, the head high and small, and the neck so long, so very long! The gravity of their

movements is in striking contrast to the paces of the asses, of which hundreds are to be seen. Ah! these Egyptian donkeys! How elegant they are, how smart, how full of life and grace, and how different from their European brothers! They have a chic indescribable, and to see them is to love them.

“What horrible cows!” cried a young American girl, pointing from the window of the carriage to some huge animals with black and glossy skins, whose looks were, in fact, rather repulsive.

“These are not exactly cows,” explained an Egyptian. “That is the ghamousah, the female buffalo, whose milk is quite excellent. There is in our country a tradition that, after God had made the cow, the Devil, coming to have a look, burst out laughing, and declared that he could do better himself with his eyes shut. God took him at his word. The Devil set to work and produced—the ghamousah!”

The old Egyptian who related this little tale was a man of charming manners, and one who, some twenty years ago, played an important part in Egypt. Seated by my side, he drew my attention to many objects of interest.

“Do you see,” he said to me, “these hillocks of sand? These are all that remain of the defence works erected by Arabi to stop the English in 1882. After landing at Alexandria it was thought that they would march directly on Cairo. But, as you know, they did no such thing. General Wolseley preferred to disembark at Ismailia, to the great surprise of the Egyptians, who believed firmly, after the words pronounced by M. de Lesseps, that France would not permit the English to enter the canal. At any rate, Wolseley's army, some 13,000 strong, with forty guns, landed at Ismailia on August 22, 1882, crossed without a hitch the thirty-six miles of desert, and on September 13 attacked the Egyptians entrenched at Tel-el-Kebir. We had

26,000 men and seventy guns, commanded by Arabi himself. Wolseley lost fifty men! Arabi was the first to decamp, followed by his broken army. He continued to run until he reached Cairo, where, as soon as the advance guard of the English cavalry appeared, he promptly surrendered."

"To what do you attribute this ridiculous defeat?" I asked. "To the cowardice of the Egyptian troops?"

"Not a bit," he replied. "The best troops in the world will turn tail when their officers and their commander-in-chief decamp as if the devil were at their heels."

"Arabi had no military genius, he was simply a colonel, ambitious and vain, with a very ordinary intelligence, the man of straw. …"

"Of the English?"

"Ah! who knows? Personally I do not think so. He played their game unconsciously, whilst doing the work of those equally ambitious but more intelligent than himself. Remember that the revolution of 1882 was a very serious affair, and a very excusable one. It was not at first against the foreigners, but against the Government, against the Turkish Pashas, who occupied almost all the high military and civil posts, and who were crushing the country under their despotism. With a leader more intelligent, and employing other means, the movement might have succeeded, and had the sympathy of the whole world. Arabi missed being a hero, he became simply a rebel."

"What has happened to him?"

At this question a smile came to his lips, and, with a roguish twinkle in his eyes, he replied:

"What has happened to him? Why, he lives in Cairo, happy and peaceful, on a pension of £1000 a year, generously granted him by the Government. Certainly it has not been granted to him for having raised a revolution, for having been, if not the leading spirit, at least the cause of the massacres at Alexandria, nor for having fled

ignominiously at Tel-el-Kebir. But you must admit that, from the English point of view, the man who supplied a reason for the bombardment of Alexandria, who opened the doors of Egypt for England, and who, having at his disposal 26,000 men and seventy guns, only managed to kill fifty English, and allowed Cairo and its citadel to fall without a blow, is well worth a pension of £1000 a year. Think of the trouble England might have had, had he been made of other and sterner stuff."

"And from the Egyptian point of view?"

"Ah! from our point of view it would seem natural that we should hate and despise the man whose cowardice and incapacity have resulted in our country being now under the yoke of England … but, as a matter of fact, it is not so; for if apparently we have lost an independence which we really did not have, we much prefer to be governed by the English, thanks to whom Egypt has attained to a degree of prosperity hitherto unknown, rather than to be misgoverned by Turkey. That is quite worth the £1000 a year which we pay him on the advice of England."

"On the advice of England?" I asked.

"Of course! Ever since that day on which he surrendered at Cairo, Arabi, chief revolutionist, rebel against his Sovereign, has been taken by England under her wing. His trial was a farce, conducted not by the Egyptian judges, but by the 'counsel for the defence,' two English lawyers sent from London by means of a private subscription, and a third Englishman, Sir Chas. Wilson, representative in the Court, of England.

Lord Dufferin, who had just arrived in Egypt as Special Commissioner charged with the task of Adviser to the Khedive, began by applying all his energies to better the condition of Arabi in prison. 'Sir,' he said one day to the Khedivial Councillor Borélli, 'I cannot allow Arabi to be treated with such cruelty. I have just been informed that there are holes in his mosquito-curtain!' Several days after,

the ex-rebel having complained of the noise made by the sentries, which prevented him from sleeping, the night guard was immediately supplied with felt shoes! But, in spite of all the English efforts, Arabi and four of his companions were condemned to death. England, however, would not permit the sentence to be carried out, and the five prisoners were exiled to Ceylon, where for eighteen years they lived surrounded by every comfort … at the cost of the Government which they had tried to overthrow. 'But there was a revolution, they were rebels. We absolutely must hang some one, or what will become of the authority of the Government?' shouted Borélli. So they hanged three unfortunate devils, amongst whom was Commandant Soliman Sami, who acknowledged having with his troops set fire to certain buildings in the Square of Mohamed Ali, under the orders of Arabi, whilst he, pardoned and repatriated, lives at Cairo on a Government pension, and may be seen any day driving round at the fashionable hour."

The old Egyptian ceased. Through the windows of the carriage the sunshine streamed as I reflected on my friends, the English, and their tenderness for rebels. Even the famous Colonel Lynch, who fought against them in South Africa, is to-day as free as Arabi, though, so far, I have not heard that the English Government has granted him a pension of £1000 a year.

Far off, in the plain, green and bathed in sunshine, a blare of trumpets sounded, and I perceived in the distance a company of infantry at exercise. Pointing to these splendid troops, I asked: "Are they worth more now than in the time of Arabi?"

"We have," he replied, "an admirable little army, of which England has as much right to be proud as we; for it is owing to the brilliant English officers who, in the last twenty years, have given themselves heart and soul to its regeneration, that Egypt to-day has an army worthy of it.

“I know that in recent years much criticism has been directed in England against their army, against the Society life led by their officers, and their apparent ignorance.

“It is not for me to offer any opinion. The young English officers are so active and so energetic that they must have continual occupation. They are splendid when the conquering of some savage country is in hand; but in London, what outlet have they for their energy but laying siege to the hearts of fair ladies? In Egypt, and now in the Soudan, a vast field has been opened for their activities. With untiring zeal, with unflagging patience, with admirable intelligence and extraordinary tenacity they have succeeded in giving to Egypt a new army, worthy of the warmest praise, and at a relatively small cost. In 1882, when Arabi was Minister of War, his Department cost Egypt almost £864,000. The English wisely considered that, for a country weighed down with debts, the first thing to be done was to reduce the expenses, and the War Budget was consequently lowered each year, until in 1886 it amounted to £336,000. After that, as the prosperity of the country increased, the grants for the army were again raised, the Sudan re-conquered, the Dervishes annihilated, and yet, at the present day, our excellent army costs us less than the bands of Arabi. Amongst Europeans the belief seems general that the Egyptians, like the Chinese, will only fight well when commanded by European officers. … We Egyptians, however, like to think that to-day our soldiers would do their duty equally well when commanded by Egyptians.”

This is undoubtedly the opinion of men in a position to know, and amongst these his Excellency Abani Pasha, the amiable and charming Minister for War.

Three o'clock! The hundred and ten miles separating us from Cairo have been left behind, and now the Capital of Egypt rises up before us, a mass of white under a sky radiantly blue, sparkling with gold under the rays of a sun

which, on this the first day of December, recalls the lovely days of May in France.

CHAPTER III CAIRO

Arrival—Impressions—Population and types—The building mania—Extraordinary prosperity—Unheard-of riches—Life— The hotels—Napoleonic hotel-keepers—Stories and anecdotes —Tourists—Society, high and otherwise—Scandals—True history of certain great fortunes—Effect of climate on femininity and femininity on Arabs.

WHAT changes in the space of a few years! One hears of the mushroom growth of American towns, but where before has one seen an ancient Eastern capital suddenly take a fresh lease of life, born again, as it were, to a new existence, as if touched by a magic wand? At first sight the traveller who revisits Cairo after a few years' interval will not notice any great difference. At the huge station there is the same hurly-burly, the same cries, the same native porters seizing your luggage. On leaving, the same smell of the East, of the towns innocent of drains, the same terrible dust. But all this is soon forgotten and one comes once more under the indefinable charm which enters into every traveller who finds himself in the midst of these new and strange scenes.

The principal street, Shariah-Kamel, and the Place de l'Opéra, have not greatly changed. This is still the liveliest corner of the town, where from morn to eve a huge and strange crowd presses and pushes its way along the pavements. It would be impossible, even in dreams, to picture anything more animated than this living panorama, where East meets West, and meeting seems to mix one in the other.